

# The Abrahamic Covenant and the Kingdom of God

By Jeong Koo Jeon

Abraham's life is extensively recounted, beginning with his calling by God, his pilgrimage, and his death (Gen. 11:27–25:11). In the midst of his life, God made a covenant with Abraham that was a significant event and turning point in redemptive history.<sup>1</sup>

Jeffrey Niehaus argues that the recent archaeological findings and the discoveries of the ancient Near Eastern treaties should discard the classic covenant theology, formulated in the Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century:

However, a rejection of the theologically constructed covenant established by covenant theology in its classic form (i.e. “the covenant of grace” construed out of the Noahic through the new covenants) does not make one *ipso facto* a classical dispensationalist either. Both classical covenant theology and classical dispensational theology are in fact archaic and ought to be discarded (or radically modified at least in terms of their understanding of covenants, as, to some extents, progressive dispensationalism has done with respect to classical dispensationalism) in favor of the realistic view of the Bible—that is, a view which understands Scripture in terms of its ancient Near Eastern context. It is *a priori* unlikely that systems developed in the seventeenth century (covenant theology) or in the nineteenth century (classical dispensational theology)—long before archaeological discoveries showed us what covenants actually were and how they worked in the ancient Near East—could, lacking such evidence, have arrived at a proper understanding of covenantal matters in the Bible. That both systems failed to do so can now be seen to be the case.<sup>2</sup>

However, we will argue that the discoveries of the ancient Near East treaties do not discard but affirm classic covenant theology. The Abrahamic covenant is

a representative example. Classic covenant theology interpreted the Abrahamic covenant as the covenant

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1. For interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant from different perspectives, see John J. Collins, *Introducing to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 91–98; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1984), 47–79; Jonathan Edwards, *A History of Redemption: Containing the Outlines of a Body of Divinity* (Lexington, KY: Hard Press, 2011), 54–68; Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 93–110; *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 292–382; Nicholas P. Lunn, “Patterns in the Old Testament Metanarrative: Human Attempts to Fulfill Divine Promises,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 72/2 (2010), 237–49; John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: Theological & Biblical Studies* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1988), 16–20; O Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), 127–66; Willem Vangemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 100–30; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), 66–90; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 255–335; idem, *Genesis 16–50*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1994), 1–161; Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 100–30.

2. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “Covenant and Narrative, God and Time,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53/3 (2010), 535. Critiquing the classic covenant theology of the seventeenth century, Niehaus fails to read correctly its identity. Classic covenant theology did not construct its covenant theology, interpreting from “the Noahic through the new covenants” in light of the covenant of grace. Rather, classic covenant theology formulated and developed biblical hermeneutics and theology through the lens of the distinction between the covenant of works and covenant of grace, inaugurated in Genesis 3:15 after the first Adam's fall. In doing so, the redemptive-historical order of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation as well as law and gospel is well safeguarded in the classic covenant theology.

of grace, inaugurated in Genesis 3:15. The Abrahamic covenant, in light of the ancient Near East treaties, may be considered a covenant of royal grant, granted to the vassal king or faithful vassal by the Great King to one who had successfully accomplished a warrior's mission, defeating enemies in the name of the Great King. At this juncture, we will demonstrate that the Abrahamic covenant, as a covenant of royal grant, is harmonious and compatible with the idea of the covenant of grace.

We will see that God made promises to Abraham with his sworn oath, including a covenant people and land, both vital components of the theocratic kingdom as a type of the fully realized kingdom of God in heaven. Historically, Bible interpreters and theologians have overlooked the connection between the Abrahamic covenant and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is my contention that God's judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was a redemptive judgment in the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant. In destroying these cities, God did not use a common grace war but a holy war against the wicked and corrupt cities. God demonstrated a pattern of redemptive judgment, which will be displayed once again, when he separates the elect from the non-elect with the second coming of the Son of Man.

3. We will use Abraham's name as Abraham consistently, although God changed Abram's name into Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old: "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:5).

4. The three components of the theocratic kingdom as holy land, covenant people, and king, and its specific characters are insightfully summarized by Kline as follows: "Theocracy implies an external realm. It does not refer to a spiritual reign of God in the hearts of his people by itself, but included the geopolitical dimension. On the other hand, theocracy involves something more than a general providential rule of God over men and nations. It denotes a particular kingdom realm that God claims in a special way as his own.... In a theocracy the people of the realm as well as the land itself are specially consecrated to God. This special religious relationship is defined through covenants, divinely determined and instituted, in which God identifies with the kingdom-people, bestowing on them his name to be borne and confessed by them. Because the name of God is identified with the theocratic people and is at stake in their history, the covenants that govern this relationship contain guarantees of dominion and power and glory for the loyal theocratic community.... Theocracy is not a combination of church and state institutions. It is a simple unique institution, a structure *sui generis*. It is a the kingdom realm whose great king is the Lord, where all activity is performed in the name of the Great-King enthroned, confessed, and worshipped in the cultic epicenter, whence theocratic holiness radiates outward, permeating all, so that the whole realm, land and people, is a sanctuary of the Creator-Lord" Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 49-51.

5. All quotations from the Bible are cited from English Standard Version unless otherwise specified. In addition, all the italics within the quotation of the Bible are my emphases.

In addition, we will demonstrate how the sacrifice of Isaac on the Mount of Moriah was a Messianic prophecy. It is important to note that God revealed in the Abrahamic covenant the coming of the Messiah as "the Son of Man," who will be sacrificed on the altar of Golgotha, to forgive all sins and to bestow all the promised redemptive blessings for the elect. Furthermore, God's promised blessings to Abraham, indicated by such expressions as "in your offspring," "in you," and "through you," were adopted and transformed later by the apostles to note the Christological designation as "in Christ Jesus," "in Christ," and "through Jesus Christ."

Finally, Bible interpreters and theologians, by and large, have traditionally ignored the relationship between Abraham's justification by faith and the Abrahamic covenant. It is my assessment that Abraham's justification by faith in Genesis 15:6, in the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant, provides a soteriological pattern that sinners are justified by faith apart from works of the law. Paul, as well as the other apostles, adopted this view of the Abrahamic covenant, and it became one of his key messages.

#### A. THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM AND THE PROMISE OF THE THEOCRATIC KINGDOM IN CANAAN

God called Abraham<sup>3</sup> who was a descendent of Shem in the line of the Noahic covenant family. God inaugurated redemptive history after the Fall of Adam and Eve, proclaiming the primitive gospel (Gen. 3:15). Ever since then, he sovereignly directed the history of redemption, bestowing saving grace to the elect.

God revealed his plan of redemption, calling Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans. Through his promise to Abraham, God revealed his plan for the establishment of the theocratic kingdom in Canaan.<sup>4</sup> God promised Abraham that he would form "a great nation" (לְגוֹי גָדוֹל), a type of the heavenly theocratic kingdom, which will be consummated when Jesus returns:

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house *to the land* [אֶל-הָאָרֶץ] that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you *a great nation* [לְגוֹי גָדוֹל], and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, *and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* [וְנִבְרַכְתְּוּ בְךָ כָּל-בְּנֵי-הָאָרֶץ] (Gen. 12:1-3).<sup>5</sup>

God's promise to Abraham to form "a great nation" was in fact significant because the nation would be

different from pagan nations under God's common grace. "A great nation" would be composed of the covenant people of Abraham's descendants, who would dwell in the holy land that God promised to give them by oath. This nation would be ruled by God, the Great King, along with the kings as vicegerent rulers in his place. In that sense, "a great nation" is a holy theocratic kingdom, a type of the everlasting kingdom of God in heaven, which will only be fully realized after the final redemptive judgment when Jesus returns.

#### B. THE PROMISE OF BLESSINGS TO ALL NATIONS THROUGH THE OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM

God promised "a great nation" that will be established in Canaan as a type of the everlasting kingdom of God in heaven. At the same time, God promised blessings to all nations in Abraham. Thus, God spoke his prophetic word to Abraham saying, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). This is an indication that God will continuously direct the grand drama of redemptive history through covenantal promises. And it will be fully realized with the coming of the Messiah which is the central fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

In fact, God confirmed his original promise to Abraham later which includes the theocratic kingdom in the Promised Land and blessings to all nations *in him*:

17 The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:17–19).

During the earthly ministry of Jesus and the apostolic age, Jews, committed to first-century Judaism as a whole, did not understand that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. The first-century Jews did not grasp this because they did not read the OT from the perspective of redemptive history; instead, they denied Jesus as the coming Messiah despite the progressive revelation from various perspectives since Genesis 3:15.

Meanwhile, the apostles, after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and the *Pentecost event*, began to proclaim that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. One of the central elements of

the covenant is the abundant soteriological blessings through faith in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Matthew began his Gospel by stating that Jesus Christ is the descendant of Abraham who is the father of the Old Testament religion of Israel:

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham... 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations (Matt. 1:1–17).

