

LIVING AS DEPENDENTS IN GOD'S CREATION

OVERVIEW OF STUDY PROGRAM

In these studies we will consider humanity's participation in the Father's home, the Father's family, the Father's work and the Father's garden. This will give us an opportunity to consider the Father's covenant with humanity in the light of creation, the fall, redemption and the new creation.

COURSE OUTLINE

Weeks 1 and 2 (14/10/97 and 21/10/97)

Introduction.

CREATION: THE FATHER'S HOME.

A given.

Humanity partakes of its nature.

Week 3 (28/10/97)

CO-HABITING: THE FATHER'S FAMILY.

A Name

A Home.

Adoption.

Union and Communion.

Weeks 4 and 5 (4/11/97 and 11/11/97)

VOCATION & THE FATHER'S WORK.

Purpose.

Authority.

Guidance.

Weeks 6 and 7 (18/11/97 and 25/11/97)

SINGING IN THE FATHER'S GARDEN,

Creatures with the Creator.

Ontology.

Covenant.

Salvation.

Worship.

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INTRODUCTION

Every one that has earnestly sought the reason behind particular events or ever asked why, has considered this topic.¹ The subject is as broad as creation and as deep as the limits of humble enquiry.

My meaning is: we must be persuaded not only that as he once formed the world, so he sustains it by his boundless power, governs it by his wisdom, preserves it by his goodness, in particular rules the human race with justice and judgment, bears with them in mercy, shields them by his protection. but also that not a particle of light, or wisdom or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him, and of which he is not the cause, in this way we must learn to expect and ask all things from him, and thankfully ascribe to him whatever we receive. For, until men feel that they owe everything to God, that they are cherished by his paternal care, and that he is the author of all their blessings, so that nought is to be looked for away from him, they will never submit to him in voluntary obedience; nay, unless they place their entire happiness in him, they will never yield up their whole selves to him in truth and sincerity.”²

The aim of these studies is to show the magnitude of God's plan as the ongoing expression of his fatherhood and that this revelation enables humanity to fulfil its responsibility as creatures.

¹ It must be acknowledged that there is a place for legitimate enquiry but this is performed with ready acceptance of our creaturehood. Such endeavours not a violation of the limitations placed upon us by our God but expresses the desire to fulfill the mandate given to humanity at creation “go into all the world and subdue it”. On the other hand Calvin justly warns of arrogant enquiry, Calvin John. Translated by Henry Beveridge. [Institutes of Christian Religion Vol one](#). Eerdmans. Michigan vol 2. p 204. “For it is not right that man should, with impunity pry into things which the Lord has been pleased to conceal within himself that we should not apprehend but adore’. ‘Let us not be ashamed to be ignorant in a matter in which ignorance is learning. Rather let us willingly abstain from the search after knowledge, to which it is both foolish as well as perilous, and even fatal to aspire.”

² Calvin John. Trsl. by Henry Beveridge. [Institutes of Christian Religion Vol one](#). Eerdmans. Michigan. p40.

Week 3

CHAPTER ONE

CREATION - THE FATHER'S HOME.

A given.

Every day of our lives we participate in, and with, our environment. Most of the time we do so without giving it a thought. But sometimes, something shatters our aloofness. We experience a heightened sense of peace, or settledness, and become, at least for the immediate present, a little more sensitive to things like a sunset or a flowing river. For a fleeting moment we value the solitude of a walk in the scrub, or on the beach, more than anything else. We marvel with rare innocence at the human physique. Or we enjoy a time of silent tenderness with a loved one. Such intrusions are unbeckoned (in Geoff Bingham's words "a joy, unbidden comes"). They can occur in the midst of ordinary activities of any day or night. Without them (these serendipities) some people would never see the design that is all around us and therefore never see the hand of the Father in our daily life.

But for fullness of life it is essential that we see the hand of the Father. Not only is creation a given but so too is our participation in it. We both share in its character as creatures and share in its destiny as God the creator fulfills his plan and purpose in, through, and for us. Our daily experiences are evidence and testimony to this fact.

Humanity partakes of its nature.

