

God's Church, When Did She Begin?

Sunday morning, July 26, 2020

Eph. 1:3–6; Gen. 3:15; 17:1–7, 9–14; 15:8–10; Rom. 11:17–24; Gal. 3:6–9, 28–29; 4:1–7

- I. The Church Began Before Time. If Considering the Decree of God, The Covenant of Redemption
 - A. Bible Teaches That the Church Originated Conceptually in God's Decree
Eph. 1:3–6; Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8; WSC 20; WCF 11.4
 - B. Theologians Refer to this as the Covenant of Redemption
 - C. But the Decree of God's Redemption Is Not the Same as the Accomplishment of Redemption in History
WCF 11.4

- II. The Church Began after the Fall. If Considering the Promise to Adam, The Covenant of Grace
 - A. Bible Teaches That the Line of Believers Originated with Adam
Gen. 3:15; WCF 7.5; Rom. 4:6
 - B. The Confession Speaks of the Invisible Church as Having a Beginning with Adam and Eve
WCF 25.1; WLC 30

- III. The Church Began with Abraham. If Considering the Covenant with Abraham, the Covenant of Promise
 - A. Visible Church Began with Abraham by God's Grace Gen. 17:1–7, 9–14
 - B. Visible Church Began with Abraham by God's Omnipotence Gen. 17:1, 5
 - C. Visible Church Began with Abraham by God's Oath Gen. 15:8–10, 17, 18a; Heb. 6:13–18
Amos 3:12; Isa. 49:6; Hos. 5:15–6:3; Jer. 3:12–14; Lev. 26:40; Isa. 49:6; Isa. 10:33–11:12; Ezek
11:19; 36:26–27; Jer 31:31–34; Isa. 59:16–17; 53; Isa. 49:6; Lk. 13:24–30; Jn. 10:16, 27–29;
Rev. 7:9; 21:12–14; Rom. 4:16; Heb. 2:10–16; Eph. 2:12–20; Heb. 8:(6-12) 8, 10:15-19; Heb. 2:16;
6:13–20; 11; 12:12

- IV. Did the Church Begin at Pentecost, Considering the Blessing of the Spirit?
 - A. No. The New Testament Church Was Grafted into the Remnant of the Old Believing Church
Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6; Isa. 11:10; Rom. 11:17–18; Matt. 21:43
 - B. No. The New Testament Church Was the Old Believing Church Coming into Her Inheritance
Gal. 3:6–9, 6, 8; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 3:28–29; 4:1–7

QUOTES

“The covenant of redemption does not stand by itself, but is the basis of the economy of salvation. It is the great prelude which in the Scriptures resounds from eternity on into our own time and which we can already listen to [in] the pure tones of the psalm of grace.” (Vos)

“This [Abrahamic] covenant was the solid, Biblical, and objective foundation upon which *all the Reformers unanimously and without exception* rested the legitimacy of infant baptism. They had no other deeper and more solid foundation.” (Herman Bavinck)

Heidelberg Catechism, Question 74. Ought little children also to be baptized? Answer: Yes: for since they, as well as their parents, belong to God’s covenant and Church, and since redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who produces faith, are promised to them no less than to adults, they ought to be incorporated into the Christian Church by baptism, which is the sign of the covenant, and to be distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, in place of which baptism has been instituted in the New Testament.

“Abraham believed and was justified when he could make a responsible decision, and yet God commanded the patriarch to institute the rite, beginning with his own children. Why didn’t God simply wait until Abraham’s son, Isaac, was old enough to make his own decision? It is because salvation is God-centered, not human-centered. The focus is not on our choosing God, but on God choosing us. God comes to us and to our children in love and grace, placing his mark of ownership on his covenant people. Circumcision was not something a convert did to show he meant business, but was something *God* did to show that *he* meant business.” (Horton)