

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT UNDER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

Let's briefly review that last article. Remember, we were dealing with the critic who challenges the assumption that baptism replaces circumcision. The critic didn't believe that baptism represented a one-to-one replacement with circumcision, because baptism was of a different form than circumcision.

Many Baptists have implicitly adopted this argument without ever considering its merit. Does it really follow that something is not a suitable replacement because it is of a different form? Or is it possible for something to be of a different "form" and still be a compatible replacement?

Consider the dynamics of a trade, say, in the National Hockey League. In many cases one player (a forward) is traded for another who doesn't play the same position (defence). Nevertheless, because the trade is in the team's best interest, the replacement is entirely acceptable. The new player plays a different position (form) but he is the replacement all the same.

Or consider an analogy from transportation. A man uses a bike to get to work. The mode of transportation is his bike. However, with the coming of winter he decides to utilize a different mode of transportation—a car. Difference in form, but the same in substance—both are means of transportation.

It's clear from these analogies, that something may be a different form, but still equal the

substance of the issue, as in the case of the bike and the car.

This is precisely what I am arguing for with baptism. In fact, the argument is that much stronger when applied to baptism. Baptism may be of a different form than circumcision, but it is absolutely the same in substance. Baptism, like circumcision, is the sign and seal of the covenant. The biblical evidence for this is overwhelming.

BAPTISM: THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT UNDER THE OLD ADMINISTRATION

The fact that baptism replaces circumcision in the new administration is established by the following considerations: 1) in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul vigorously opposes the Judaizers who insist that circumcision is still a necessary rite in the new administration; 2) more importantly, in Christ's inaugural address, he set forth baptism as "the mark" of kingdom citizenship, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28:18-19).

It should be noted however, that baptism is not unique to Christianity. Other religions have practiced this rite. Hindus practice a form of baptism in the Ganges River. The Pharisees practiced various baptisms (Mark 7:1-4), and although John Baptist's baptism was a precursor to Christian baptism, it was different. John's baptism in no way equalled Christian baptism, just as his ministry did not equal Christ's ministry. His baptism called Jews to

renewed living. It demanded holy living in preparation of the coming Messiah. John's baptism was preparatory, transitional and introductory. This is why Apollos needed to be taught more fully the way of Christ since all he knew was the baptism of John (Acts 18:25). Since John's baptism was part of the old administration, its ritual import did not match the depth of Christian baptism.

Christian baptism is set apart from all of these precisely because it is the unequivocal sign of the covenant in the New Testament. That means that Christian baptism signifies the name of the living God being placed upon the believer. Christian baptism is thus a baptism in the name of God, or more precisely, in the name of the Triune God. It is God's signatory, or, if you prefer, it is His signature of ownership. In baptism, one is branded with the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and thus marked out as His. This is what sets it apart from all other baptisms and what makes it the unequivocal sign of the covenant in the new administration.

BAPTISM: THE SEAL OF SPIRITUAL UNION

Furthermore, as the sign of the new covenant, baptism signifies a number of spiritual realities. First, just as circumcision signified Israel's union with Jehovah, so does baptism. As the Westminster Confession of Faith eloquently states, it is the sign of a believer's "ingrafting into Christ." Christ is the great vine and we are the wild branches that have been grafted in by the master gardener-God. In other words, in baptism we've been united to Christ. Baptism is then the sign of our union with Christ.

Paul vividly illustrates the depth of our unity to Christ through baptism, saying: "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:3-11 emphasis added).

Baptism represents the most intimate union possible. It is a union more intimate than marriage, at least on a spiritual level. It represents our spiritual union and affinity with Christ in every aspect. When He died, we died. When he was buried, we were buried. When He rose, we rose! And where He sits, we sit-in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

We are in Christ. We are transplanted out of Adam and into the body of Christ. This is why Paul exhorts us to live for God "in Christ Jesus our Lord." Baptism represents the union a believer has with God in Christ.