After Peter experienced the Pentecost event, he began proclaiming the good news of the gospel to the Jews. He noticed that the promised seed of Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant is Jesus Christ. Peter alludes to the Pentecost event as a turning point in redemptive history that signifies the beginning of the spread of the gospel of Jesus to all nations. In that sense, Peter interprets the Abrahamic covenant in light of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of the OT, including the Abrahamic covenant:

13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he decided to release him. 14 But you denied *the Holy and Righteous One* [τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον], and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed *the Author of life* [τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς], whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.... 22 Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, and *in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed* [ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου {ἐν}εὐλογηθήσονται πᾶσαι αἱ πατριαὶ τῆς γῆς] (Acts 3:13–25).

As such, Peter sheds new light on his interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant. He interprets from the perspective of redemptive history where the blessings of the covenant apply to "all the families of the earth" in

Jesus Christ, who came as the singular figure, the offspring of Abraham. So the prophetic word in the Abrahamic covenant, “in your offspring,” actually points to the covenantal blessings in *Jesus Christ* who is “the Holy and Righteous One” (τὸν ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον) and “the Author of life” (τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς).

First-century Jews appealed to the Abrahamic covenant for their religious and national roots. Paul, before his Damascus Road conversion experience, was at the center of Pharisaic Judaism, opposing Jesus and Christianity. He thought the rejection of Jesus Christ and the persecution of Christians were the right way of life for the glory of God. However, after his Damascus Road conversion experience, Paul realized that first-century Judaism misunderstood the heart of the Abrahamic covenant. So Paul testified to the Galatians that the centerpiece of the Abrahamic covenant is indeed Jesus Christ, who is its fulfillment. Paul realized that Abraham, as the father of faith, was justified and saved by the principle of the gospel in Jesus, just as believers are under the New Covenant.

Paul notes that believers in Jesus Christ are “the sons of Abraham” (υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ), regardless of their ethnic background. Paul uses the method of representative expression for the children of God to embrace Gentiles, including both males and females:

5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? 7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the *sons of Abraham* [υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ]. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that *God would justify the Gentiles by faith* [ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός], preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “*In you shall all the nations be blessed*” [ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη] 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.... 15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “*And to offspring*,” [καὶ τοῖς

6. Interpreting Genesis 12:1–3, Williams insightfully suggests Yahweh in the OT as “a missionary God”: “Israel is elected to be God’s channel of blessing to all nations. Again, the three promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 (a seed, a land, and God’s covenant blessing) are given for the sake of the fulfillment of Israel’s missionary mandate. The goal of God’s covenant with Abraham is that people from every nation, not just Israel, will be redeemed. The Old Testament is a missionary book because Yahweh is a missionary God.” Williams, *Far As the Curse Is Found*, 118.

σπέρμασιν] referring to many, but referring to one, “*And to your offspring*,” who is *Christ* [καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός] (Gal 3:7–16).

Like Peter, Paul interprets the Abrahamic covenant from a Christocentric perspective as he endeavors to defend the good news of the gospel against the background of another gospel, spreading in different churches in the region of Galatia.

Calling out and making a covenant with Abraham was one of the most important turning points of redemptive history. God called out Abraham while he was living in the midst of a pagan culture and religion in Ur of the Chaldeans. Making a covenant with Abraham, God introduced the gospel of grace and bestowed saving grace unto Abraham. This historical episode suggests that Abraham’s faith, as the father of the OT Israelites, was not originated through man’s religious tradition, teaching, and proclamation, but solely through God himself. In that sense, we may identify Yahweh as the original evangelist and missionary as demonstrated through the calling of Abraham. This was also the case in the proclamation of the primitive gospel to Adam and Eve after they committed the original sin in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15).<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, calling Paul as the apostle for the Gentile mission was a very significant turning point in redemptive history. Before his conversion, Paul did not understand that one of the key elements of the Abrahamic covenant is salvation by God’s grace through faith in the coming Son of Man. As one of the representative spokesmen of Pharisaic Judaism of his time, Paul fell into the legalistic understanding of salvation and the religious traditions of Judaism which were fundamentally different from the religion of OT Israel, which was deeply rooted in the Abrahamic covenant. In the midst of confusion and struggle, Paul met Jesus at the heavenly throne and received the gospel “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) as he defended the authority of his apostleship and the authenticity of his proclamation of the gospel to the Galatians:

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it *through a revelation of Jesus Christ* [δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ]. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called

me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus (Gal. 1:11–17).

As such, the apostolic apology for the defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ was deeply rooted in the Abrahamic covenant which was fundamentally misunderstood and misrepresented by first-century Judaism. And the apostles rightly offered this apology under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Paul summarized the gospel he preached as “according to my gospel through Christ Jesus” (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, my own translation). In doing so, he emphasized that he received his gospel, not from men but “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” who was crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven where he was already inaugurated to rule as the exalted King in the heavenly Kingdom of God (Rom. 2:16; 16:25–27; 2 Tim. 2:8–10).

Knowing that the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled and given in Jesus Christ, who is “the offspring of Abraham,” Paul began to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews. For example, Paul used the representative method of expression such as “in Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ), and “through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). These expressions convey all the redemptive spiritual blessings given by God in Jesus to the elect, from election to the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom of God. And this most definitely applied to the believers in Ephesus:

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful *in Christ Jesus* [ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ]; 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* [ἐν Χριστῷ] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons *through Jesus Christ* [διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ], according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.... 11 In him we have obtained all inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to

the council of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope *in Christ* [ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ] might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:1–14).

Accordingly, Paul, as with other apostles, adopted the Christological designations such as “in Christ,” “in Christ Jesus,” and “through Jesus Christ,” reflecting the Abrahamic covenant designation of “in your offspring” and “in you.” The apostles’ use of the Christological designations through the reflection of the Abrahamic covenant in light of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension and the Pentecost event exemplifies how all the apostles read and interpreted the OT from a redemptive-historical perspective.

### C. THE COVENANT OF ROYAL GRANT AND COVENANT RATIFICATION OATH

God promised Abraham again and reassured him of the establishment of the theocratic kingdom in Canaan through the covenant community of Abraham’s offspring. Throughout his pilgrimage, Abraham walked on the Promised Land where God would establish the holy theocratic kingdom. Although Abraham walked on the Promised Land, he still did not have his own covenant child that God promised. In the midst of Abraham’s personal struggle with not having his own covenant child, God revealed to him “in a vision” (חֶזְיוֹן) that his covenant offspring would be numerous as the stars in heaven:

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram *in a vision* [חֶזְיוֹן]: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” 2 But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” 5 And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 *And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness* [בִּיהוָה נַחְשָׁבָה לֵוּ צְדָקָה]. (Gen 15:1–6)

Interpreting Genesis 15:6, Collins fundamentally misinterprets justification by faith, which is one of the central components of the Abrahamic covenant. He argues that “there is no contrast between faith and law implied in Genesis.”<sup>7</sup> However, this is not so. God differentiated faith and law in the depiction of Abraham’s covenantal pilgrimage. God forensically declared Abraham as righteous before his circumcision. In that sense,

7. Collins’ interpretation of Genesis 15:6 by and large reflects contemporary biblical and theological scholarship which denies the contrast between law and faith or gospel in the depiction of soteriology and redemptive history: “The statement in Gen. 15:6, ‘And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness,’ has played an important and controversial role in Christian theology. It is cited by St. Paul in Gal. 3:6. Paul argues that since Abraham is also told that all the peoples of the earth will be blessed in him (Gen. 12:3), this shows that Gentiles can be justified by faith, not by the law. This argument later played a fundamental role in the theology of Martin Luther. Needless to say, there is no contrast between faith and law implied in Genesis (although it is true that there is no requirement of legal observance). Faith here is trust in the promise. In Jewish interpretation, the key element is that the promise relates to possession of the land. The promise to Abraham is seen as the original charter for possession of the land of Israel.” Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 92.

8. Bruce explains very concisely and clearly that Abraham’s justification by faith before the reception of circumcision is a clear biblical indication that “Gentiles as well as Jews” are justified by faith apart from obedience “in the death and resurrection of Christ”: “As for Abraham, it is important to observe that his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness long before he was circumcised: this shows that the way of righteousness by faith is in no way dependent on circumcision, but is open to Gentiles as well as Jews. Abraham is thus the spiritual father of all believers, irrespective of their racial origin. And the testimony that his faith was reckoned to him righteousness means that to all who believe in God, whose saving power has been manifested in the death and resurrection of Christ, their faith will similarly be reckoned as righteousness.” F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 329.