The corporate unity which exists between humanity and the created universe³ is known in the experience of all peoples. This relationship is clearly portrayed in Hebrew where the word for mankind is a shortened form of the **word for earth from** which he was taken. We are earthen vessels (Gen 2:7, 2 Cor. 4:7).

If we accept the earthiness of creation then, while we can speak of the environment (ie. creation) as a given, we cannot imply that it is in any sense eternal or the anchor point for our understanding of the cause of all things. When we speak of it as a given we infer a giver and there by stand opposed to those who posit any sense of autonomy in the creation. It is a given both in its origins and in its ongoing existence. God as the creator continues to give creation and for this reason we are able to receive as a gift, that which is given. God gives and we receive in the present continuous sense.

The environment in which we live and of which we partake, has certain characteristics that reveal the nature of the provider; there is order, authority, plan, purpose, diversity, unity, interaction, consistency and fruitfulness. But in the creation as fallen humanity knows it, there is also confusion, rebellion, futility, tension, struggle, pain, and anguish. These too reflect the nature of our God who in holiness works through our environment to judge and discipline his children.

³ Mabie, Henry C. 1908. [How Does The Death Of Christ Save Us?](#) Hodder and Stroughton. London. p. 82.

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There are strains in creation because of the bondage that it is under - the bondage to sin and decay bought about by the fall. This amounts to pandemic evidence of the judgment of God on humanity. The physical environment struggles because it is the realm of human existence and therefore the medium for divine - human interaction. This interaction involves our holy God constantly moving through creation to confront and destroy evil.

Explanation: Thus far I have spoken of creation as the God given environment into which we are placed and of which we are commanded to enjoy but I have not referred to our participation in creation. I have not yet spoken of human skill, ingenuity, imagination, creativity, sociality, inventiveness, procreation, productivity. Nor have I considered the innate, but uniquely human, traits such as hope, love, faith, and self sacrifice. However if you look at the study program you will notice that the first three weeks I have intended to look at the home and environment that God has given and the fourth and fifth weeks to deal with the nature of our participation in the Father's work. Then in the sixth and seventh weeks we will consider how we live in this garden of God. I hope to show that the gold (for example) of the garden is the gold of the old covenant temple ornaments and of the city streets in the New Jerusalem. It is sanctified by God and formed by God given human skill. This activity and, all kindred human activity is performed is expressed as culture. It springs from and gives expression to true worship.

Week 3

CHAPTER TWO

CO-HABITING - THE FATHER AND HIS FAMILY.

A Name.

Paul wrote that in Ephesians 3:15 that in Christ the whole family in heaven and earth is named. And God declared to Israel "I have called you by name, I have surnamed you. though you have not known me" (Isa 45:4). In this idiomatic way God reminds his people that he brought them into being, as creatures, and as a nation. He gave them their life, their identity and their inheritance. That he did this first through Abraham and then through Moses shows that his involvement in naming, his people has two facets first, it is a deeming act and second a redeeming act. It involves both creation and, recreation. And so it is for us, we are deemed children of God by creation and redeemed children of God by grace in adoption. But this chronological order has to be reversed for its theological significance. We were born to be reborn. This order can be seen in Deuteronomy 4:32-40. The Father gives us his own name.

He does not give his name as a label separate from himself. He is his name. This means that he becomes our identity, the authority over us to which we are called to submit and by which we live. Israel calls out in repentance "doubtless you are our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is your name" (Isa 63:16) and Malachi asks have we not all one father? has not one God created us? (Mal 2: 10). The answer is yes so therefore stop cheating each other, Or as Paul says "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ... because ... there is one God and father of us all."

A Home.

He is our dwelling place, "In him we live and move and have our being" by virtue of creation, but now by virtue of adoption our lives are "hid with Christ in God" and so we abide in Him. When this occurs our yearning for a homeland is both stimulated and satisfied. Through him who is our elder brother we enjoy a foretaste of the inheritance for which we were created. We abide in his company as we live in his garden. This means that we commune and fellowship with the triune God. All that has threatened our security has been overcome. God, who alone can give peace, has settled our hearts. We are cared for and know him intimately who is Jehovah Jireh, our abundant provider. He is the prodigal Father who uses the creation as the context for his paternal love (Ps 33:5).