BAPTISM: THE SEAL OF SANCTIFICATION

Second, Christian baptism signifies the work of holy sanctification. Just as circumcision signified the cutting away of defilement, baptism signifies the washing away of sin. Just as the act of circumcision vividly and painfully illustrated cutting away the hardheartedness of a sinful heart, the application of water in baptism is expressive of the washing and cleansing of a sinful nature.

Some have down played this aspect, arguing that that there is no "specific" New Testament
-continued inside back cover

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

MAN AND GOD IN RELATIONSHIP - PART 3



Since fellowship with God is cut-off by the terms of the covenant of works, mans only hope is grace. And God did establish a new covenant with man, a covenant of grace. In this article we want briefly to look at the administration of this gracious covenant.

In 1 Peter 1:2, 3 we find that God's gracious dealings with man have an element from eternity and another manifested in time. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." They are elect in eternity and begotten in time.

Now covenant, as we have previously seen, defines the relationship we have with God. And since those that are saved are saved according to and agreeably to the foreknowledge of God, this means that God has from eternity past defined this relationship. This means that from one angle the covenant of grace existed in eternity past. We saw in the last article that this covenant was made between the persons of the Godhead with Christ as the federal head of His people. The question that remains to be answered is 'how does God have this covenant administered in the time of life on earth?'

The answer to this question has been fraught with controversy throughout the history of the church. There are a few, basic paradigms that have been followed; each attended with varying nuances. One heretical view is a dispensational understanding which teaches that God's plans

with Adam and Israel have failed. He subsequently set up a new covenant that merely requires faith rather than obedient works. There is also an errant view, which sees the church of the new covenant as a parenthesis between the old covenant failure and a future re-establishing of the old covenant worship of God and the reign of the Son of David. The thorniest divisions occur within the Reformed branch of the church itself as well as the differences between many Calvinistic Baptists who hold to a covenantal view of scripture. Like those of a reformed covenantal view, they understand that God has administered His covenant of grace in the old dispensation but now since the redemptive work of Christ deals with His people in the terms of the new covenant of grace. The difference lies in how and where the old and new covenants differ from each other.

At the outset I would like to say that while my theological commitments are in line with those of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I do recognise that God has His people in many different expressions of His church. I gladly receive them all as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Scripture teaches that no one has a perfect biblical understanding, including ourselves, so we do not place ourselves above others. We hold to those convictions of ours, as we understand them from scripture, praying that God would grant us His Spirits illumination. We are committed to the reformed hermeneutics (principles of interpretation), including that the scriptures are to interpret the scriptures. "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." 1 Corinthians 2:13 The fact that there are differences amongst be-

lievers proves that we are not yet made perfect. When we err, it is sin, and therefore we need to be greatly humbled, praying that God would cleanse us of secret faults and guide us into His truth.

Another thing also needs to be stated at this juncture. I have no intention to develop a complete system of covenant theology. There are many good resources to be referred to for an in-depth study. A good, complete overview of our position can be found in the book *"Children of the Promise"* by Robert Booth, available from P&R Publishing. My purpose on touching this subject is with the view to keeping families in focus. In other words, to see how new covenant administration ought to shape our family living.

After the fall of man in the garden, God came to Adam with a promise. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15 Though this 'proto evangelion' is full of theological implications, there are a few basic observations that are germane to our discussion. The first is that Adam would have seed, hence humanity would not die an immediate and ultimate death. Second, through the promise of a Seed, life was being extended to Adam and his race. In the promise there was hope for Adam and those in union to him, that he represented, through the Seed. Or to say it in other words, the only hope for Adam's race, lay in the promise that God had made to Adam.

With the progression of history, there was also a progression of redemptive revelation. While God in justice destroyed the world of Noah's day with the flood, Noah, together with his wife, his sons and his son's wives were rescued in the ark. With Noah, God re-established His

covenant. The terms included many of the terms that He made to Adam (Genesis 9:1-3 "So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.), as well as further revelation as to His redemptive purposes. (Genesis 9:11 "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy all the earth.")