9. Vos as a redemptive historical theologian, who correctly emphasizes the progressive character of divine revelation in the Bible, identifies that Genesis 15:6 is “the first explicit Biblical reference to faith.” However, he is unable to read that justification by faith in Genesis 15:6 provides the primal pattern of justification by faith within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant: “Gen. 15:6 is the first explicit Biblical reference to faith. Broadly speaking, faith bears a two-fold significance in Scriptural teaching and experience: it is, firstly, dependence on the supernatural power and grace of God; and secondly, the state or act of projection into a higher, spiritual world.” Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 83.

10. For further readings on my thoughts of John Calvin’s understanding of covenant and justification by faith, and other related theological and hermeneutical issues in light of contemporary discussions, see Jeong Koo Jeon, *Calvin and the Federal Vision: Calvin’s Covenant Theology in Light of Contemporary Discussion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 1–42; idem, *Covenant Theology: John Murray’s and Meredith G. Kline’s Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham, MD: University press of America, 1999), 1–29.

Genesis 15:6 “And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him righteousness” is the primal example of soteriological blessing of justification by faith. Abraham’s reception of circumcision, as the sign of the covenant, clearly suggests that Abraham was justified by faith apart from obedience or works of the law. In fact, many years after Abraham was justified by faith, Abraham, his son Ishmael, and “all the men of his house” were circumcised (Gen. 17:22–27).<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that Paul adopted the primal example of justification by faith, as represented in Genesis 15:6, in the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant. He quoted it in Galatians 3:6 to demonstrate that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith. So justification by faith for both Jews and Gentiles is one of the essential components of Paul’s gospel.

After his Damascus Road conversion experience, Paul reflected on the Abrahamic covenant. He realized that Abraham as the father of faith was not justified by works, but by faith (Rom. 4: 1–25; Gal. 3:6–14). So Paul revisited Abraham to note and confirm justification by faith. Paul’s unpacking of sinners’ justification by faith throughout his epistles was one of the central proclamations of his message. Again, it is important to note that Paul used the primary example of justification by faith from the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant in which Yahweh declared Abraham as righteous when Abraham had faith in him before he received circumcision, the sign of the covenant. In that sense, Genesis 15:6 is a classical biblical paradigm and reference from the OT for Paul’s proclamation of justification by faith in his Gentile mission and epistles, as well as for the message of the other apostles.<sup>9</sup>

Abraham’s justification by faith apart from receiving circumcision, the sign of the covenant, signifies that believers in the OT were saved by God’s grace and justified not by the obedience of the law but by faith alone, as with the believers under the New Covenant. Reflecting on Genesis 15:6, Paul expresses the classical understanding of justification by faith “apart from works of the law” (χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου): “For we hold that *one is justified by faith apart from works of the law*” [δικαιοῦσθαι πιστεὶ ἄνεργων χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου] (Rom. 3:28).<sup>10</sup>

In general, there were two different forms of treaties in the ancient Near East. One is the form of the treaty of royal grant. It was a treaty that the Great King promised to grant land or properties to the faithful vassal who fought the victorious war on behalf of the Great King and his kingdom. And one of the characteristics of it lies in that the sworn oath to the treaty was made not by the vassal king and his servants but by the Great

King. Also, an animal was slain during the treaty ratification ceremony. One of the representative examples of the treaty of royal grant has been found in the treaty between Abban and Yarimlim. This treaty reflects the treaty ratification ceremony between the Great King, Abban, and the vassal, Yarimlim of Alalakh. It goes back to the time of Abraham, reflecting the ancient Near East culture, international relationships, and religion of that time.

... The city of Amame, the city of Aushun, the city of Zikir, the city of Murar, the city of Iriddi: Yarimlim [held them]. Zitradu, the mayor of [Iriddi] turned against Yarimlim and led the [robber] MUSNADDU. He let the robber band enter Iriddi; his city and all its land he turned away from Abba-AN, king ... With ... and the mighty [weapon] ... with silver, gold, lapis lazuli, crystal and the mighty [weapon] of Addu he captured and destroyed Iriddi, and he captured the MUSNADDU, his enemy. He returned safely to Aleppo and said: Can I give my brother a pile of ruins? In exchange for Iriddi [that] rebelled [against] him [and that I captured] and [destroyed, I shall give Yarimlim] the city of Alalakh, and the city of Murar over and above his portion I shall add to it. Abba-AN is under oath to Yarimlim, and also he cut the neck of a lamb. He swore: I shall never take back what I gave you. If in days to come Yarimlim sins against Abba-AN, [if] he repeats anything Abba-AN says to him and reveals it to another king, if he lets go of the hem of Abba-AN's robe and takes hold of another king's robe, he [shall forfeit] his cities and territories. Further, if a successor of Yarimlim sins against Abba-AN or a successor of Abba-AN, if he lets go of the hem of Abba-AN's robe or the hem of the robe of a successor of Abba-AN and takes hold of the hem of another king's robe, he shall forfeit his city and his territories. If successors of Yarimlim wish to sell one of his cities, then their older brother shall buy it; he may sell it only to a successor of Abba-AN, but to another king he may not sell it. If [there is] no successor to Yarimlim, but [there is] a successor to Abba-AN, if ... his cities ... [Akhi-saduq] son of ... [Irpadda] ... [Niqmaddu] ... (gap) ... made Yarimlim swear by the gods.<sup>11</sup>

The other form is the suzerainty treaty. This was a treaty in which the Great King stipulated regulations and laws upon the vassal and his kingdoms. The dual sanctions were announced and strictly applied by the principles of blessings and curses through the treaty lawsuit. When two kingdoms made the suzerainty treaty, the vassal king and his people made an oath as

a means of ratifying the treaty. In the presence of the Great King and his servants, the vassal king and his people made an oath. The treaty ratification ceremony by an oath signified that the vassal king and his servants would comply with all the detailed components of the treaty, and the Great King may protect the vassal king and his kingdom from military threats and attacks from other kingdoms. However, if the vassal king and his kingdom violated the stipulations of the treaty with the Great King and his suzerain kingdom, the curses of the treaty would fall upon the former through the execution of the treaty lawsuit.<sup>12</sup>

The Hittite treaties around the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. were the representative paradigm of the suzerainty treaties in the ancient Near East. The treaty between Suppiluliuma, the Great King of the Hittites, and Mattiwaza of Mitanni is one of the representative examples of the suzerainty treaties in the second millennium B.C. The Hittite treaty as a suzerainty treaty makes a close parallel to the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 19–24), the covenant renewal in Moab (Deut. 1:1–34:12), and another covenant renewal at Shechem (Josh. 24:1–33). The common distinctive characteristics of the suzerainty treaty are that the treaty oath was sworn by the vassal and his people along with the announcement and execution of dual sanctions such as blessings and curses, following the written codes of stipulations.

A duplicate of this tablet has been deposited before the sun-goddess of Arinna, because the sun-goddess of Arinna regulates kingship and queenship. In the Mitanni land a duplicate has been deposited before Teshub, the lord of the KURINNU of Kahat. At regular [intervals] shall they read it in the presence of the king of the Mitanni land and in the presence of the sons of the Hurri country. Whoever will remove this tablet from before Teshub, the lord of the KURINNU of Ka-

11. Bill T. Arnold & Bryan E. Beyer eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 96–97. For the different forms of the Ancient Near East treaties, similar to the covenants of the OT, see Arnold & Beyer eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East*, 96–103; James B. Pritchard ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts & Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 205–25.

12. Scholars have endeavored to formulate comparative studies from divergent theological perspectives between the ancient Near East treaties and biblical covenants. See Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969); Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997); Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972); G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).

hat, and put it in a hidden place, if he breaks it or causes anyone else to change the wording of the tablet—at the conclusion of this treaty we have called the gods to be assembled and the gods of the contracting parties to be present, to listen and to serve as witnesses.... If you, Mattiwaza, the prince, and *you* the sons of the Hurri country do not fulfill the words of this treaty, may the gods, the lords of the oath, blot you out, *you* Mattiwaza and *you* the Hurri men together with your country, your wives and all that you have.... May they overturn your throne, *yours*, of Mattiwaza. May the oaths sworn in the presence of these gods break you like reeds, you, Mattiwaza, together with your country. May they exterminate from the earth your name and your seed *born* from a second wife that you may take.... *If on the other hand* you, Mattiwaza, the prince, and *you*, the Hurrians, fulfill this treaty and *this* oath, may these gods protect you, Mattiwaza, together with your wife, the daughter of Hatti land, her children and her children's children, and also *you*, the Hurrians, together with your wives, your children, and your children's children and together with your country.<sup>13</sup>

The Assyrian treaties from the first millennium B.C. have a similar pattern as found in the suzerainty treaty in the Hittite treaties from the second millennium B.C. However, there was a distinctive visible ceremony during the Assyrian treaty ratification ceremony. The vassal and his servants made an oath before the Great King while an animal was torn into two pieces. The torn animal signified that the curses of the treaty would befall the vassal, his servants, and their land if they do not obey the stipulations of the treaty.

