

Sunday, March 17, 2024

Handout - Lesson #3

Biblical Theology: Baptism as Covenant and Eschatological Judgment

Chapters 9-10 of *Word, Water, and Spirit*

- Introduction

- Review
 - Lesson #1 - Historical Theology
 - Lesson #2 - Biblical Theology: Baptism as New Creation
- Reflect

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!

- Luke 12:50

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

- Matthew 3:11

- Why does Jesus speak of his coming crucifixion as a *baptism*? Why does John the Baptist say that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and *fire*?

- Baptism as Covenant Judgment

- The Covenantal Framework of the OT
 - OT Covenants¹

Covenant	Parties	Details
Adamic	God and Adam	Upon the condition of obedience to the commandment of God, Adam would have secured eternal life for himself and his offspring (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:22; Lev. 18:5; Hos. 6:7; Rom. 5:12-20). The signs of this covenant were the trees of life and knowledge.

¹ J. V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 231-232.

Covenant	Parties	Details
Noahic	God and Noah, or more broadly, God and creation (Gen. 9:8-17)	This covenant falls in the unilateral category, as it consists of God's promise. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow (Gen. 9:13).
Abrahamic	God and Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 17:2)	This covenant includes Abraham's seed, land, and a continuing relationship with God. It has the ultimate goal of the blessing of the nations. Though emphasis lies on the unilateral administration of this covenant, the bilateral element is present in the expected response (Gen. 17:1, 9-14). The sign of this covenant is circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14).
Mosaic	God and Israel	God made this covenant with Israel on the occasion of their exodus from Egypt (Ex. 19-24). While there are clearly unilateral elements in this covenant, there is a greater emphasis on the bilateral elements involved in keeping the covenant (Ex. 19:5). The most developed form of the Mosaic covenant appears in Deuteronomy. The sign of this covenant is the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13), but circumcision is still required by male participants.
Davidic	God and David (2 Sam. 7:8-17)	This covenant emphasizes the unilateral promise of God and contains no explicit conditions. It is described as a "covenant of salt" (2 Chron. 13:5), which conveys the idea of permanence. This covenant is rooted in the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants.

- What is a covenant?

- "A relationship that God establishes with us and guarantees by his word."²
- "A covenant is a bond-in-blood sovereignly administered."³
- "In Scripture God's covenant is his self-giving to his family among humanity. As the means by which he promises salvation and restoration, the covenant is a life-and-death kind of bond signified and sealed by physical symbols. This covenant involves two parties, but it is neither a contract drawn up by nor an agreement reached between two parties. It is sovereignly and unilaterally disposed. God establishes his covenant with his people. His people receive it, but they do not contribute to its construction. God's covenant is complete as such, prior to any response to it. In this sense God's covenant is unconditional, but this unconditional covenant operates in a carefully

² *First Catechism*, Q & A #24.

³ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 15.

conditioned fashion since its grace carries in its wake obligations for the covenanted party.”⁴

- “I will be your God, and you will be my people.”
 - Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16
- The Basic Covenant Dynamic⁵

God makes his COVENANT		
His people respond to his covenant in either...		
FAITH and obedience	OR	UNBELIEF and disobedience
...and receive either...		
BLESSING	OR	CURSING

- Circumcision
 - Blessing:
 - Offspring (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-16; 17:3-8)
 - Circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4)
 - Participation in new creation (Gen. 17:12)
 - Cursing
 - Bloody and painful
 - Cutting off (Gen. 17:14)
 - Death (Ex. 4:24-26; Josh. 5:6)
 - Exile (Lev. 26:33; Ps. 37:9, 22)

⁴ Sinclair Ferguson, *Baptism: Three Views*, 96-97.

⁵ Ferguson, 97.

- Circumcision and Baptism

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

- Colossians 2:11-12

- *In him...*

- The circumcision that Paul describes in verse 11 is true for all those who are in union with Christ.

- *...also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh...*

- Everyone who is in Christ undergoes a spiritual circumcision. This circumcision is the work of the Spirit.

- *...by the circumcision of Christ...*

- This work of the Spirit is accomplished by the crucifixion of Christ. He was cut off for his people so that they might receive the outpouring of the Spirit.

- “Christ’s crucifixion was a circumcision.... The sword of judgment.... Was turned on Him. Just as faithless Israel was cut off from the presence of God for his disobedience, the true and faithful Israel, Jesus, was cut off so that the exile under Satan, sin, and death would come to an end for God’s people.”⁶

- Isaiah 53:8 - *By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?*

- *...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

- All those who are in Christ have been spiritually circumcised by means of (or in the manner of) having been buried with him in his baptism.
- Romans 6:3-4 - *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him*

⁶ Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 239-240.

by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- Why does Paul parallel circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11-12?
Because both circumcision and baptism symbolize death or covenant judgement.

