

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTION # 31.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #31. *With whom was the covenant of grace made?*

A. The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.¹

Question 1—*What do we understand by the word “covenant”?*

Answer—There are several ways in which the word כְּרִית is used in the Old Testament:

First, sometimes this word signifies a compact, or league, made between two parties—between man and man, Gen. 14:13; 26:28, 29; 1 Sam. 20:16, 17. In these covenants, there is a calling upon God to be witness and enforcer of the bond, Gen. 24:3.

Second, we also find many places in Scripture wherein God is represented as entering into a covenant with man, which is most agreeable to the infinite distance between him and us, Isa. 40:13-17. In this, there is a notion that God bestows blessings upon his people without any condition being demanded, Jer. 33:20. Thus, God made such a covenant with Noah, Gen. 9:9-11. So, too, when God promises to bless his people with safety, Ezek. 34:25. In addition, when he promises to bless his people with all spiritual blessings, Isa. 59:21. Therefore, by this word is intended a divine establishment, or ordinance, in which God gives his people promised blessings, in such a way that it brings to him the most glory, Num. 18:19.

Third, the word also refers to those approaches whereby men seek to take hold of the promises of God, Isa. 56:4, 6; promising their obedience, in the acceptance of his gracious terms, Josh. 24:24, 25. In this act, men declare their intent to offer their obedience to the whole law of God, and to all the particular obvious requirements which are included in it, Ex. 24:7. This kind of covenanting is to be understood as an engagement to the covenant of God by a voluntary acquiescence and mutual swearing to the Lord, 2 Chron. 34:31, 32.

Question 2—*What is the difference between covenants of men and that of the covenant of grace?*

Answer—When men enter into covenants, they do so with the expectation of receiving some benefit from the other party, Gen. 21:25-32. The servant has no rights to the rewards which his master promises, nor has the master any right to his service, without some mutual consent, Matt. 20:13-15.

However, the parties concerned in the covenant of grace are God the Father and Christ, the head of the elect, both of whom are divine Persons, John 1:1, 14. Thus, there cannot be assumed to be any idea of advantage to the essential glory of God or to the divine perfection of the Godhead which might be said to arise from this transaction, Job 22:2, 3. What was done by Christ, therefore, made no addition to the essential glory of God nor to the divine blessedness, any more than man can be said to be profitable to him, as well agrees the words of the Psalmist speaking for Christ, Ps. 16:2, 3.

¹ Gal. 3:16; Rom. 5:15-21; Isa. 53:10, 11.

When we consider the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, we must conclude that though they are distinct as to their Persons, yet, having the same essential perfections, the will of the Father and of the Son are the same, John 10:30. For this reason, no act of obedience can be performed by a divine Person in the same nature, for there can be no act of subjection in the nature which is properly divine (*i.e.*, there is no essential subordination in the divinity), John 5:23; 16:15. Thus, it is that, when we consider Christ, as entering into covenant, and as engaging to perform those conditions which were insisted on in it, these are supposed to be performed by him as Mediator, or God incarnate, in his human nature, Rom. 8:3. In this respect, he is the head of the covenant, which is made with him, and with the elect, John 6:38, 39. We may suppose, therefore, when we speak of a covenant between the Father and the Son, that, whatever is the will of the Father, the same is the will of the Son, John 17:21; and whatever conditions the Son consented to perform, as stipulated in the covenant, it was in his human nature that the work was to be done, 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 4:1, 2.

Question 3—Is there a Covenant of Grace and, if so, how does it differ from the Covenant of Redemption?

Answer—There is a covenant of grace, in which is all our salvation and hope, which is accordance with the mutual consent of the Father and Son, that involves setting the Son to be the Saviour of the elect people of God, Prov. 8:23. As such, he was to execute those offices which he was to perform as Mediator, and receive the reward of glory which was the result, John 17:5.

Various Scriptures speak of Christ as “called” and “given for a covenant of the people,” Isa. 42:6; and “foreordained” to perform the work which he has engaged in behalf of the elect, 1 Pet. 1:20. Additionally, Scripture speaks of him as “sanctified and sent into the world” to act as Mediator, John 10:36; sealed by the Father unto this great work, John 6:27; and as receiving “power to lay down his life, and take it again,” so that he might accomplish this great end of our redemption, John 10:18. He has been empowered to execute the offices of prophet, priest and king, Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:21; Ps. 2:6; in order to act as Mediator of this covenant of grace, 1 Tim. 2:5.

Under the name of David, Christ was set forth as the Saviour of his people in the Old Testament, Ezek. 34:24; Hos. 3:5. This is the result of the covenant of grace transacted between the Father and the Son, on behalf of his elect people, Isa. 42:1, 6; Matt. 12:18-21. In this covenant of grace, the Son, as the Mediator Christ (*i.e.*, in his true humanity), was ordained to discharge the stipulations on behalf of those elect people encompassed by its provisions, Isa. 49:8, 9; 2 Cor. 6:2. Thus, Christ confers blessings of the kingdom in a covenant way upon his people, Luke 22:29 (διατιθεμαι υμιν, καθω; διεθετο μοι ο πατηρ μου, βασιλειαν).

In that which is called the Covenant of Redemption, there were several promises given respecting Christ himself: 1.) That he would receive the support and help of the Father in this task, Isa. 42:4. 2.) That there would be a mediatorial glory conferred upon him when his sufferings were complete, Luke 24:26; Phil. 2:9. 3.) That he would be given a people as a reward for his sufferings, Isa. 53:11, 12; these elect people were given to serve him, Ps. 22:30. It is upon the basis of this covenant that the covenant of grace is made with the second Adam, Christ, and made sure to his elect people, Luke 1:72; Mic. 7:20; Ps. 25:14; Ezek. 20:37.