

# THE LORD'S - COVENANTS OF PROMISE

By Kevin E. Hughes

Why Study the **Covenants** in the Bible ?

**Covenants** are a **Framework** for a **Biblical Theology**

Or a way of looking for **God's** Overall Plan for **Man** through **Covenant Promises**

## How Many **Covenants** are there in the Bible ?

The list of **Covenants** given by most **Commentators** writing on the **Covenants**

are only referring to what **they** see as the **Major Covenants** or **Primary Covenants** in the **Bible**.

Most **Commentators** don't give **you** all the **Covenants** in the **Bible** but just the most significant **Covenants**, necessary to understand **God's promises** according to **their** particular **Biblical Theology**.

Other **Commentators** explain that there are **Major Covenants** and **Minor Covenants**, like when talking about **Major** and **Minor Prophets** in scripture.

Other **Commentators** say that there are **Major Covenants**

with **Sub-Covenants** or **Subordinate Covenants** or **Supplementary Covenants** underneath **them**.

## How Many **Major Covenants** are there in the Bible ?

A. **Major Covenants** > as Viewed by different **Theologians**

1. One **Major Covenant** > from **Reformed Theology**
  - a. One **Covenant** of **Grace** or One overarching **Covenant**
2. Two **Major Covenants** > from **Reformed Theology**
  - a. **Augustine**, "On the Spirit and the Letter", Chapter 18 and 27, 412 AD
    - i. **Old Testament** and **New Testament**
  - b. 1<sup>st</sup> **Covenant** of **Works** and 2<sup>nd</sup> **Covenant** of **Grace**, 1647 Westminster Confession, **WCF 7:3**
    - i. **Covenant** of **Grace**: under 2 **Administrations**, 1<sup>st</sup> under **Law** and 2<sup>nd</sup> under **Gospel**
  - c. 1<sup>st</sup> **Old Covenant** and 2<sup>nd</sup> **New Covenant** OR **Mosaic Covenant** and **New Covenant**
  - d. **First Covenant**, and **Second Covenant**, **Read** **Heb 8:7, 8:13, 9:1, 9:15, 9:18**
  - e. **Law Covenant** and **Grace Covenant**,
3. Three **Major Covenants** > from **Reformed Theology**
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> **Covenant** of **Redemption** and 2<sup>nd</sup> **Covenant** of **Works** and 3<sup>rd</sup> **Covenant** of **Grace**, that progressively unfolds **OT Covenants** until completed in **NT**, 2<sup>nd</sup> **London Confession**, **LCF 7**
    - i. **Second London Baptist Confession**, also called the **1689 Baptist Confession of Faith**,
    - ii. Most **Reformed Theology** today, as R. C. Sproul, Wayne Grudem, others....
4. Five **Major Covenants** > from **Dispensational Theology**
  - a. Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New **Covenant**
5. Six **Major Covenants** > from **Dispensational Theology**
  - a. Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New **Covenant**
  - b. Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Priestly, Davidic, and New **Covenant**, TMS
6. Seven **Major Covenants** > from **Dispensational Theology**
  - a. Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Priestly, Davidic, and New **Covenant**
  - b. Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New **Covenant**
7. Eight **Major Covenants** > from **Dispensational Theology**
  - a. Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, and New **Covenant**.

### Notice:

**Reformed Theology** (**Covenant Theology**), adds 2 or 3 **Theological Covenants**

**Dispensational Theology**, does not have any **Theological Covenants**

## How Many Minor Covenants or Subordinate Covenants are there in the Bible ?

### A. Minor Covenants

1. **Minor Covenants** > All **Covenants** in Bible that are Not seen as **Major Covenants**
  - a. certain **Covenants** in Bible, seen as less important or restate **Major Covenant** Provisions.

### B. **Sub-Covenants** or **Subordinate Covenants** or **Temporal Covenants** > from **Reformed Theology**

1. Different **Administrations** of the **Covenant of Grace**, from **Gen 3:15** onward, **WCF 7:3**
2. R. C. Sproul, **Sub-Covenants** are, all **Covenants** under a **Covenant of Grace**
3. A. W. Pink, “**Subordinate** systems (**Covenants**)  
or “**Temporal** (Time, Not Eternal, Material, Non-Spiritual) **Covenants**”, Book, P. 5

## Covenants seen as under Various Dispensations

“In **theology**, one meaning of the term **dispensation** is as a distinctive **arrangement** or **period in history** that forms the **framework** through which **God** relates to **mankind**.” [wikipedia](#)