... This spring lamb has not been brought out its fold for sacrifice, nor for a banquet, nor for a purchase, nor for (divination concerning) a sick man, nor to be slaughtered for [...]: it has been brought to conclude the treaty of Assur-nerari, king of Assyria with Mati'-ilu. If Mati'-ilu [sins] against th[is] sworn treaty, then, just as this spring lamb has been brought from its fold and will not return to its fold and [not behold] its fold again, (in like manner) may, alas, Mati'-ilu, together with his sons, daughters, [magnates] and the people of his land [be ousted] from his country, and not [behold] his country again....

13. Arnold & Beyer eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East*, 97–98. A close parallel between the Ancient Near East treaties and covenants in the Old Testament remarkably discards the historical critical approach to the formulation of the Old Testament canon, affirming the antiquity of the Pentateuch.

14. *Readings from the Ancient Near East*, 101.

If Mati'-ilu [should sin] against this treaty, so may, just as the head of this spring lamb is cut off, and its knuckle placed in its mouth, [...] the head of Mati'-ilu be cut off, and his sons [and magnates] be thrown into....

If Mati'-ilu should sin against this [treaty], so may, just as the shoulder of this spring lamb is torn out and [placed in ...], the shoulder of Mati'-ilu, of his sons, [his magnates] and the people of his land be torn out and [placed] in [...].<sup>14</sup>

Strikingly, an Assyrian treaty-like pattern in the first millennium B.C. was evident in the covenant made by God with the covenant community of Judah in Jerusalem during the reign of King Zedekiah:

17 “Therefore, thus says the Lord: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, Every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the Lord. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them *like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parties*—19 the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. 20 And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. 21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. 22 Behold, I will command, declares the Lord, and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant” (Jer. 34:17–21).

Yahweh revealed that curses can befall the covenant community of Judah. He used the Babylonian kingdom to curse the covenant community because they violated the covenant before Yahweh, the Great King, although they passed “between the parts of the calf” like the vassal king and servants. Likewise, the Lord, as the Great King, cursed the covenant community when they violated the covenant by executing the covenant lawsuit.

Jeremiah's prophecy against Judah and her Babylonian exile, due to the execution of the covenant lawsuit, suggests that God's curses against the covenant

community were not based upon the Abrahamic covenant but the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 19–24). In the process of making the Sinaitic covenant, the covenant community of Israel made a sworn oath to the covenant before Yahweh, the Great King (Exod. 19:8; 24:3, 7).<sup>15</sup> That is the reason why God poured out his wrath against the covenant community of Israel when they disobeyed the law given to them through Moses, the mediator of the covenant on Mount Sinai. In that sense, we can identify the Sinaitic covenant as the covenant of law.

Having identified the Sinaitic covenant as the covenant of law, we need to explore the background of the Abrahamic covenant and why it fits to the pattern of a covenant of royal grant. Abraham fought the war to bring back his nephew “Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people” when they had been captive in Sodom. It is important to note that Abraham fought the war to bring back his nephew Lot, other people, and all the possessions in the name of Yahweh, the Great King (Gen. 14:8–24). After Abraham returned from war as a victorious warrior, Yahweh, the Great King, recognized Abraham as the faithful warrior-servant. And he promised great reward to Abraham: “*After these things* the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not Abram, I am your shield; *your reward shall be great*’” (Gen. 15:1).<sup>16</sup> As a reward, Yahweh promised to grant the land to Abraham’s descendents through the covenant ratification ceremony in Genesis 15. In that sense, the Abrahamic covenant may be rightly identified and designated as a covenant of royal grant as demonstrated with the treaty of royal grant in the ancient Near East.<sup>17</sup> As a covenant of royal grant, the Abrahamic covenant is a comprehensive reflection of promissory character of the covenant which has been designated as the covenant of grace in the Reformed tradition, including the classic covenant theology of the seventeenth century. In that sense, it is remarkable to discover how the idea of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, defined in the Reformed tradition, including the classic covenant theology in the seventeenth century is harmonious with the concept of the covenant of royal grant.<sup>18</sup>

In the process of the covenant ratification ceremony of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15, there was a distinctive phenomenon. Abraham as a vassal did not give a sworn oath before the Lord Almighty, the Great King, which was a general pattern of the suzerainty treaty in the ancient Near East:

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a

covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites” (Gen. 15:17–21).

15. The sprinkling of the blood on the covenant people during the Sinaitic covenant ratification ceremony suggests that God’s saving grace was applied to the elect not by the principle of the law but by the principle of the covenant of grace even under the Sinaitic covenant. So, the sprinkling of the blood by Moses in Exodus 24:8 may not be considered as a sworn oath made by the covenant community of Israel as suggested by Robertson: “First the law was read. The people responded with a verbal commitment to obedience (Exod. 24:7). Then Moses sprinkled the blood on the people as he declared: ‘Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you’ (Exod. 24:8). This blood of sprinkling symbolized not only the cleansing of the people. It also consecrated them to keep the covenant on pain of death. The same pledge-to-death which played such a prominent role in the inauguration of the Abrahamic covenant manifested itself in the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant. Sheer statistical considerations may have occasioned the substitution of the blood-sprinkling ritual for the ceremony of passing between the pieces. An entire nation hardly could be paraded between the pieces of slain animals. But an equally significant ceremony of blood-sprinkling could be instituted.” Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 135.

16. Italics are mine. Here, Kline’s discussion is helpful and comprehensive: “Coming on the heels of this episode, the Lord’s word to Abraham (Gen. 15:1) has the character of a royal grant to an officer of the king for faithful military service. God identifies himself by the military figure of a shield (cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 18:2), otherwise read as suzerain, and promises: ‘Your reward will be very great’ (also read ‘who will reward you very greatly’). The term *sakar*, ‘reward,’ is used for the compensation due to those who have conducted a military campaign. In Ezekiel 29:19 it refers to the spoil of Egypt which the Lord gives Nebuchadnezzar as wages for his army (cf. Isa. 40:10; 62:11). The imagery of Genesis 15:1 is that of the Great King honoring Abraham’s notable exhibition of compliance with covenant duty by the reward of a special grant that would more than make up for whatever enrichment he had foregone at the hand of the king of Sodom for the sake of faithfulness to Yahweh, his Lord. The broader record of the Lord’s dealings with Abraham includes numerous key expressions paralleled in the ancient royal grants to loyal servants: such a servant is one who obeys, keeps the charge, serves perfectly, walks before his lord.” Kline, *Kingdom Prologues*, 323–24.

17. For the discussion of the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of royal grant in parallel to the treaty of royal grant in the ancient Near East, see Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 40–50; Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 102–103; idem, *Kingdom Prologue*, 323–26; Niehaus, “Covenant and Narrative, God and Time,” 544–46; Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184–203; idem, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford University Press, 1972), 78–79.

18. For a comprehensive and critical analysis of the development and adaptation of covenant theology in the Reformed tradition from Calvin to Murray and Kline, including the classic covenant theology of the seventeenth century, see Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology*, 1–334.

In the process of the covenant ratification ceremony, the distinctive visible phenomena appeared and “a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed” between the torn pieces of the animals. In fact, “a flaming torch” between the carcasses was the visible sign of the theophanic glory.<sup>19</sup> It signified that Abraham as a vassal did not make an oath to the covenant. Rather, Yahweh as the Great King made an oath to the covenant. This visible presence of the theophanic glory indicates God’s oath to Abraham that he would fulfill all the covenantal promises through the execution of his mighty power and sovereign grace in redemptive history. In addition, God made an oath that the theocratic kingdom in the Promised Land would surely be established. And God provided more detailed geographic boundaries of the Promised Land where Abraham’s covenant descendants would dwell. The visible presence of the theophanic glory, passing between the pieces of torn animals, suggests that saving grace, bestowed on sinners, would be possible not through men’s meritorious obedience but through God’s sovereign grace alone. It was also a redemptive historical event which foreshadowed the Messiah’s sacrificial death at Golgotha, which

19. The appearances of the theophanic glory in Abraham’s life, culminated in Genesis 15:17 are well articulated and summarized by Vos: “To Abraham at first revelation came after the earlier indefinite fashion. In Gen. 12.4 Jehovah ‘speaks’ to him, but no sooner has he entered the promised land than a change of expression is introduced. In Gen. 12.7 we read that Jehovah ‘appeared’ unto Abraham (literally, He ‘let himself be seen by Abraham’). Here is something more than mere speech. The emergence of a new element is also recognized by the building of the altar, for the altar is a shrine or house of God. In Gen. 15.13 we have again the indefinite statement that Jehovah ‘said to Abraham.’ But in Gen. 15.17 a visible manifestation, a theophany takes place. In the form of the smoking furnace and the flaming torch God passes by. The theophany here assumes the character of something fearful. In chapter 17.1 we read again that Jehovah let Himself be seen by Abraham; and that this was a theophany follows from the statement of vs. 22, ‘And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.’” Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 69. Furthermore, Vos insightfully observes that the theophanic glory as “the walking of God (alone)” between the torn animal pieces signifies God’s sworn oath to keep his promises before Abraham: “At no point of the Old Testament, the life of Moses perhaps excluded, was there such a divine condescension as during the life of Abraham. If we except Gen. 15, there was a remarkable absence of the frightful in these theophanies. There is something here somewhat resembling God’s ancient walk with men in the days of paradise or the life of Enoch. In recognition of all this he was by later generations called ‘the friend of God,’ Jas. 2.23. And even in the midst of the terror of 15.12, there was a most impressive witness to the divine condescension in the remarkable setting of the theophany itself. There is probably no case surpassing this in anthropomorphic realism within the Old Testament. The dividing of the animals and the walking of God (alone) between the pieces literally signifies that God invokes upon Himself the fate of dismemberment in case He should not keep faith with Abraham [cp. Jer. 34.18–19].” *Ibid.*, 86.

in turn opened the way for the forgiveness of sins and salvation, including all the redemptive blessings.

