



Instructor: Pastor Jon

Class Summary: This lesson focuses on what Reformed Theology is and how their theological covenants impact their hermeneutic and theological conclusions.

What does it mean to be “reformed”

Reformed Soteriologically- (John MacArthur Jr.)

- "I was raised in a dispensational environment; there's no question... But, as I got into seminary, I began to test some of those things. I have been perhaps aptly designated as a leaky dispensationalist....Here's my dispensationalism – I'll give it to you in one sentence: there's a difference between the church and Israel – period!... At the same time in seminary, I began to be exposed to reading among more Reformed theologians... And over the years of exegeting the scripture, it has again yielded to me a Reformed theology...." "I was convinced of it (Reformed theology) when I started and I'm more convinced of it now as I've gone through the text. I was convinced of it when I started because I read so many noble men who have held that view (Reformed Theology). It was more at that point hero worship, and now it's become my own."

Reformed Theologically- (RC Sproul)

- "Covenant theology is a hermeneutical framework that seeks to understand the Bible according to its covenantal structure. Covenant theology is particularly associated with Reformed theology, as the Reformed tradition has devoted much attention to studying the biblical covenants. As Dr. R.C. Sproul frequently observed, "Reformed theology is covenant theology."~ Definition from ligonier.org
- Covenant theology is "It is what is nowadays called a hermeneutic—that is a way of reading the whole Bible that is itself part of the overall interpretation of the Bible..." ~J.I. Packer

We have much in common:

- The authority of God's Word
- The Triunity of the Godhead
- Salvation by grace through faith
- The existence of the universal and necessity of the local church
- The sovereignty of God
- The future eternal state
- The person and work of Jesus Christ
- Many more areas...

The hermeneutics of Reformed Theology- "Covenant theology is a hermeneutical framework"

- Claim to interpret Scripture literally. In fact...
 - "amillennarians (Covenant Theologians), not dispensationalists, interpret prophecy literally in that they follow the literal sense of how the writers of the NT interpret OT prophecy."
 - "Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism; in Dispensationalism it has been carried to an extreme. We have seen that this literalism found its most thoroughgoing expression in the claim that Israel must mean Israel, that it cannot mean the Church, that the Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel concern the earthly Israel, and that the Church was a mystery, unknown to the prophets and first made known to the apostle Paul. Now if the principle of interpretation is adopted that Israel always means Israel, that it does not mean the Church, then it follows of necessity that practically all of our information regarding the millennium will concern a Jewish or Israelitish age." ~ OT Allis
- The issue of how the testaments relate to one another
 - "How the Old and New Testaments relate to one another is one of the central issues in biblical hermeneutics" ~ Wayne House
 - "It is difficult to think of any problem that is more important or fundamental than the relationship between the testaments" ~Paul Feinberg

- "The way in which one understands the relationship of subsequent revelation to antecedent revelation. Does subsequent revelation merely expand and add to the knowledge God previously revealed, or does it expand and alter this knowledge in some way?" ~Brad Klassen
- Covenant Theology holds to the priority of the New Testament over the Old Testament
 - "Here is the basic watershed between a dispensational and non dispensational theology. Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A non dispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament" ~George Ladd
 - "As we read the Bible, we see that earlier texts never explicitly interpret later texts. Earlier texts provide the interpretive context of later texts, but earlier texts never cite later texts and explain them directly." ~ Tom Hicks
 - "...the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament and that a totally and exclusively literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is not justified." ~Anthony Hoekema
- An illustration of this put to practice
 - Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:13-15
 - "In Hosea this is not a prophecy at all but a historical affirmation that God had called Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. However, Matthew recognizes Jesus to be God's greater son and deliberately turns a historical statement into a prophecy. This is a principle which runs throughout biblical prophecy. The Old Testament is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event." ~George Ladd
 - Hosea the prophet ministered during the eighth century BC and focused his attention primarily on the northern kingdom of Israel. During the early part of Hosea's ministry, Jeroboam II ruled over Israel and the northern kingdom enjoyed a good deal of prosperity. But spiritually and morally, the Israelites were bankrupt, having fallen into idolatry that would ultimately cause God to drive them out of their land in 722 BC. The people were in a sad condition indeed, and part of what made it so tragic was that the people had failed to be what