Adoption. This is a familial term which has legal implications. We are not only adopted into God's family but we are also given his name and an inheritance. In Rev 19:11-16 Christ is called the Faithful and true. King of Kings and Lord of Lords and this righteous name becomes ours (Jer 23:6 and 33:16). This fact is affirmed by Isa in 62:2.

But adoption also implies intimacy. Luther attempts to remind his readers of this in the Small Catechism.

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He is truly our Father and we are truly his children in order that we may approach him boldly and confidently in prayer, even as beloved children approach their dear Father.

Union and Communion.

The fullness of life, and therefore the fullness of creation, can only be experienced as a gift from God, in communion. It cannot be experienced through self-serving individualism or unrestrained enjoyment. As a gift from God it leads to enjoyment of creation. It is not a heightened state of existence that comes to us from unrestrained enjoyment of, or participation in, our environment. While fullness of life was the intention of creation it is only available to fallen humanity by faith as a gift of grace.

The Father knows his fatherhood in perfect communion with the Son and the Spirit and it is into this communion that he has adopted redeemed humanity. It is trinitarian communion 1 Cor. 1:9. 2 Cor. 13:14 and 1 John 1:3.

We are not redeemed on a commercial basis, as slaves to live in poverty in the back sheds of God's plantation. Our redemption was the means of our adoption into the family fellowship or communion as sons and daughters. It was a familial work, not a commercial, nor even primarily a forensic one. The love that reconciled us to God was the love of the Father drawing in recalcitrant children. This reconciling, paternal love is now communicated to and through us when we, as Christ's siblings, joyfully fulfill his command to be reconciled.

It is often easier to live with the nonhuman creation than it is to live with other people but while it is right and proper that as redeemed people we enjoy a closer affinity with the world around us, our reconciliation is to the divine community and therefore to the community of God's people.

We are to depend on God for the wisdom we need to relate to each other as forgiven people. But if our hearts are right with him this wisdom is not difficult to know. If it is wisdom from God it is first peaceable, easy to be entreated and slow to anger. It is our sin that prevents us knowing this wisdom. We are to depend on God for our forgiveness, our justification.

Week 4

CHAPTER THREE

Participants in Vocation

Definition. Vocation is not to be limited to employment although it certainly includes it. To live in dependence on God in his creation is to be involved in faithfulness in all that He is doing in his creation. The stress is on what he is doing. He initiates the activity. But vocation is not simply that we participate but that we participate with purpose.

Purpose. The need to have purpose is part of our created being. Every expression of goal orientation reminds us that God created us for a future goal. For Adam this was evident in the I-act that God placed him in the garden and gave him work. He was to be involved in the Father's creation program. Humanity has inherited this mandate from Adam and so we are to replenish the earth, to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. We are to exercise dominion over every living thing. We are to tend and keep the garden. If we refuse this mandate then we refuse the blessing of God (Gen 128) or in Paul's words we refuse to be thankful.

The command or mandate has not yet been rescinded and certainly has not been fulfilled. Humanity has not yet fully subdued every living thing, eg the AIDS virus, the common cold, and often when we do exercise dominion it is as despot and not with benevolence. Even if it were possible for humanity to say that he had completed the mandate, unless he did so as a response of thanksgiving to the Father (ie., as a response to God's blessing) then he has not truly fulfill the command. Instead dominion is an act of rebellion and not obedience.

If humanity had remained in the state of holy communion, his work, and his enjoyment of it, would not have ceased. But when sin entered the scene so too did drudgery and every other perversion of vocation. When God was no longer humanity's central focus of worship we also lost our reason for employment. This in turn led on to a sense of futility and frustration, or idolatry, as we sought to fulfill our need for worship in work (eg. workaholics).

Humanity cannot escape with impunity, the need to be gainfully employed. When God gave the command that if a person does not work neither should he eat, he was not being hard or even pragmatic, he was exhorting people to return to the mandate given at creation. We will not find fulfillment in any other way. Note: Redemption is for service. Election is for Holiness

God, in whose image we are made, is not redundant and so neither should we be.

My Father works and I work. The work which Christ performed in the flesh is variously referred to as "atonement" (for sins), "salvation" (of **mankind**) and "propitiation" (or God's wrath). This work is one aspect of the total work in which he is now involved. When he announced "it is finished" it was this aspect that was completed.