Likewise, Genesis 15:17 can be considered the visible ceremony of the covenant ratification oath, made by Yahweh in the presence of Abraham. The visible phenomenon of a “flaming torch” was the presence of the theophanic glory, making an oath to the covenant in front of a mere creature, Abraham. Later, after Abraham passed the probation period, offering his promised son, Isaac, on Moriah, the Mount of the Lord, Yahweh confirmed his original oath to the covenant through the prophetic word:

15 And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice (Gen. 22:15–18).

Likewise, Yahweh’s sworn oath to the covenant with Abraham through the prophetic word is the confirmation of his oath that he already made through the visible phenomenon in Genesis 15:17. The author of the book of Hebrews confirms that Yahweh made an oath before Abraham to demonstrate that all the promises of the covenant would be fulfilled without a mistake. Abraham experienced a glimpse of the fulfillment of the covenant promises during his own lifetime:

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, *he swore by himself* [ὤμοσεν καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ], 14 saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” 15 And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes *an oath is final for confirmation* [ἐρας εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὄρκος]. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, *he guaranteed it with an oath* [ἐμεσίτευσεν ὄρκῳ], 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us (Heb. 6:13–18).

As such, the author of Hebrews reflects upon and interprets that Yahweh made his promises to

Abraham. And Yahweh guaranteed to fulfill his promises through the prophetic voice of his angel “with an oath” (ἐμεσίτευσεν ὄρκω). Yahweh’s verbal sworn oath to Abraham after passing the probation period on Moriah, the Mount of the Lord, is another confirmation that the visible presence of theophanic glory in Genesis 15:17 is Yahweh’s sworn oath to the covenant.

#### D. COVENANTAL OBEDIENCE AND THE SIGN OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The covenant ratification oath, made by God to Abraham in Genesis 15:17, suggests that all the rich promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be completely fulfilled. One of the covenantal promises is that personal salvation, bestowed to the elect, may be applied by the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ who passed through the valley of death. Nevertheless, God commanded the covenant community members to live a life of obedience and holiness. This signifies that believers should be “the salt of the earth” (τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς) and “the light of the world” (τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου) (Matt. 5:13–16). Whatever they do, they must live for the glory of God. So God, through his oracle, revealed the unbreakable covenantal bond between him and Abraham, emphasizing the importance of covenantal obedience in believers’ lives:

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “*I am God almighty; walk before me, and be blameless* [הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִים] 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly” (Gen. 17:1–2).

Yahweh revealed himself to Abraham as “I am God Almighty” (אֲנִי־אֵל שַׁדַּי). This signifies how “God Almighty” will fulfill all the promises made to Abraham through the gradual process of history slowly but surely. In return, Yahweh demanded covenantal obedience from Abraham in response to his rich covenantal promises and blessings. So he commanded Abraham to “walk before me, and be blameless” (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תָּמִים) (הִתְהַלֵּךְ). This binding relationship between Yahweh and Abraham is the pattern of the covenantal relationship under the New Covenant: God saves his people in Jesus Christ through grace alone. In response, believers should be set apart and live their lives in the present world for the glory of God as the New Covenant community of Jesus Christ.

God commanded Abraham to perform the rite of circumcision as a sign of membership in the covenant

community. Receiving the sign of circumcision did not mean that the recipient was saved by means of circumcision. Rather, it meant the recipient belonged to the covenant community, making a covenantal commitment to live a holy life which represents the kingdom of God in the present sinful world:

9 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep *my covenant*, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 *This is my covenant* [אֵת בְּרִיתִי], which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, *And it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you* [וְהָיְתָה לְאֵימֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם]. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall *my covenant* be in your flesh *an everlasting covenant* [עִלְמָה לְבְרִית]. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; *he has broken my covenant* [אֵת בְּרִיתִי הִפְרָ]” (Gen. 17:9–14).

Commanding circumcision as a sign of the covenant, God assured Abraham that the covenant was “an everlasting covenant” (לְבְרִית עִלְמָה). The Abrahamic covenant as “an everlasting covenant” suggests that all the rich covenantal promises will certainly be fulfilled as the history of redemption progresses, according to the divine plan. Furthermore, it signifies that the Abrahamic covenant is an unbreakable covenant because God will fulfill all the promises of the covenant although God threatened his curse on any “uncircumcised male” in the covenant community, saying that “he has broken my covenant.”

When God made a covenant with Noah and the world, including the earth after the Flood judgment, he used the rainbow as a sign of the covenant not around or in the human body but in the sky. It suggests that the Postdiluvian Noahic covenant is not a covenant of grace but a covenant of common grace, which provides a stable world environment until the final redemptive judgment when Jesus Christ returns. That is why God placed the sign of the Postdiluvian Noahic covenant in the sky (Gen. 9:8–17).<sup>20</sup>

20. For a comprehensive biblical theological analysis of the Postdiluvian Noahic Covenant in Genesis 8:20–9:17 as the renewal or

In the Sinaitic covenant, God commanded the covenant community of Israel to keep the Sabbath holy, the fourth commandment (Exod. 20:8–11). Moreover, God established the Sabbath day as holy, as a sign of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod. 31:12–18). Keeping the Sabbath holy, as a sign of the Sinaitic covenant, indicates that the covenant is primarily the national covenant of Israel with Yahweh because he commanded the entire covenant community of Israel to keep the Sabbath holy. It was a breakable covenant although the principle of the covenant of grace, inaugurated in Genesis 3:15, confirmed and expanded through the Abrahamic covenant, was continuously applied even under the Sinaitic covenant (Gal. 3:15–29). Later, through Jeremiah's prophecy, God identifies how the Sinaitic covenant as the Old Covenant was breakable while the New Covenant is unbreakable because God will make it with his people through the Messiah, the mediator of the New Covenant as well as the fulfiller of the requirement of the covenant, bestowing all the redemptive blessings that God promised (Jer. 31:31–34).

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recovery of the covenant of common grace, see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 244–62; Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 51–55. The common grace character of the Post-diluvian Noachic Covenant is persuasively summarized by Vos as follows: "We now come to the Noachian Revelation which took place after the flood. In this positive constructive measures were taken for the further carrying out of the divine purpose. Here again the reminder is in place that the principles disclosed and the measures taken did not directly relate to the prosecution of redemption, although an indirect bearing upon that also must not be overlooked. That the development of natural life is proximately dealt with, follows from the following: what is ordained by God and the promise made have equal reference to the entire Noachian family. But we know that the work of redemption was carried on in the line of Shem only; the arrangement made is not even confined to the human race; it is made with every living creature, nay, with the earth herself; that the *berith* is a *berith* of nature appears from the *berith* sign; the rainbow is a phenomenon of nature, and absolutely universal in its reference. All the signs connected with redemption are bloody, sacramentally dividing signs." *Ibid.*, 51.

21. Edwards comprehensively captures and describes the fundamental nature of judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah as a type of the eschatological judgment: "But this was now in a great measure forgotten; now therefore God was pleased again, in a most amazing manner, to show his wrath against sin, in the destruction of these cities; which was after such a manner as to be the liveliest image of hell of any thing that ever had been; and therefore the apostle Jude says, 'They suffer the vengeance of eternal fire,' Jude 7. God rained storms of fire and brimstone upon them. The way that they were destroyed probably was by thick flashes of lightning. The streams of brimstone were so thick as to burn up all these cities; so that they perished in the flames of divine wrath. By this might be seen the dreadful wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; which tended to show men the necessity of redemption, and so to promote that great work." Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, 64.