God called them to be—a royal priesthood and a light to the nations (Ex. 19:5–6; Isa. 42:6). This failure occurred despite God's having graciously adopted Israel as His son, as Hosea 11:1 indicates. Israel was not true to its filial identity and was finally cast out of the land. But Hosea also saw that God's anger against His people would not last forever; He would provide a renewed Israel who would serve the Lord faithfully (vv. 2–12; see 2:14–23).

That hope for a new Israel—a true Israel that would embody all that God called Israel to be—persisted across the centuries into the New Testament era. This hope was finally fulfilled in the incarnation of God's true Son by nature, Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us that Jesus fulfills Hosea 11 (Matt. 2:13–15). He is the true Israel, the faithful Israel who succeeds where old covenant Israel failed. Like ancient Israel, He came up out of Egypt, passed through the waters, and was tested in the wilderness (2:13–15; 3:13–4:11; see Ex. 12:40–42; 14:1–31; 16:4). Unlike old covenant Israel, however, Jesus passed the test. He is therefore worthy to be called God's Son because of who He is in His deity and because of what He accomplished in His humanity.

The good news of the gospel tells us that we can be the true Israel of God as well. If we are in Christ, we share in the privileges and relationship He enjoys as God's true Son. We are not sons of God by nature; rather, we are sons of God by adoption, His beloved children in Christ. As such, we inherit all of the promises given to old covenant Israel. Those promises of God that Israel would rule over her enemies and enjoy abundant covenant blessings (for example, Isa. 14:1–2)—those promises are for all of God's people, the true Israel of God consisting of Jews and Gentiles who are united to Christ by faith alone. In Him we are the true Israel of God, heirs of the glorious destiny promised to God's old covenant people (Zeph. 3:14–20). ~ligonier.org

- Since Christ is the "true Israel" and we are in Christ, then all the Old Testament promises made to "Israel" now belong to us in Christ and not to ethnic Israel.

- Covenant theology unapologetically practices Sensus Plenior (fuller meaning)-
 - "Sensus Plenior is a Latin phrase that means "fuller sense" or "fuller meaning". It is used in Biblical exegesis to describe a deeper meaning in the Bible that's beyond what the original author intended."
 - "The reality of sensus plenior undergirding the New Testament's use and development of the Old Testament highlights a second critical distinctive of the Bible's intrinsic hermeneutic. Namely, because the New Testament expands, develops and clarifies much of what God was pleased to reveal to His people throughout the Old Testament, the New Testament must take interpretive priority to the Old Testament." ~Dewey Dovel
 - Illustration: The book of Song of Solomon- "It is clearly about the love of Christ for His bride, the church"
 - Illustration: "The story of David and Goliath is clearly about Christ's defeat of Satan upon the cross"
- Covenant theology often leans heavily upon and even at times elevates historical theology to a position of authority in their interpretation of Scripture.
 - Ill. Sproul Page 12 "The Study of History" cf. with pages 30-31- Discussion of infant baptism.
 - "...we would appeal to the Cahier's men, to Wiersinga and to others, to build their hermeneutical procedures on the theology of Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, etc., (emphasis mine) and then in terms of it to challenge all men to repentance and faith in the self-identifying Christ of Scripture instead of making compromise with unbelief" ~ Cornelius Van Til
 - Very similar to what some have called Confessional Interpretation, Canonical Interpretation, Systematic Interpretation or, depending on definition, Theological Interpretation. - Soft Catholicism
 - A reliance upon Theologies, Creeds, and Confessions in one's interpretation

The framework of Reformed Theology- "That seeks to understand the Bible according to its covenantal structure"