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Since his ascension Christ has continued to work to bring to fulness that which he achieved at Calvary. The work to which Christ referred when he said "hither to my Father works, and I work" he continues to do and will continue to do, until he has delivered all things up to the Father that God might be all in all (I Cor 15:24).

This work includes;

- 1) He exercises authority over every principality and power (Col 2: 10).
- 2) he continues to exercise authority over his church (Eph 5:22).
- 3) He continues to add to his church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).
- 4) He continues to seek and to save that which is lost (Lk 19: 10).
- 5) He continues to live before the Father as our mediator (Heb 8:1-2, 1 Tim 2:5).
- 6) He continues to hold us up to the Father as blameless (2 Thess 5:23-24) and without spot or blemish (I Cor. 1:8).
- 7) He continues to lead us into all truth (by his Spirit, Jn 16:13).
- 8) He continues to fulfill the just requirements of the law in us (he is our righteousness).
- 9) He brings to fulness the work that he begun in us (Phil 1:6).
- 10) The government is upon his shoulders (Isa 9:6)
- 11) He continues to move among his Churches and is their life (Rev 1:20-2:1).

These are some of the actions in which the Son is now involved.

Our unity in Christ is a dynamic bond that God has wrought for the effective realisation of his own goal, it is not a static or purposeless relationship. But the realising of these goals has become perverted by human effort and becomes, instead, humanities self aggrandisement, Rather than being participants in a goal determined by God, we attempt to establish our own goals. These must ultimately come to nought. God called us into a life of purpose by including us in the building of his kingdom. But we exchanged this vocation for what we thought was the right to determine our own vocation, to set our own goals and build our own kingdoms -- What can our own little Kingdoms be worth when God in His glory brought heaven to earth?

Week 5

CHAPTER THREE

Participants in Vocation

Last week we considered living as dependents in view of the fact that God includes us in what he is about and that anything other than his program must ultimately come to nought. We looked briefly at the unique work of Christ into which he has drawn his people. Christ only ever performed his work under the Father's authority (Jn 5:19, 8:28 12:50, 14: 10), therefore this work was, and continues to be, the Father's work. The Father's will was the basis of his life.

This is a foundational point. Christ is the measure of true humanity therefore his understanding of life must also be the true measure of life, If Christ knew that fulness of life is only found in doing the Father's will then we too can know this with utmost confidence. But far more must be said about this or else we are left in the abismal state of having Christ only as our example (an example against which we cannot hope to measure)⁴. What must also be said is that Christ is not only the measure of true humanity, he is true humanity. In other words, God views all humanity according to their relationship to this one man, Jesus.

As we consider the next important principle, the distinction between Christ as our example and Christ as our substitute needs to be understood. If we forget this point we will see his obedience as the example for us to follow instead of his sacrifice offered to the Father on our behalf His life then becomes the model for ours instead of the life offered up to the Father in our place. And we will see his submission to the Father as the standard of submission that is demanded of us instead of the perfect submission offered to the Father in our name.

With this established we can move onto the next point.

This brings us to our next important principle; there is no ontological vocation apart from authority. The God who calls also maintains the call by virtue of his divine authority.

Authority. Authority is an essential aspect of the creator/creature relationship. However the fall has mar-red humanity at such a deep level that we have never experienced submission as it was intended to authority as it was intended. We live under perverted authority and offer only perverted submission. What we Offer as submission is more akin to rebellion than it is to submission. Non of this can be excused but it is the experience of fallen humanity and cannot be used as the basis for our understanding of God or of true humanity.

⁴ This problem occurs when we objectify the example and then attempt to measure up to its standard. We either fall foul of despair when we meet repeated failure or we deceive ourselves into thinking that we have achieved a degree of acceptability when compared to Christ and so fall foul of the sin of pride. Fundamentally the sin is not despair or pride but objectifying Christ.