1. **Covenants** under **Dispensations** > from **Reformed Theology** (**Covenant Theology**)
  - a. **Covenant of Grace, Administered** > under Different **Dispensations**, **WCF 7:6**
  - b. **WCF**: “There are not, therefore, **two covenants** of **grace** differing in substance, but one (**covenant** of **grace**) and the same (**covenant**) under **various dispensations**” **WCF 7:6**
  - c. **WCF**: **Covenant of Grace, First Administered** > under One **Dispensation** during “the Time of the Law” in Old Testament, to **the Jews**, **WCF 7:2-6**
  - d. **WCF**: **Covenant of Grace, Second Administered** > under Another **Dispensation** during “the Time of the Gospel” in New Testament, to Both **Jew** and **Gentile**, **WCF 7:2-6**
2. **Covenants** under **Dispensations** > from **Dispensational Theology**
  - a. **Dispensationalism**: usually **7 or 8 Dispensations** with **7 or 8 Covenants**
  - b. **8 Covenants**: Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, New **Covenants**
  - c. **7 Dispensations**: of innocence, of conscience, of human government, of promise, of Law, of Grace, and of the millennial kingdom.
  - d. **8 Dispensations**: of innocence, of conscience, of human government, of promise, of Law, of grace, of the millennial kingdom, of the Eternal Kingdom

### Notice:

#### **Dispensational Theology,**

is most known for using **Dispensations** to explain **their Theology**

#### **Reformed Theology (Covenant Theology),**

is most known for using **Theological Covenants** to explain **their Theology**

BUT, Both **Reformed Theology** and **Dispensational Theology,**

use **Dispensations** with their **Theology**

AND, Both **Reformed Theology** and **Dispensational Theology,**

use **Covenants** with their **Theology**

### Notice:

#### **Dispensational Theology,**

follows **their Covenants** chronologically as progressively revealed in OT, Genesis to Malachi

#### **Reformed Theology (Covenant Theology),**

Does Not follow their **Covenants** chronologically as progressively revealed in OT.

**It** uses **Covenant of Redemption**, revealed in NT first, (“New is in the Old Concealed”)

**It** then uses **Covenant of Works**, revealed in the OT

**It** then uses **Covenant of Grace**, revealed in the OT

## WCF - Westminster Confession of Faith (mostly Reformed Presbyterian Churches)

**Read** The Westminster Confession of Faith is a Reformed confession of faith.

Drawn up by the 1646 Westminster Assembly as part of the Westminster Standards to be a confession of the Church of England, it became and remains the "subordinate standard" (to the Bible) of doctrine in the Church of Scotland and has been influential within Presbyterian churches worldwide.

In 1643, the English Parliament called upon "learned, godly and judicious Divines" to meet at Westminster Abbey in order to provide advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government and discipline of the Church of England. Their meetings, over a period of five years, produced the confession of faith, as well as a (Westminster) Larger Catechism and a Shorter Catechism.

For more than three hundred years, various churches around the world have adopted the confession and the catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the Bible.

The Westminster Confession of Faith was modified and adopted by Congregationalists in England in the form of the Savoy Declaration (1658).

Likewise, the Baptists of England modified the Savoy Declaration to produce the Second London Baptist Confession (1689).

English Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists would together (with others) come to be known as Nonconformists, because they did not conform to the Act of Uniformity (1662) establishing the Church of England as the only legally approved church, though they were in many ways united by their common confessions, built on the Westminster Confession. *Wikipedia*

The confession is a systematic exposition of Calvinist orthodoxy, influenced by Puritan and covenant theology. It includes doctrines common to most of Christendom such as the Trinity and Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, and it contains doctrines specific to Protestantism such as sola scriptura and sola fide. Its more controversial features include the covenant of works with Adam,.... *Wikipedia*

When the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was formed in 1789, it adopted the Westminster standards, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.

## 1647 - Westminster Confession of Faith [Reformed/Covenant Theology]

Of God's Covenant with Man

Chapter 7, Sections 2 – 6

2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, a wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant (of works), the Lord was pleased to make a second (covenant), commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.
4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a testament (covenant), in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the testator (a person who makes a Will), and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it (covenant), therein bequeathed.
5. This covenant (of grace) was differently administered in the time of the law and in the time of the gospel: under the law (OT) it (the covenant of grace) was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

6. **(Covenant of grace)** Under the gospel (NT), when **Christ** the substance a was exhibited, the ordinances in which this **covenant (Covenant of grace)** is dispensed are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to **all nations**, both **Jews** and **Gentiles**; and is called the **New Testament**.

There are **not**, therefore, **two covenants of grace** differing in substance, but **one (covenant of grace)** and the same (**covenant**) under various **dispensations**.