#### E. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND THE JUDGMENT UPON SODOM AND GOMORRAH

God cursed the world through the Flood judgment due to the corruption of the people, exempting only Noah and his family. After the Flood, God promised Noah and the whole earth that there would never be "a flood to destroy the earth" again. This promise to Noah indicates that God would never curse the world by a flood again on a global scale. And it also explains how God will not use the Flood as a means of the final redemptive judgment at the *Parousia*:

11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth...  
15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh (Gen. 9:11–15).

The post-Flood promise to Noah was fulfilled surprisingly within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant. Certainly, God promised Noah that he would not destroy the world through the Flood judgment again. Nevertheless, God did not reveal to Noah the means or method of the final judgment. The judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah was a type of the final eschatological judgment.<sup>21</sup>

The Bible identifies Sodom and Gomorrah as spiritually and morally corrupt cities where homosexuality was rampant. God sent two angels to save Lot's family, the covenant family, before the judgment of the cities. Knowing that there were male visitors in Lot's house, "the men of Sodom" surrounded the house and declared that they would like to engage in sexual activities. This episode indicates the homosexual nature of Sodom and Gomorrah:

4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. 5 And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? *Bring them out to us, that we may know them* [אֵלֵינוּ וְנִדְעָה אֹתָם] אֵלֵינוּ [הֵרִיבֵנוּ] (Gen. 19:4–5).

As such, the episode before the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah suggests that homosexuality was common in the cities. In that sense, "bring them out to us, that we may know them" may be better translated as "bring them out to us so that we may have sexual

relations with them.”<sup>22</sup> In addition, this episode suggests that homosexuality is against God’s creation ordinance, the regulation of life, and the institution of the family in the Garden of Eden.

Against the corruption and wickedness, God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, located on the east side of the edge of Canaan, with his fiery judgment. These two cities represented the sinful pattern of life near the holy land. Notably, God saved Abraham’s nephew Lot and his family from the destruction of the cities through the intervention of his angels:

12 Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. 13 For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.” 14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. 15 As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” 16 But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 And as they brought them out, one said, “Escape for your life, Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away” (Gen. 19:12–17).

Lot and his family members, as a covenant community, escaped to Zoar, a safe area. We must pay special attention to Zoar, which was a part of Canaan, the Promised Land. Zoar is described as a beautiful land; it was “like the garden of the Lord” (גַּן־יְהוָה) which has the image of the Paradise Land represented in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen. 13:10).<sup>23</sup> Zoar, as the garden of the Lord, actually reflects Canaan as the Promised Land to Abraham and alludes to the everlasting Kingdom of God which will be consummated after the final redemptive judgment. After Lot’s covenant community escaped the city, the judgment of fire came down from heaven. The judgment was a type of final judgment; it clearly separated the covenant community from the non-covenant community. In that sense, the judgment was a redemptive judgment, which is related to redemption and salvation:

23 The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. 24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. 25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:23–26).

Jesus prophesied that the world in the last days will be similar to the days of Noah and Lot. Our present world will face the final redemptive judgment. Jesus’ prophecy to his disciples reveals that the Flood judgment during the time of Noah and the fiery judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah during the time of Lot were the OT types of the final eschatological judgment:

26 Just as it was *in the days of Noah* [ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε], so will it be *in the days of the Son of Man* [ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου]. 27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise, just as it was *in the days of Lot* [ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Λῳτ]—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be *on the day when the Son of Man is revealed* [ἢ ἡμέρα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποκαλύπτεται] (Luke 17:26–30).

Jesus noted that “the days of Noah” (ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε) were the last days of the original world before the corrupt world faced the universal flood judgment. Similarly, “the days of the Son of Man” (ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) are the last days of the present world which are the days between the first and second coming of the Son of Man. And “the days of the Son of Man” can also be identified as the last days or the semi-eschatological age.

God used the method of holy war when he executed redemptive judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. God revealed two different types of war in redemptive history. In fact, God allowed two different types of war when he commanded Israel to conquer the Promised Land. One was a common grace war which is the

22. The Septuagint adequately reflects the original Hebrew meaning and translates it as “ἐξάγαγε αὐτοὺς πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἵνα συγγενώμεθα αὐτοῖς” which may be translated in English as “bring them out to us so that we may have sexual relations with them.”

23. The Septuagint translates גַּן־יְהוָה as “ὡς ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ” which carries the meaning of “like the paradise of the Lord.”

common method of war among nations as we witness in the contemporary world; it respects international law along with peace treaties. God commanded the covenant community of Israel to wage a common grace war outside of the boundaries of the Promised Land when they marched into the Promised Land (Deut. 20: 10–15). The other was a holy war: the war of “total destruction” (הרס). God commanded the covenant community of Israel to wage a holy war within the boundaries of the Promised Land when they conquered the Promised Land (Deut. 20:16–18). The holy war was the war of Yahweh, and Yahweh fought against the sinful world himself, although he commanded the covenant community of Israel to fight the holy war in his place when they conquered the Promised Land.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the redemptive history of the OT, Yahweh waged holy war several times, separating the covenant community from non-covenant communities.

24. For the divergent patterns and practices of holy war in the history of Ancient Israel from different perspectives and understandings, see G. H. Jones, “‘Holy War’ or ‘Yahweh War?’” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975), 642–58; Idem, “The Concept of Holy War,” in *The World of the Old Testament*, 299–322. Ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989); Tremper Longman III & Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, trans. and ed. Marva J. Dawn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Surprisingly, over all, the scholars, while exploring the patterns of holy war in the history of Ancient Israel, bypass and ignore the significance of Yahweh’s holy war in the Flood judgment and judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which are powerful historical demonstrations of the classical paradigm of Yahweh’s holy war. In contemporary international wars and disputes, the radical Islamic fundamentalists have often claimed and raged holy war (*Jihad*) in the name of Allah. The radical Islamic claim on holy war, at best, is a pseudo-holy war when we examine it from the biblical concept of holy war, vividly patterned in redemptive history.

25. For Jesus as the Son of Man as well as the Son of God in light of the Pauline theology in the milieu of the four Gospels, see Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, trans. David H. Freeman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 21–130. The historical critical interpretation of Jesus as the Son of Man as well as the Son of God has been represented by Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951 & 1955), I: 26–133.

26. Kline interprets Isaac’s sacrifice as the intrusion of eschatological judgment: “It was the ethics of the Cross, itself an intrusion of final judgment into mid-history, that was intruded into the Old Testament age in the divine command to sacrifice Isaac. The provision of the sacrificial substitute once Abraham had manifested the obedience of faith advises us of the inadequacy of sinful human life for making atonement. God had not defined Isaac’s life as the life that was actually to be sacrificed as an atonement for sin. Meanwhile, Abraham’s confrontation with the Intrusion’s demand had served to try the father of believers whether he was prepared to live by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.” Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 169.

Yahweh fought the holy war, the war of total destruction, when he executed the redemptive judgment against the corrupt world while saving the Noahic covenant community in the Ark. Similarly, Yahweh fought against the corrupt cities of Sodom and Gomorrah through the means of a holy war, separating the covenant community of Abraham’s nephew, Lot, and the non-covenant community within the cities. As such, the pattern of holy war in redemptive history demonstrates the coming of the final holy war. God will execute the final redemptive judgment, separating the elect and reprobates, at the *Parousia*. The demonstration of the holy war against Sodom and Gomorrah within the context of the Abrahamic covenant is the divine demonstration that the ultimate realization of the heavenly Kingdom of God, as the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, will be granted to the covenant community of the elect in Jesus Christ after the final redemptive judgment.

#### F. ISAAC ON MOUNT MORIAH AND THE SON OF MAN

In the inauguration of redemptive history, God prophesied that the Messiah will come as “the woman’s offspring” (Gen. 3:15). According to the four Gospels, Jesus, as the Messiah, revealed his own identity as “the Son of God” and “the Son of Man.” Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of the OT, emphasized his sinless humanity with his self-designation as “the Son of Man.” Meanwhile, Jesus emphasized his divinity and the specific nature of the Triune God against rejection by Judaism in the first century with his self-identification as “the Son of God.”<sup>25</sup>

Isaac, as the promised son of Abraham, about to be sacrificed on the altar of Mount Moriah by his father, Abraham, can be considered and seen as a figure, alluding to the Son of Man on the altar of Golgotha as the only begotten Son.<sup>26</sup> In that sense, Isaac on the altar of Mount Moriah was the first divine revelation in the OT that the Messiah, “the woman’s offspring,” would actually come as “the Son of Man,” although the specific words “the Son of Man” were not used in the context of the sacrifice (Gen. 22:9–13).