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It is not coincidental that God has given instructions to children to obey their parents in the Lord for this is right (Deut 5:16 and Eph 6:2-3). It is the first commandment with a promise because it shows the child at an early age what it is to be a dependent creature. As the child grows, faithful parents teach the child how they live in dependence on God. They demonstrate by their own attitude around the home that God is a faithful provider and therefore there is no need to fret or scheme. These early lessons assist in the development of an attitude to life that sees God as the giver of all things, it enables human beings to be at rest in the hands of a faithful provider and this in turn enables the person to fare well (Deut 5:16, 6:3 and 18). The founding father of communism saw religion as the opium of the people because he saw in the faithful believer the ability to be at rest under the authority of God the all sovereign one.

Guidance. With this concept we are not simply dealing with security or confidence regarding our occupation. Guidance has to do with our confidence in God's ability to take us with him through his program for creation. But it not only has to do with what God does with, and through us, but more importantly it relates to our confidence in God's rationale, his reasons for doing things. And this of course relates to our trust in his person.

Guidance is a problem for believers because, all too often, we are "practical atheists". We have removed God from the picture and relegated him to the realm of piety. In so doing we have divorced him from the practical issues of daily existence. This means that when we are in a predicament that offers no solutions we have to turn on a spiritual tap. Suddenly we need to access a reservoir of spirituality that, thus far, we have not utilized because we think it is only for emergencies. We need, what I call "a theology of the fridge"⁵. We need the reassurance of knowing that there is, over all things, a benevolent and all powerful Father⁶ who by virtue of his own will has secured us and all that is legitimately ours. We need also to be assured that he does this without us even being aware of it. He does it because of who he is and not because of who we are.

Confidence in the midst of our humanity

The security which comes from knowing and loving God's authority and guidance in the midst of vocation has a major impact in all areas of our lives. This is especially true in areas such as decision making, choice and making mistakes. What does it mean to know the authority and guidance of the Father as a dynamic reality when we are faced with the weakness of our own humanity in this way.

It is precisely at this juncture that we learn about love, faith, divine discipline, the practicalities of justification and the divine intention for our earthiness (2 Cor. 4:7).

⁵ The fridge remains at work, silently performing its task even if we are oblivious to the fact. It is a fridge whether we believe in it or not.. it does its work irrespective of our acceptance of it as a fridge. However it is to our detriment if we do not accept it for what it is. We are worse off if we do not set it apart for its intended purpose. This setting apart for its intended purpose is part of the meaning of sanctification. And we are commanded to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

⁶ If we understood only that the one over us is an all powerful god then we could be justified in maintaining our distance because he might well be a capricious dictator. But Christ came to show us that the God whom we worship is Father, and it is this revelation that gives us comfort in our infirmities.

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To live as dependents in God's creation carries with it a demand of moral perfection. But not autonomous moral perfection. We are to depend not only on Christ to for all our material needs but also, and more importantly, to provide all our moral needs. The God who says be holy for I am holy is himself holy in us and for us. The God who says that love over looks faults does himself overlook all our faults. He who said that love is longsuffering is himself longsuffering toward us. He who says bear one anothers burdens does himself bear our burdens. And most importantly he who says "forgive seventy seven times seven" does himself first forgive us seventy seven times seven.

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Week 6

SINGING IN THE GARDEN - A FITTING RESPONSE

(Ps 92:1, 147: 1)

Singing is a universal expression of the heart, it voices our emotions, our feelings and our deepest thoughts and is therefore an expression of worship given to us by God. It is his song (Ps 42:8). We worship in this way in conjunction with all creation (Ps 98:1-9). Either we sing to idols or we sing to the living God. We who are in Christ are to praise his name. He is the one to whom we sing.

Eden, Israel, the Church and Song

God gave lavishly to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. They were to worship God by their activities in creation in the midst of this bounty. This was to be their culture. After the fall the people of Israel were given a focus of worship which reflected the bounty of the original garden and which pointed toward the bounty of the ultimate garden. This was the Tabernacle and later the Temple. For the construction of these two centers God, himself gave, and moved his people to give, lavishly (Ex 35: 5105 21-29, 36:5). The people's inheritance was a land of great bounty (Deut 6:3) that reflected the garden of God and pointed toward the ultimate inheritance (Num 13:23-27). The great bounty of God at creation is also reflected in the ornamentation of the priest's garments and the fruitfulness of the garden is seen in the fruit depicted in the priests vestments and the Temple ornaments.