This **Covenant (of Grace)** was differently administered, **WCF 7:5-6**

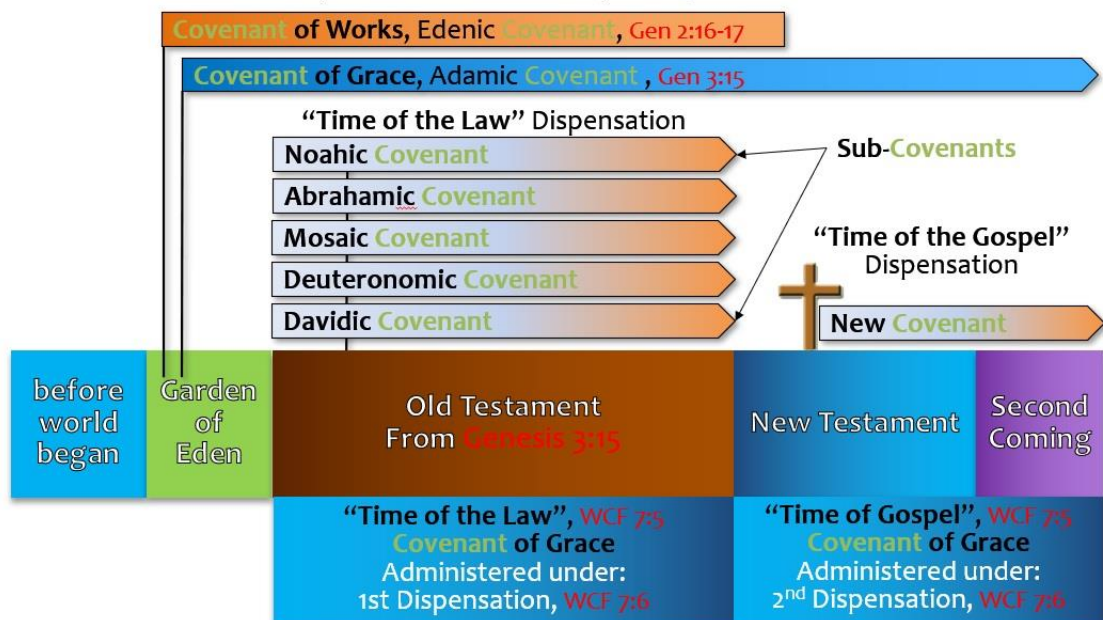
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| (1) in the time of the law (OT)                | (2) in the time of the gospel (NT)          |
| (1) (OT, Mosaic <b>Covenant</b> ) dispensation | (2) (NT, New <b>Covenant</b> ) dispensation |

**2 Covenants: 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant of Works and 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant of Grace**

## Reformed Theology is **Covenant Theology**

### Major & Sub-Covenants: **Covenant Theology** 1647 **Westminster Confession of Faith**

2 Major **Covenants** + 2 Major **Dispensations**



## The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (mostly Reformed Baptist churches)

**Read** The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, also called the Second London Baptist Confession, was written by Particular Baptists, who held to a Calvinistic soteriology in England to give a formal expression of their Christian faith from a Baptist perspective. Because it was adopted by the Philadelphia Association of Baptist Churches in the 18th century, it is also known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith.

The Philadelphia Confession was a modification of the Second London Confession that added an allowance for singing of hymns, psalms and spiritual songs in the Lord's Supper and made optional the laying on of hands in baptism.

The confession was first published in London in 1677 under the title

"A confession of Faith put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians, Baptized upon Profession of their Faith in London and the Country. With an Appendix concerning Baptism."

It was based on the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) and the Savoy Declaration (1658), with modifications to reflect Baptist views on church organization and baptism.

The confession was published again, under the same title, in 1688 and 1689. *Wikipedia*

**Reformed Presbyterians:** baptize infants (Paedobaptism)

**Reformed Baptists:** baptize based on a person's confession of faith (Credobaptism)

## 1689 - 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith [Reformed/Covenant Theology]

### Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. (Luke 17:10; Job 35:7,8)

2. Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. (Gen 2:17; Gal 3:10; Rom 3:20, 21; Rom 8:3; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16; Ezek 36:26, 27; John 6:44, 45; Ps 110:3)

3. This covenant (of Grace) is revealed in the gospel (message); (revealed) first of all to Adam (Serpent?, Gen 3:15) in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and (second) afterwards by farther steps, (progressively revealed by OT Covenants) until (finally) the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it (covenant of Grace) is founded in that eternal covenant transaction (Cov. Of Redemption) that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; (Cov. Of Redemption) and it (covenant of Grace) is alone by the grace of this covenant (Cov. Of Redemption) that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.