Abraham was about to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac, on the altar of Mount Moriah. Then, suddenly, the voice of the angel of the Lord intruded from heaven and told Abraham to stop. Yahweh prepared a ram to sacrifice as a burnt offering “on the Mount of the Lord” (בְּהַר יְהוָה) (Gen. 22:9–14). The dramatic transition of sacrifice from Isaac to a ram is a divine revelation about the mission of the coming of the Son of Man. Indeed, it is a Messianic prophecy that the Messiah as the Son

of Man will come to sacrifice himself as “the Lamb of God” and be slaughtered as a little lamb at Golgotha, the Mount of the Lord. All the animal sacrifices on the altar of the Lord in the OT prefigured Jesus as the final and “once for all” sacrifice (Heb. 7:26–28). Hence, echoing the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount of the Lord, John the Baptist shouted that the Messiah as “the Lamb of God” will be slaughtered to atone and forgive the sins of the elect. In the same vein, a ram, prepared by Yahweh on the Mount of the Lord, alluded to “the Lamb of God” (ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) who is Jesus Christ:

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world [ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου]! 30 This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I am baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel” (John 1:29–31; Cf. Isa. 53:7).

Abraham offered the ram as a burnt offering which was related primarily to atonement for sins. In fact, Yahweh accepted the burnt offerings as “the pleasing aroma” which signifies the soothing or appeasing of Yahweh’s anger due to human sin (Gen. 8:20–22; Lev. 1:3–17).

After Abraham offered the burnt offering on the altar, he shouted that “the Lord will provide,” which echoes his prophetic answer to Isaac: “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Gen. 22:8). Witnessing the burnt offering provided by Yahweh, Abraham shouted prophetically that “the Lord will provide” (יְהוָה יִרְאֶה). It signifies that Yahweh will provide the burnt offerings to be sacrificed on the altar. And from that time on, the oral tradition had been transmitted by saying “on the mount of the Lord it shall be provided” (Gen. 22:14). Later, Yahweh commanded that the temple be built on Mount Zion. The Chronicler identifies Mount Zion as Mount Moriah, the place of the altar, offering the burnt offering by Abraham (2 Chron. 3:1). Ultimately, Yahweh provided the Lamb of God as a once for all sacrifice, which is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic voice of “the Lord will provide.” Fulfilling his earthly mission, Jesus as the Lamb of God offered himself to atone for the sins of the elect at Golgotha near the place of the Solomon temple where Abraham’s burnt offering was offered on Mount Moriah. After the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lamb of God, the apostle John saw the exalted Lamb of God through a vision where he is ruling both visible

and invisible realms; he is receiving honor, glory, and worship at the heavenly throne (Rev. 5: 6–14).

After Abraham passed his trial, being willing to sacrifice his only promised son on Mount Moriah, God confirmed how the Messiah as Abraham’s offspring would indeed come. Abraham’s obedience, displayed by his willingness to sacrifice his promised son on the altar of Mount Moriah, resembles Jesus’ perfect obedience, sacrificing himself as the final sacrifice: “And *in your offspring* [בְּיִרְעָךָ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:18).

We need to pay attention to God’s promise to Abraham after he successfully passed the trial to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac, on the altar of Mount Moriah. The promise was to bless “all the nations of the earth” in the offspring of Abraham. And God used the promised designation as “in your offspring” (בְּיִרְעָךָ).<sup>27</sup> The Abrahamic promise designation as “in your offspring” became an apostolic foundation using the language of “in Christ Jesus,” “in Christ,” and “through Christ Jesus” to indicate the promised blessings of the elect in Jesus Christ, who passed his trial through his sinless, obedient life and sacrificial death as the mediator of the New Covenant.

After Abraham died, God confirmed again to Isaac, the promised son of Abraham, that he would form the theocratic kingdom in the Promised Land. And “all the nations of the earth” shall be blessed in the offspring of the promised child of Abraham. Again, the redemptive blessings of “in your offspring” signify how God would give all the redemptive blessings to the elect *in Christ Jesus* who would come as the seed of Abraham. Once again, God reminded Isaac that he would use Abraham’s obedience as the ground to bless his descendants in the Promised Land because his obedience mirrored the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man:

1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the Lord appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. 4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And *in your offspring all the*

27. The Septuagint translation of בְּיִרְעָךָ as ἐν τῷ σπέρματι σου is perfectly harmonious with the apostolic designation of the Abrahamic Covenant expression *in Christ, in Christ Jesus, and through Christ Jesus*.

*nations of the earth shall be blessed* [בְּרֵכָה כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ וְיִהְיֶה בְרָכָה], 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” (Gen 26:1–5)

Later, God revealed through OT prophecy that the Son of Man would come. But he also revealed that the Son of Man will come as the eschatological King who will rule the heavenly Kingdom of God. God revealed the coming Son of Man as the eschatological figure who will rule the fully realized kingdom of God through Daniel’s prophetic night visions. To do so, the Messiah had to pass through a trial as the mediator of the New Covenant. Only then would the realized Kingdom of God be granted by the heavenly Father. At last, he fulfilled all the earthly missions given by God. And God would grant his realized kingdom to his son where he

28. Kline notes that Abraham’s obedience, intending to sacrifice Isaac as the son of promise on the altar of Mount Morriah, was *meritorious*, besides the affirmation of his saving faith through his obedient life. And Abraham’s meritorious obedience had redemptive historical significance, providing grounds to grant the theocratic kingdom to his descendents. In doing so, Kline carefully avoids legalism because Abraham’s obedience served not to bestow personal salvation for the elect but the theocratic kingdom in the Promised Land, which is the type of the everlasting theocratic kingdom. However, I think *meritorious obedience should be limited to the first and last Adams* although the first Adam failed to display this in the Garden of Eden. From the perspective of biblical theology, meritorious obedience should be applied to only sinless and perfect obedience, demonstrated by the obedience of Jesus Christ as the last Adam through his life and death as the mediator of the New Covenant while the first Adam as the representative covenantal head failed to obey. Kline establishes his own biblical theological argument of how Abraham’s obedience was meritorious, with which I disagree: “That Abraham’s obedience had special historic significance as the basis for God’s future favorable action towards his descendents is confirmed by the Lord’s late repetition of the substance of this oracle, now to Isaac (Gen. 26:2ff.). Having restated his commitment to fulfill the covenant promises to Isaac and his line, the Lord concluded: ‘because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws’ (Gen. 26:5, cf. v. 24). Here the significance of Abraham’s works cannot be limited to their role in validation of his own faith. His faithful performance of his covenantal duty is here clearly declared to sustain a causal relationship to the blessing of Isaac and Israel. It had a meritorious character that procured a reward enjoyed by others... Because of Abraham’s obedience redemptive history would take the shape of an Abrahamite kingdom of God from which salvation’s blessings would rise up and flow out to the nations. God was pleased to constitute Abraham’s exemplary works as the meritorious ground for granting to Israel after the flesh the distinctive role of being formed as the typological kingdom, the matrix from which Christ should come... Though not the ground of the inheritance of heaven, Abraham’s obedience was the ground for Israel’s inheritance of Canaan. Salvation would not come because of Abraham’s obedience, but because of Abraham’s obedience salvation would come of the Abrahamites, the Jews (John 4:22).” Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 324–25.

will rule the kingdom as the Great King, as well as “the Son of Man” (בֶּרֶךְ אֲנִי), who was already revealed through the intended sacrifice of the promised son, Isaac, on Mount of Moriah. The ruling of the Son of Man, as well as the Kingdom of God, will be everlasting after the Son of Man returns in eschatological glory “with the clouds of heaven”:

13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one *like a son of man* [אֲנִי כְּבֶרֶךְ], and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13–14).

During his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ had the self-consciousness that he came to the world as “the Son of Man” as prophesied through Daniel’s night visions. For example, in the discourse with Zacchaeus in Jericho, Jesus revealed his own identity as “the Son of Man” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). And the earthly mission of the Son of Man was to save “the lost,” adopting them as “a son of Abraham” (υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ), regardless of their ethnic identities and social statuses. Thus, Jesus interprets the recipient of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant from the perspective of the New Covenant, of which he is the mediator. He is the fulfillment of Isaac, who was sacrificed on Mount of Moriah as the promised son of Abraham:

8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is *a son of Abraham* [υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ]. 10 For *the Son of Man* [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου] came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:8–10)

As we observed, God rejoiced in seeing Abraham’s obedience to sacrifice his promised child, Isaac, which established a foundation for God to grant all the promised blessings. Nevertheless, Abraham’s obedience was not a meritorious obedience, although God used his obedience to make a ground to bless “all the nations of the earth” in his offspring. Abraham’s obedience prophetically anticipated Jesus’s perfect and meritorious obedience through his life and death, which is the foundation for the salvation of the elect in him, to whom he grants the full right to inherit the kingdom of God in heaven.<sup>28</sup>

*Continued on Page 249.*

generic transcendental arguments and modal transcendental argumentations. He advocates the latter while providing a new and clearer way to articulate it with the help of analytical philosophy and possible world semantics.