The worship given to the people by God was to be a time of great joy and song (I Chron 13:8, 2Chron 5:11-13, Ps 33:1-3). The liturgical year was dotted with feasts (Deut 14:23-26, 16:13-15), celebrations, and sabbaths, and it was a perpetual testimony to the abundant giving of God. These occasions spoke to the people of the **past acts** of God in creation and redemption, the **present act** of God in providence and the **future act** of God in bringing his people into the fullness of their inheritance.

When understood as a whole, these things formed Israel's culture. It was a culture of song to the glory of God. These things were signs that were rooted in the past and which pointed to the future. The Temple was to be a place of great joy (Isa 56:7). Its ornamentation and decorations reminded the people of the original (and present) bounty of their creator God and at the same time they pointed forward to the time when their own transient nature would be superseded by the eternal reality of which they spoke. The Temple was important for Israel but originally there was no Temple in Eden, there is no Temple for us now (Jn 4:21-23), and ultimately we will see that God himself is the Temple (Rev 21:22). The garden of Eden was a microcosm of the creation and creation as we now know it is the precursor for the new heaven and new earth, as we sing now, we begin the song of the new creation (Isa 51:3).

Creatures with the Creator. We were created to share the Triune God's song. We were to knowingly and joyfully participate in his story, to sing out his song and tell out the

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wonderful deeds of God⁷. His story has become our story, his song has become our song. it must be said again that worship is not what we do it is our participation by grace in what he is doing.

Our need to worship is our need to be involved in His program, in His story or song. This is human anthology and song in the appropriate expression. (Ps 147:1)

The song we sing is not always a pleasure. Jesus sang on **the way out of the Last Supper** (Matt 26:30 and Mk 14:26) and Jewish tradition suggests that he sang from the second half of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118). Moses sang a song that was to stand as a testimony against the people (Deut 31:19).

God has given us a reason for singing and the song to sing. We sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3-4 from Exod 15:1-21 and Deut 32:1-44).⁸ The song of idolatrous humanity will be stilled when confronted by the song of the righteous (Isa 25:4-5, Ps 97:1-7).

Ontology. This has to do with things as they really are. Ontological life is true life, it is life as it as it was intended. Fulness of life comes to those who live ontologically. It is enjoyed by those who live as they were intended to live. A person who is not at peace in their creaturehood cannot know ontological life. It is life lived in willing dependence on God.

But something else needs to be said or we are left with a 'pie in the sky' religion that denies creation and therefore insults the creator. To be created in the image of God is a divine work that gives sinful humanity unimaginable status. We are created in the image of God. However, if we over stressing the divine focus of these words (in the image of God), we lose sight of the natural content. If we orientate ourselves too much towards the heavenly, we risk trying to sever our essential affinity with our environment. We are in the image of God - yes- but we are created and therefore intended to express our *imago dei* status here on earth with the rest of creation. Human ontology has to do with living as creatures in creation. Creation is the divinely appointed context for us to live out the *imago dei* and human creativity is the *modus operandi*.

This is important for our study because it means that to fulfill our **divine mandate** requires our full participation in creation. We fulfill our mandate by worshipping God as creatures, faithfully utilizing creation. Weavers weave, spinners spin, builders build, writers write, students study, house keepers keep house (Ex 35). Whatever God's vocation for us involves it is a heavenly/earthly occupation.

⁷ Consider the words of 182 and 192 in the New Creation Hymn (Red) Book.

⁸ The Aboriginal people tell We story of their homeland by singing its song. So we sing the song of our homeland (the heavenly city, whose builder and founder is God), the new heaven and new earth, and tell its story. The New Creation Hymn Book number 197.

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Week 7

COVENANT AND SUMMARY

When we consider the great truths of the faith we are confronted with a plethora of terms and ideas that relate to the discipline of theology but which are no longer a part of our daily life; they have their origin in another language and another culture. Each of these concepts have been researched and written about down through the centuries by many competent theologians and now they can be studied as separate entities that have their own sections and subsections.