(Gen 3:15; Heb 1:1; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:2; Heb 11:6, 13; Rom 4:1, 2, &c.; Acts 4:12; John 8:56)

[Found this Document difficult to Read and Understand, so ( ) added for clarity. K. E. Hughes]

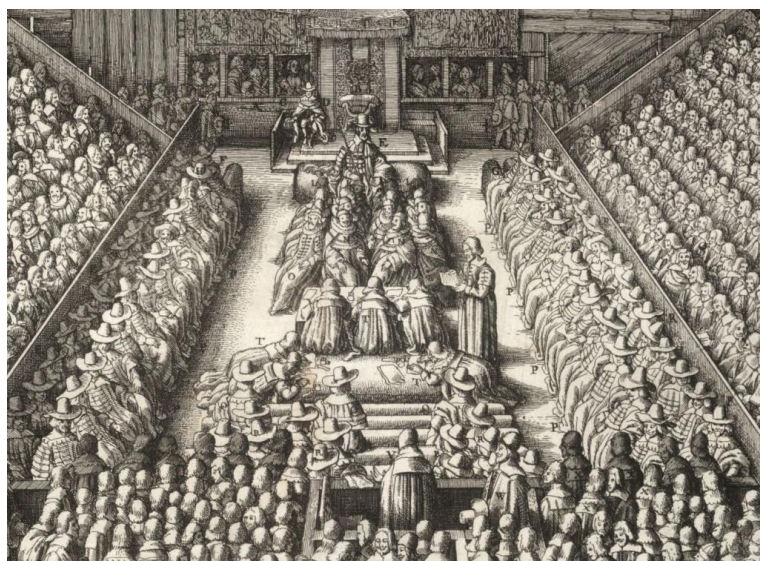
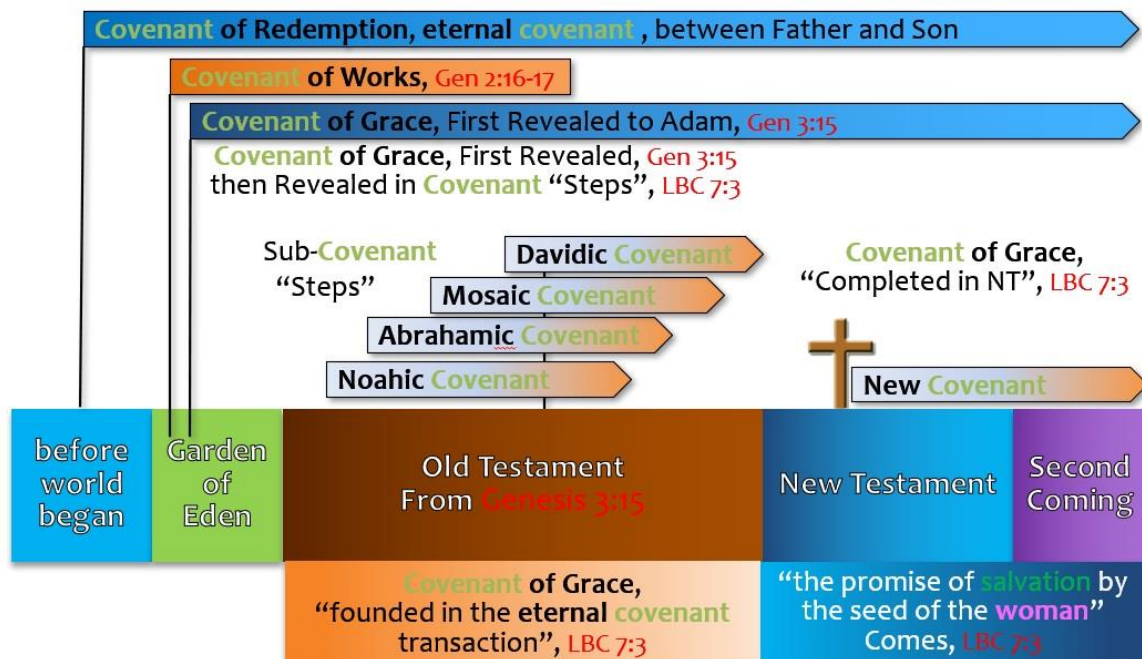
Covenant of Redemption was before the world was, between Father and Son, LBF 7:3  
Then Covenant of Works with Adam, then Covenant of Grace first revealed Gen 3:15.

3 Covenants: 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant of Redemption, 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant of Works, 3<sup>rd</sup> Covenant of Grace

## Reformed Theology is Covenant Theology

### Major & Sub-Covenants: Covenant Theology 1689 Second London Baptist Confession

3 Major Covenants (No Dispensations mentioned)



**1647** - Westminster Confession of Faith [Reformed/Covenant Theology]  
2 Covenants: 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant of Works and 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant of Grace

**1689** - 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith [Reformed/Covenant Theology]  
3 Covenants: 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant of Redemption, 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant of Works, 3<sup>rd</sup> Covenant of Grace