One of the things that makes the covenant with Noah so interesting is the inclusion of Noah's family in the benefits and the expression of the covenant. "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you." Genesis 9:9 And the reason that the family is here included in the covenant terms, is given by God Himself. "Then the Lord said to Noah, "Come into

How does God have this covenant administered in the time of life on earth?

the ark, you and your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." Genesis 7:1 Because Noah was righteous by faith, God included him with his family in covenant relationship. God was not only interested in the redemption of Noah as an individual, but also in all that relates to the life of this individual. His family is included and the society of his day is also benefited for God establishes capital punishment for murder. This is for the good order of the societal institution. So society benefits from the covenant God made with Noah and his seed. Is your relationship to God a manifest blessing to your children? Your life directly shapes and affects the lives of your progeny.

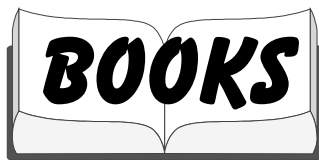
-Bill Kroesbergen

YOUTH'S CORNER

I-A-H NAMES

Several men mentioned in the Bible had names that ended with the same last three letters - IAH. How many can you identify without looking up the Bible verse?

1. I had charge of rebuilding the wall and Temple at Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:2)
2. I was a king of Judah, the son of Ahab. I ruled for only 2 years. (I Kings 22:40)
3. I, too was a king of Judah, the son of Joash. I ruled for 23 years. (II Kings 14:1)
4. I was the Old Testament prophet who said, "Here am I, send me."
5. I was a king of Judah who loved God. God added 15 years to my life when I prayed for healing. (II Kings 20:1-11)
6. I was only 16 years old when I was made king of Judah. (II Kings 15:1-2)
7. Nebuchadnezzar made me a vassal-king of Judah. (II Kings 24:17)
8. People call me "the weeping prophet."
9. I prophesied in Judah and am known as the fourth Minor Prophet.
10. I wrote an Old Testament book that has 8 visions and am known as the eleventh Minor Prophet.
11. I was only 8 years when I became king. (II Kings 22:1,2)
12. I was a royal prince. The prophet Jeremiah was thrown in my dungeon. (Jer. 21:1)



BOOKS IN REVIEW

Every so often God shapes and qualifies an individual and uses him in such a way that the power and work of God, draws the attention, not only of the church, but also of the world. Jonathan Edwards was just such a one. God's

power to bring multitudes to conversion and godliness in a short span was evident in the revivals that Edwards experienced in his ministry.

Edwards' own life was characterised by a consistent and diligent piety that was not abrasive, but rather displayed the loveliness of his Saviour. His brilliant mind probed deeply into matters of science, philosophy, and theology. His penetrating analysis of religion causes the reader to feel that God searches the deep things of the heart.

Iain Murray's goal 'to further encourage the reading of Edwards himself' has been helped by this biography. Not only does the reader get a taste of Edwards' thinking, but he is also given a window into the everyday life of an eminent man of God. May God raise up many more men who care only to gain the approval of God Himself.

-Bill Kroesbergen

Jonathan Edwards
-A New Biography-
by Iain Murray
Banner of Truth

MISSION SPOTLIGHT



MISSION TO UGANDA

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our lives this past year have been nothing like we planned or expected. On August 25, 2001 we moved into our newly built little home on the plains of Karamoja. Within just a few months of our settling in, it became apparent that we would need to return to Mbale to carry on the work there due to the fact that the three families serving in Mbale had returned to the states. It was a difficult move to make. We had become very attached to the people of Karamoja and to the ministry to which we had been called, but it was obvious that the need in Mbale was one which we were best able to meet. Tony would take up teaching responsibilities at Westminster Theological College and I would return to my duties at Covenant Primary School. The truth of the catechism's explanation of God's providence became a reality to me over this period of transition - "God's most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions." Though I didn't understand God's purposes in our having to move, I could rest in knowing that God does all things, and he does all things well!