Lastly, Camden Bucey proves the second of two exegetical studies in this year's issue. This article, like Jeon's, is also an Old Testament study. However, unlike Jeon's piece, Bucey's focus is in the prophet Micah. Bucey's concern is to demonstrate the close relation between exegetical, biblical, and systematic theology. He uses Micah 3:1–4 as a test case to demonstrate that not only can the doctrine of the Trinity be found on the pages of the Old Testament, but also the finer details of the doctrine such as the perichoretic relations of the three persons of the Godhead.

In our book review section for this year, we have a number of notables. All the reviews and responses were quality reviews, but we were able to include some unusual things. Some of the most important books reviewed for this issue are Michael Horton's volume on systematic theology, Johannes Maccovius' book on distinctions (once a prime text in seminaries in the seventeenth century), Eric Johnson's massive compendium on counseling, and last but not least, a couple of books on John Knox reviewed by yours truly (we had to have *something* in the review section to match the theme of John Knox!). Three unusual features of this year's review section include two reviews and responses, one on the subject of infant baptism, with J.V. Fesko and Gary Crampton arguing for paedobaptism and credobaptism, respectively; and the other review and response on Kevin Vanhoozer's recent book *Remythologizing Theology*. We were fortunate to have Dr. Vanhoozer able and willing to respond to the review from James Dolezal, as well as having a further response from Dolezal. The third unusual feature is that we have an entry in Reformed philosophy, a first for The Confessional Presbyterian. Paul Helm's excellent volume entitled *Eternal God*, now in its second edition, is ably reviewed by a Reformed philosopher, Patrick Hall. Enjoy our selection for this year.

This year's recurring back of issue features offer Todd Rudell's rendition of Psalm 116 for *Psallo*, more information on James Durham manuscripts in *Antiquary*, and a translation of the preface to the Constance Hymnal for *In Translatiōne*. The latter is of note for having a defense of hymns to go along with the Psalms in public worship song, but also of interest as an early Reformed acknowledgment that some contended for the singing of the Psalms alone in the services of the church (which would be the practice of many Reformation churches such as the Church of Scotland). While the author was Reformed, and was writing for (and the hymnal was ecumenically intended for use by) Reformed, Lutheran and Anabaptist alike, some of the argument is strikingly Lutheran, rather than from the stand point of that regulative

principle of worship defended just some ten years later by John Calvin in his *Necessity of Reforming the Church* and later by John Knox in his writings.

We offer these articles and the numerous book reviews with humility and thanksgiving to our Triune God. It is our prayerful hope that God would be pleased to use this 2011 edition to bring much good to His Church, edify and challenge His servants, and bring all glory to His thrice holy Name. Amen.

*Holy Communion in the Theology of John Knox. Continued from Page 24.*

#### THE EUCHARISTIC LEGACY OF KNOX

As we approach the five hundredth anniversary of John Knox's birth, one wonders how our Reformer will be commemorated.<sup>75</sup> To be sure, Knox has many enemies in our day, who will try to vilify him in one way or another. Our concern here, however, is not with those who condemn him but with those who admire him as the leading Reformer of Scotland. The image of John Knox as a fiery preacher, the trumpeter of God, is certainly true to history, and it is right that we commemorate his legacy as a preacher of the Word. But Knox should also be commemorated as a restorer of the sacrament in Scotland. Indeed, the rich, eucharistic theology and piety of our Reformer left an indelible mark on Scottish Presbyterian history. It can be seen in the Communion sermons of Robert Bruce as well as those of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, in the works of John Willison and Robert Walker, and, of course, in the Scottish Communion seasons of the eighteenth century. Along with Sir David Wilkie's portrait (see cover), these things bear eloquent testimony to the eucharistic legacy of John Knox, the restorer of the sacrament of Holy Communion in the realm of Scotland. ■

*The Abrahamic Covenant and the Kingdom of God. Continued from Page 138.*

#### CONCLUSION

We endeavored to prove that God promised the holy theocratic kingdom which includes the covenant people and the Promised Land in Canaan. Through the ceremony of covenant ratification by oath, God assured Abraham that all the promises would be realized and fulfilled. God's promise of the holy theocratic kingdom in Canaan was a type of the everlasting kingdom of heaven in Jesus Christ.

We found that the recent discoveries of the treaties in the ancient Near East do not contradict the classic covenant

75. Although the exact year of Knox's birth is uncertain, he was most likely born in 1514 (see Kyle-Johnson, 40).

theology in the seventeenth century. Rather, they affirm it. We used the Abrahamic covenant as a test case. The designation of the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of grace in classic covenant theology is compatible with the concept of the covenant of royal grant, in parallel with the treaty of royal grant which was one of the two different patterns on the treaties in the ancient Near East.

We explored how the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah was redemptive judgment through holy war and separated the covenant community from the non-covenant community and corrupt world. It was a type of the final redemptive judgment at the *Parousia*. The redemptive judgment within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant was the divine demonstration that the ultimate realization of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled with the eschatological redemptive judgment.

Through the intended sacrifice of Isaac on the altar of Mount Moriah by Abraham, we endeavored to seek the image of the Son of Man sacrificed on the altar of Golgotha. In that sense, the sacrifice of Isaac on the altar was a Messianic prophecy of how “the woman’s offspring” would come as “the Son of Man” to forgive the sins of the elect and bestow all the redemptive blessings that God promised to Abraham, including personal salvation.

We established the apostolic designation of “in Christ Jesus,” “in Christ,” and “through Christ Jesus” to note redemptive blessings, including personal salvation, adopted from the Abrahamic covenant wherein God promised redemptive blessings to Abraham and his descendants by the means of the phrases “in your offspring” and “in you.”

We endeavored to support a thesis that Abraham’s justification by faith within the historical context of the Abrahamic covenant provided for the first time in redemptive history a soteriological pattern that sinners are justified by faith apart from obedience or works of the law. Representatively, Paul used this soteriological motif after his Damascus Road conversion experience and proclaimed it for both Jews and Gentiles, as did the other apostles.■

*On the Shoulder of Giants: Van Til’s Appropriation of Warfield and Kuyper. Continued from Page 146.*

Finally, Kuyper was correct to connect apologetics with the other dogmatical sciences. Apologetics cannot be divorced

20. For further discussion focused specifically on the *generic* form of the transcendental argument, see my “A Dilemma For the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence,” *Philosophia Christi* 11, no. 2 (2009): 465–469. James Anderson provides an insightful reply to my proposed dilemma in “No Dilemma for the Proponent of the Transcendental Argument: A Response to David Reiter,” forthcoming in *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2011). I reply to Anderson in “Rejoinder to Anderson,” also forthcoming in *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011).

from the Christianity it is intended to defend or vindicate. However, he was wrong to diminish its significance. Given Van Til’s correction of Kuyper’s territorial notion of the antithesis and common grace with a temporal or eschatological view, we can now see that apologetics has an essential role to play in the proclamation of the Gospel (and in this Warfield was correct). Apologetics is no more fruitless than preaching or evangelism in this age before the consummation. Preaching and witnessing have no inherent powers to convert the sinner. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit uses preaching and witnessing and so can also use apologetics.

#### CONCLUSION

Cornelius Van Til critically appropriated the apologetic insights of both Benjamin B. Warfield and Abraham Kuyper. He accepted Warfield’s insight into the objective, intelligible, and clear revelation of God to man in nature and history. But he rejected Warfield’s abstract notion of induction and probability and what he understood to be Warfield’s notion of neutral “right reason.” Van Til agreed with Kuyper’s notion of the antithesis between belief and unbelief but he rejected the idea that there were practices unaffected by the fall or that there were neutral zones in this fallen world and he rejected Kuyper’s diminution of apologetics which resulted from his territorial notion of the antithesis and common grace. Van Til’s improvement on Kuyper’s notion of antithesis and common grace allows us to recognize the central place of the transcendental argument in presuppositional apologetics: the argument for the impossibility to the contrary.

Van Til stood on the shoulders of giants and he benefitted from the insights of Warfield and Kuyper. He saw farther and more clearly than these two Reformed stalwarts and we do them no dishonor when we recognize this. Greg Bahnsen is correct when he notes that he who understands how Van Til critically appropriated *both* Warfield and Kuyper will understand the genius of the presuppositional apologetic method.■

*The Modal Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence. Continued from Page 152.*

Our study has led us to distinguish the *Modal Transcendental Argument Form* from the more “generic” transcendental argument form.<sup>20</sup> Collett strongly emphasizes the desideratum that the transcendental argument should establish the necessity of God’s existence (Collett, “Van Til,” 262), but he does not clearly recognize and make explicit the modal status of the premises of the argument—this is especially true with regard to the “granted” premise of the argument. On the other hand, Choi explicitly asserts that a modal (necessity) premise is of the very essence of a transcendental argument. But he