

“Covenant Theology in a Dispensational Culture”

Week 3: The Universal Church

By Kevin Morris, taught at Ortega Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Fl. 3-8-20*

1. THE UNIVERSAL PROMISE- When did the Church Begin?

The Promise given to Abraham was not a promised limited to a nation, but one extended to the whole earth- all nations.

FROM THE DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY:

*“We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the church which is the body and bride of Christ, **which began at Pentecost and is completely distinct from Israel.** Its members are constituted as such regardless of membership or nonmembership in the organized churches of earth. We believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ’s, whether Jews or Gentiles, and having become members one of another, are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian differences, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently” (DTS)*

- A Departure from History-

Westminster Confession 25.1-2

- Represented in the above doctrinal statements is the “complete distinction” of Israel and the church.
- Our confession speaks in quite a different way (**WCF 25.1-2**)
- This is a departure from what the church has confessed historically through the ages.
- The Historical Creeds confess that the church is the universal reality of God’s people in saying “*one holy catholic and apostolic church*”- that is, catholic representing ‘universal’ of all places and times.
 - Nicene Creed, Apostle’s Creed

- A Blessing Based on Faith, Not Race

Genesis 15

- Again, our main concern is not on newness or oldness (CT vs DT), but the biblical basis for it. Is there a biblical basis for seeing God's people as God's people universally from creation to consummation?
- The Abrahamic covenant is the answer, the traceable promise that runs all the way through the Bible.
 - In the Old Testament, it is mentioned as a repeating thread of hope: "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".
- In this promise, the emphasis of descendants numbering the stars of the sky is tied to the promise of all nations being blessed.
 - Thus, the descendants are to be understood as *all* nations.

- The Faith Basis of Blessing- Verified in the New Testament

Romans 4, Galatians 3:16

- The question arises, but is this promise to Abraham in the Old the same as the promise of blessing in the New Testament?
 - **Romans 4** demonstrates this as one in the same (in Christ).
- This is further demonstrated in **Galatians 3:16**, that the issue of seed (descendants) is not a matter of an ethnic tribe but of the one promised.
 - This points back to the original promise in **Genesis 3:15**.
 - As well as the universal state of mankind (last week)

2. THE UNIVERSAL REALITY OF FAITH- Was faith always directed to Christ?

If faith alone is a doctrine restricted to the new testament church, it would seem that the pattern of faith would not be prevalent in the Old Testament with the people of Israel.

- **Old Testament Saints Seen as Forerunners**

Hebrews 11

- Hebrews 11 speaks of our forerunners and witnesses (testifiers) of faith
 - Faith has always been the universal reality of God's people
- Further this faith was not different in substance or centrality, but in *vantage* point (looking forward to Christ and looking back to Christ)
 - Jesus says Abraham "rejoiced to see my day", pointing to the substance of Abraham's faith. (**John 8:56**)

3. THE UNIVERSAL PLAN- Is God accomplishing two different plans?

To lay claim that the church is a unique dispensation in history must be verified and spoken of in clear terms of the disassociation between the church and Israel

- **ONE BODY IN CHRIST-**

Ephesians 2:11-22

- **ONE MYSTERY REVEALED IN CHRIST-**

Ephesians 3:1-13