There are dangers in this. First, it gives the impression that a person can come to know God, or become mature in the faith, by research or by an increase in knowledge, and this is not correct (can man by searching find out God? Job 11:7 and I Cor. 1:21. See also the rebuke in Isa 28:9-13). Second, it gives the impression that doctrines stand alone as though they were unrelated (Ps 119:160).

This compartmentalization of the faith (or of revelation) and the belief that biblical knowledge equals maturity, leads to a form of salvation by works. It sees the Scriptures as ethical imperatives (a code of conduct) instead of as a revelation of the covenant and therefore it sees the Gospel as contract rather than covenant.

Covenant and Theology. The doctrine of the covenant unifies all the other aspects of the Biblical Revelation. Whatever God does he does consistent with his own nature. The intra-Trinitarian covenant (the relationship which exists between the members of the Godhead) is expressed through extra-Trinitarian actions (the works of the Godhead as expressed in creation). The latter must conform to the former. The various actions, and the relevant theological constructs, must also, individually and corporately, reflect the intra-Trinitarian covenant. To put this another way, theological constructs cannot be understood in isolation, they can only be fully understood in their relationship to each other and their relationship to God.

Covenant and Life. Because we know peace with the God who loves us in covenant faithfulness, we are able to live in faithfulness to others. Covenant becomes the norm of life. Not only between us and God but also between people. We are able to let our "yes be yes and our no be no". We love without conditions or strings attached, and because we are not locked into reciprocity we are able to relate with freedom.

This is the life of dependence. We love freely because we know that any cost incurred has been, and will be, met by Christ. Such dependence is to know, as a constant state of mind, that God cannot deny himself, he will always keep covenant.

History is the unfolding of God keeping covenant. It is to be expected, therefore, that history will exhibit consistencies which, when viewed through the eyes of faith, enable us to formulate particular theological constructions. These constructions must, by nature of the case, share in the consistencies of the history of the God who keeps covenant.

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Trinity (Covenant)→history→faith→theological constructs→expressing faith
→consistent with history and covenant of Trinity.

Salvation. To consider this issue a bit further we will consider salvation as one theological construction.

The Trinitarian God has expressed himself in history by way of grace leading to salvation (Tit 2:11, Heb 9:26). Salvation is an expression of the covenant keeping God (Neh 1:5). It appears in history, flows with history and from history. In the midst of this process the Christian Church has formulated the insights given by God and this has resulted in the theological construct known as "salvation". However according to the principle given above, while the construct may be an identifiable entity it does not stand alone and can only be rightly understood in its relationship with all other theological insights. Put very simply, salvation has no meaning apart from the fall.

Salvation is both a past event and a lived experience. It involves the Old Testament, prophecy, judgement, miracles, incarnation, atonement, substitution, revelation. It also involves creation, the new creation, regeneration, conversion, reconciliation, justification, sanctification. It involves Theology, Christology, Pneumatology, ecclesiology, theodicy and eschatology. It involves the individual and the nations, Adamic Humanity and Christianity, Israel and the Church.

In spite of this complex theological network, the gift of salvation breaks open the heart of an individual, or a community, in pure simplicity. In the midst of an individual community's, or an individual person's, history, God in grace, working in and through history, brings the salve of salvation, the healing balm of Gilead (Jer 8:22), and its primary purpose is to bring wholeness to humanity. This is the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2) and it works in the fabric of society in the midst of history to bring history to its goal (its telos).

Worship. This is enjoyed as service. Culture and cultus are the one. We commune with the God of the garden as we care for the garden of God.

Worshipping God as Father, as creator and as redeemer, is one of the richest elements of living in the present in creation. Worship is the most powerful expressions of true humanity and it is the key to genuine serenity and fullness of life.

The full life that is ours now is the prelude to that which is ours in glory. This is eternal life and the true life which is God (I in 1:2, 5:11 and 5:20. Notice, eternal life is not a thing God gives but the life of the Son being lived in us). But in understanding worship we must go further. Since we know God's life to be propitiatory love (or love that sacrifices self for the well-being of others) then we can know the nature of the life to which we are being directed. To worship God and to love humanity, which are the two greatest commandments, are fulfilled as we live as crucified beings. Such a vocation is not an added dimension which the Jewish/Christian religion has given to society, it is the very nature of the triune God and therefore the very nature of humanity created in his image.