Physical Sign	Circumcision	Baptism
Spiritual Thing Signified	Union with Christ in his death	Union with Christ in his death

- Baptism as Covenant Judgment

- Why does Jesus refer to his crucifixion and death as a baptism?

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

- Mark 10:38b

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!

- Luke 12:50

- The Flood as Judgment

- 1 Peter 3:18-20 identifies baptism as the antitype of the flood.

Shadow	Substance	Symbolism
Flood	Baptism	New Creation or Judgment

- “Not all who passed through the waters of the flood were saved; in fact, only eight were saved through the waters. The rest of mankind perished. Ultimately, the presence and absence of faith in Christ determined whether the waters of the flood were waters of judgment or redemption.”⁷

- The Flood as *Covenant* Judgment

- Gen. 6:18 - *But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.*

⁷ Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 243.

- The language in verse 18 is that of covenant ratification. God is ratifying an existing covenant with Noah. He re-administers the covenantal dominion mandate (Gen. 1:28; 9:1-3).
- The Red Sea and Judgment
 - 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 identifies baptism as the antitype of the waters of the Red Sea.
 - “The Red Sea was a baptism-deliverance for Israel and a baptism-judgment for Pharaoh and his army.”⁸

Shadow	Substance	Symbolism
Waters of the Red Sea	Baptism	New Creation or Judgment

- Jesus and John’s Baptism
 - Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist not only pointed to how Jesus would baptize with the Spirit; it also pointed to the covenant judgment that Jesus would suffer for his people at the cross.
 - “By his baptism Jesus was consecrating himself unto his sacrificial death in the judicial ordeal of the cross.”⁹
- Why does Jesus refer to his crucifixion and death as a baptism? Because his baptism symbolized covenant judgment. He suffered the curse of the covenant for all who look to Him in faith. But Jesus was raised from the dead, so all who are united to him receive the blessings of the covenant: redemption, purification, resurrection, new creation!

⁸ Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 243.

⁹ Meredith Kline, quoted in *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 244.

- Baptism as Eschatological Judgement

- The Baptism of Fire

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- Matthew 3:11

- One baptism or two? One. Both “Holy Spirit” and “fire” are governed by one preposition (“with”). In other words, Jesus baptizes with the one Spirit-and-fire.
- Who will be baptized? All. Jesus will baptize “you” (plural) with no distinctions.
- With the arrival of the Messiah and his kingdom comes one baptism which brings either blessing or curse. For the people of God, the effect is blessing. The Spirit-and-fire purges, refines, and purifies. For unbelievers, the effect is cursing. The Spirit-and-fire brings wrath and judgment.

- The Fire of Purification

- Isaiah 4:3-5 - *And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy.*
- “For the people of God, the fire-presence of the Spirit is one of blessing.”¹⁰

- The Fire of Wrath

- Matthew 3:12 - *“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*
- Luke 12:49-51 - *“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.*

¹⁰ Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 250.

- Other Scriptures: Gen. 19:24-28; Deut. 32:22; Ps. 2:12; Isa. 31:9; Jer. 4:4; Amos 7:4; Mal. 4:1

- The Universal Fire-Baptism Flood

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.... Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- 2 Peter 3:7, 11-13

- “The Spirit-flood is therefore an act of eschatological judgment, one that separates the wheat from the chaff, brings an end to the old creation, and unleashes the new. Those who are united to the last Adam by faith alone through the work of the Spirit have passed through the floodwaters of judgement in the baptism of Christ, His crucifixion. Those who are united to the first Adam must pass through the floodwaters of judgement on their own. Unlike the Noahic flood, which brought temporal death and judgment, the antitypical flood of the Spirit brings eternal death and judgment.”¹¹

Shadow	Substance	Symbolism
Flood of water	Christ’s baptism of Spirit and fire	Purification or Wrath

- Conclusion

- “The covenant signs of circumcision and baptism point to the work of Christ and the Spirit. Circumcision pointed to the Messiah who would be cut off and to the cutting away of the foreskin of the heart; baptism points to Christ drowning in the waters of God’s wrath and to the outpouring of the life-giving Spirit. Baptism does not save - Christ through the Spirit saves.”¹²

¹¹ Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 258.

¹² Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit*, 260.