We moved into the house that had been occupied by the Falks before us and started making it our home. Mbale town had been "home" to us for the first four and a half years we were in Uganda, but for the year we lived in Karamoja - Mbale had come to feel like the "big city". Now we had returned and were able to renew friendships with many in the ex-patriate community and begin our new responsibilities. One of the delightful aspects of the move to Mbale was that we could begin hosting our teammates from Karamoja whenever they had business in Mbale.

Tony began teaching in February 2002. Since he was the only "professor" at the theological college, he taught all 8 classes. He enjoys teaching and though the teaching responsibility was great he really was happy to return to the classroom. During this semester, the eastern presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Uganda was going through some growing pains. Differing philosophies of ministry have created opportunities for young men to have to work through some biblical principles of presbyterian polity. Tony has literally spent hundreds of hours on our front lawn under the mango tree, counseling these men and helping them work through these issues from a Biblical perspective. There are many young men who have come to understand Presbyterian church government and want to follow the proper procedures, but they have many questions about practical application. So, besides his teaching ministry, Tony has been counseling and guiding the men of this young denomination through some very important decisions which will have long range impact on the church. It has been wearing on him, yet, great has been the faithfulness of our God! And it is encouraging to report that at the General Assembly of the PCU in June, a committee was formed to investigate the problems in eastern presbytery and thus far, that committee has been very diligent in its course of action. Please pray for strength and wisdom for Tony as he teaches at WTC this term and that the special committee from GA would justly resolve the problems facing this denomination.

The Rev. and Mrs. Barry James will be joining us this month to help with the teaching responsibilities at Westminster Theological College. Barry and Anne served here about 2 years ago for several months helping with the work in Mbale. We look forward to their coming and the fellowship it will provide to our family. David and Sunshine Okken will be returning to the states in October for the birth of their baby in early November. Because of this, Tony will take over the preaching responsibilities in Karamoja - so having Barry and Anne here to help with the work in Mbale will free Tony to relieve David in Karamoja. Please pray for the James as they get settled and begin their duties in Mbale. Also pray for Dave and Sunshine as they travel home and throughout their stay in the United States. Pray that God would bless this new covenant child as he joins the Okken family.

Last April our prayers were answered and we were able to obtain visas for our boys to travel to the United States. We left Uganda in June and spent 7 weeks traveling to six different states to visit friends and relatives. It was a blessed trip. We were able to see many people who had heard about the boys and had prayed for them and the adoption process over the years. After brief visits to New York and Pennsylvania, we spent some time in Texas visiting Tony's father; in California visiting two of our children, Matthew and his wife Kelly, and Christy and many members of our extended family and then concluded our visit with a 3 week stay in North Carolina visiting Toby and Rachel, our son and daughter-in-law. We had the pleasure of spending time with our 21 month old

grandson, Steven, and were there to witness the birth of our new little grandson, Jackson Thomas. What joy filled our hearts to see Toby's little family increase and see God honoring his promises of covenant faithfulness.

Though, as I said at the beginning, this past year has been incredibly different than we would have imagined. We have been reminded over and over again of God's faithfulness to us. God has given us so many promises and we are reminded of them each day as we read his word. Though we know those promises - they are often more precious to us as we go through difficult times. This year has been that kind of year for us...changes in our family, our home, our children, our ministry. Yet what has remained the same? The promise of Lamentations 3. We have been experiencing God's mercies each day and so we can wholeheartedly proclaim with Jeremiah: Great is thy faithfulness, O Lord!

Thank you for your prayers and support. In Christ's Service,
Kathleen & Tony Curto (OPC Missionaries in Uganda)

THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT UNDER THE OLD ADMINISTRATION CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

text that "expressly" establishes that baptism signifies purification. Here is why we know baptism, like circumcision represents purification. First, Paul's description of our intimate union with Christ is predicated upon purification.