- The identity of the covenants
 - Extra-biblical or Theological covenants
 - Covenant of redemption- " The covenant of redemption may be defined as the agreement between the Father, giving the Son as Head and Redeemer of the elect, and the Son, voluntarily taking the place of those whom the Father had given Him." ~ Berkhof
 - Covenant of works- The Westminster Confession of Faith describes this covenant as one "wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience"
 - Covenant of grace- That gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience." (To the elect and their children- "As long as the children of the covenant do not reveal the contrary, we shall have to proceed on the assumption that they are in possession of the covenant life" ~ Berkhof)
 - Biblical covenants
 - Abrahamic covenant- Genesis 15 (land)
 - Mosaic Covenant- Exodus 19-24 (19:8)
 - "Palestinian" Covenant- Deuteronomy 29-30 (regathering)
 - Davidic Covenant- II Samuel 7
 - New Covenant- Jeremiah 31:31
- The nature of the covenants
 - Conditional- "All God's covenants have conditions we must fulfill to receive covenant blessings—even the Abrahamic covenant, which is often considered to be wholly unconditional... Though we must meet certain covenant conditions, salvation is ultimately all of grace because God elects only some to salvation, giving them the ability to trust Him, which is not ours by nature as Adam's fallen children. Nevertheless, the elect of God prove their election when they repent and trust in Christ for salvation. If we don't have faith and repentance, we cannot presume that

we are elect, and if we are elect, we will have faith and repentance (Acts 13:48)."- ligonier.org

- Unconditional- If you are one of the elect then the covenants are in a sense unconditional and your meeting its demands is also unconditional.

The doctrine of Reformed Theology

"So dispensationalism shapes one's eschatology and ecclesiology. That is the extent of it. Pure dispensationalism has no ramifications for the doctrines of God, man, sin, or sanctification. More significantly, true dispensationalism makes no relevant contribution to soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation." "I have been perhaps aptly designated as a leaky dispensationalist....Here's my dispensationalism – I'll give it to you in one sentence: there's a difference between the church and Israel – period!..." ~MacArthur

- Bibliology-
- Theology Proper-
- Christology-
- Pneumatology-
- Anthropology-
- Hamartiology-

- Soteriology-
- Israelology-
- Ecclesiology-
- Eschatology-

Bibliography and Suggested Books, and Articles

Books:

Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, John Feinberg editor, Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 1988.

Perspectives on Israel and the Church, Chad Brand editor, Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, Inc. 2015.

Prolegomena on Biblical Hermeneutics and Method, Christopher Cone, Hurst, Texas: Tyndale Seminary Press. 2012.

There Really is a Difference, Renald Showers, Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. 1990.

Understanding End Times Prophecy, Paul Beware, Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press. 1995.

What is Reformed Theology, R.C. Sproul, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books. 1997.

Articles:

Dismantling Dispensationalism: It is Inconsistent on Sensus Plenior and New Testament Interpretive Priority, Dewey Dovel, <https://covenantconfessions.com/dismantling-dispensationalism-by-dewey-dovel/>

Hermeneutics: New Testament Priority, Tom Hicks, <https://founders.org/articles/hermeneutics-new-testament-priority/>

Is the Old Testament Unintelligible without the New? Important Considerations on the Relationship Between the Testaments, Brad Klassen, <https://blog.tms.edu/is-the-old-testament-unintelligible-without-the-new>

'Radical Reinterpretation' New Testament Priority , and the Hermeneutics of George Ladd, Michael Vlach, <https://mikevlach.blogspot.com/2011/07/radical-reinterpretation-new-testament.html>

The Active Obedience of Christ, Myron Houghton, The Faith Pulpit, <https://faithpulpit.faith.edu/posts/the-active-obedience-of-christ>

Trust the New Testament; and Give it Logical Priority, Kirk Miller, <https://kirkmillerblog.com/2014/02/26/trust-the-new-testament-and-give-it-logical-priority/>

Why Dispensationalism Matters, Christopher Cone, <https://drcone.com/2018/10/20/why-does-dispensationalism-matter-slides/>