"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death-Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts" (Rom. 6:1-2, 11-12).

Second, Paul connects baptism with the purifying act of circumcision, saying, "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:11-12).

Third, the apostle Peter attributes the quality of spiritual washing to baptism, saying, "There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the

answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). The idea expressed is that baptism signifies internal cleansing. Whereas water actually removes dirt and filth, baptism signifies the washing away of a sinful conscience.

And finally, remember that without purification it is impossible to be united to God in Christ (Jn. 3:5). Christian baptism, like circumcision, signifies and seals sanctification.

BAPTISM: THE SEAL OF JUSTIFICATION

Finally, just like circumcision did, baptism signifies justification-for if to be, "in Christ," means to be justified, baptism, by good and necessary reason, must signify justification. Paul alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 6:11 saying, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Although baptism is not his central point it is an inescapable application since the believer's justification is in "the name of the Lord Jesus" and baptism is seal of God's name on the believer.

CONCLUSION:

It is very important that I am not misunderstood. I want to stress that I'm NOT arguing for baptismal-regeneration, or consequently circumcision-regeneration. Neither circumcision, nor baptism, have salvific efficacy in and

of themselves. They are not magical. When I speak of their function as a “sign” and “seal” this is very different from saying that they convey and infuse divine power. Rather, I am arguing that they are an outward, visible testimony and guarantee of an inward, spiritual truth.

Of course, the critic will declare that I’ve conceded the argument, since many adults who have been baptized as infants, have left Christ and the Church and thereby evidence that the spiritual reality was never really present. Yes, it is true. Some adults who were baptized as infants, and grew up in the Church, later rebel and turn from Christ. However, this problem isn’t unique to Pedo-baptists. Apostasy is just as prevalent among Baptists as it is with us. In fact, given our culture of unbelief, it is certain that just as many adults, baptized as adults in Baptist churches apostatize at some later date, as Pedo-baptists do. Therefore, keeping the rite of baptism until someone is of the age and maturity to make a “credible” confession of repentance and belief doesn’t remedy this problem in the least. People will always change,

and unfortunately some people will turn from Christ.

Regardless, the salvific nature of baptism as a sign and seal of union with Christ is not altered by the reality of sin and apostasy. And more importantly all these areas demonstrate that Baptism is exactly the same in substance as Circumcision. Just like circumcision, baptism is now the sign of the covenant in the new administration. Just like circumcision, baptism signifies our union with God. Just like circumcision, baptism is the seal of sanctification, and just like circumcision, baptism signifies and seals our justification in Christ. Undoubtedly, baptism is a different form, but in substance it is exactly the same as circumcision. Baptism is a one-to-one replacement. Therefore, if circumcision was placed upon infants under the old administration, what good biblical explanation is there for withholding baptism from infants today? I tell you there are none!

-Tristan Emmanuel

Elders: Mr Barry Everts
1405 Seaton Road
RR#1 Cambridge, ON
N1R 5S2
(519) 623-8208
beverts@exculink.com

Mr Cope Jonkman
RR#1
Paris, ON
N3L 3E1
(519) 448-1068
cjonkman@exculink.com

Deacons: Mr Ray Halma
2310 5th Conc Rd W
RR#2 Branchton, ON
N0B 1L0
(519) 622-4389
rhalma000@sympatico.ca

Mr Evert Winkels
52 Selkirk Street
Cambridge, ON
N1S 1Z3
(519) 622-5745
ewinkels@sympatica.ca

GRACE COVENANT CHURCH

For Christ’s Crown and Covenant
Services: Sundays at 11:15 am and 6:00 pm
(meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church, Sheffield)
P.O. Box 12-4
Sheffield, ON
L0R 1Z0
(519) 624-5920
email - gcc@exculink.com
web site - <http://www.exculink.com/~gcc/index.htm>