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# The Promise Keeper

T H E   G O D   O F   T H E   C O V E N A N T S

by R.C. Sproul



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# The Promise Keeper

The God of the Covenants

R.C. Sproul



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# The Covenant of Redemption

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Knowing God means knowing that He is and will be utterly faithful to His covenant on our behalf. Scripture does not give us the full details of the plan that took place between the Triune Godhead in the past. But it does disclose the manifestation of that covenant in time—from God’s redemptive work through the nation of Israel in the stories of the Old Testament to the culminating appearance of the God-Man, Jesus the Christ. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul explores the covenantal theme in Scripture and the foundational intra-Trinitarian covenant of redemption.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 89:3-4; Isaiah 42:5-9; 53:10-12; Luke 22:28-30; John 10:18; 17:4-5

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the centrality of the covenantal theme in Scripture.
2. To be able to articulate what the covenant of redemption is, and how it relates to God’s work of reconciling His creation to Himself.

## QUOTATION

*And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

—Acts 2:38-39

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Scriptural Theme: Covenant

- a. The whole concept of “covenant” is basic to understanding Scripture. We can go so far as to say that God’s work with and in creation is couched in covenantal terms.
- b. One major principle of this Scriptural theme is that revelation is progressive. That is, each subsequent revelation from God is not a corrective on what He has previously said; rather, each revelation augments or adds content to the previous one.
- c. The word covenant does not simply mean “agreement.” We must not allow our own western conceptions of “covenant” to dictate the Scriptural meaning. But many of our own conceptions do have elements found in the biblical covenants (e.g., “promises”).
- d. Biblical covenants have a more profound religiosity inherent in them. They are wrought by divine sanction, and depict an integral relationship between promises and fulfillments (i.e., God *always* fulfills His word.).
- e. Thus, the Christian is to walk by faith—a faith that is nothing less than being fully persuaded of the promises of God, which will lead us in gratitude to live in covenant with Him.
- f. This, of course, is impossible to do without His grace. While we have not seen or heard God, His Word has been given for this reason: to attest to His covenant faithfulness.

### II. The Covenant of Redemption

- a. Much controversy surrounded Jesus during His lifetime. From whence did He come? By whose authority? What was His origin? The answers to these questions bear on this first covenant among the Godhead.
- b. Christ Jesus did not come to change what God had revealed prior to His arrival, or as is commonly misunderstood, to show mercy in contradistinction to the Old Testament “God of wrath.”
- c. All along, Jesus was doing the will of His Father. They were one in their eternal purpose. He did nothing on His own initiative, but came because of an intra-Trinitarian covenant—a covenant that was not “Plan B.”
- d. In this covenant, the Father sent the Son, the Son accomplished the plan, and the Spirit applied the Son’s accomplished work to the people of the Triune God.
- e. Typically, Jesus’ work in redemption is discussed in two ways:
- f. *Perfect Active Obedience*: Jesus actively and willfully put Himself under the Law of God (e.g., He was baptized just as sinners in need of cleansing were to do). Jesus needed to accomplish all that God required Israel to do. Thus, He became the embodiment of Israel. And as the Israel of God, He achieved perfect righteousness and earned redemption for His people.

- g. *Perfect Passive Obedience*: This work Jesus did on the cross. He subjugated Himself to the curses of the covenant, to the judgment and wrath of the Father, on behalf of His people.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Each subsequent covenant revealed in Scripture corrects the problems with God's previous plan.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Both true and false
  - d. I don't know
2. The covenant of redemption describes \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The intra-Trinitarian agreement to redeem a people for God's glory
  - b. The intra-Trinitarian agreement to damn a people for God's glory
  - c. Both a and b
  - d. None of the above
3. The covenant of redemption was God's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Response to what had taken Him by surprise: the Fall of man
  - b. Response to the Israelite nation's failure to keep the covenant of works
  - c. Plan to provide salvation for sinners via the death of Jesus on the cross
  - d. None of the above
4. Which of the following best describes the "active obedience" of Jesus?
  - a. The passion (death and resurrection)
  - b. Jesus put Himself under the Law of God and perfectly abided in it.
  - c. Jesus put Himself under the Law of God and abolished all of it.
  - d. All of the above
5. Much of the Bible is couched in \_\_\_\_\_ terms.
  - a. Scientific
  - b. Covenantal
  - c. Both a and b
  - d. None of the above
6. By whose authority did Jesus come to earth?
  - a. His own
  - b. The Father's
  - c. The Holy Spirit's
  - d. All of the above

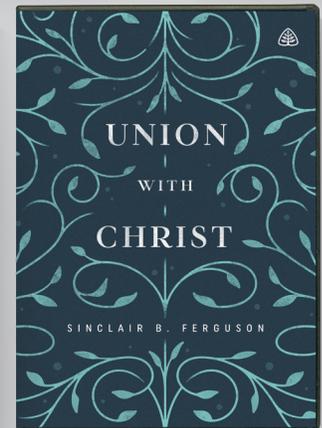
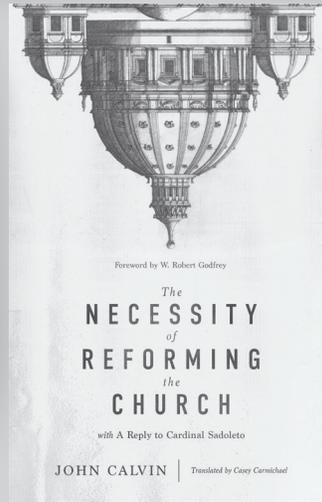
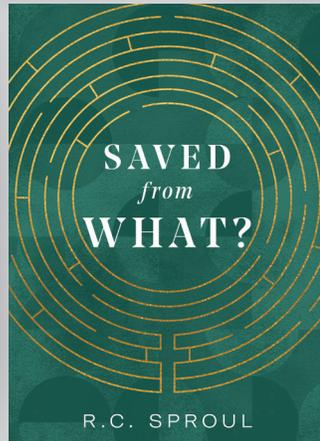
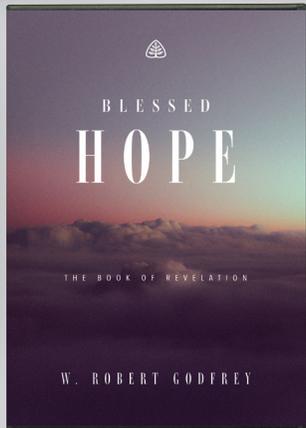
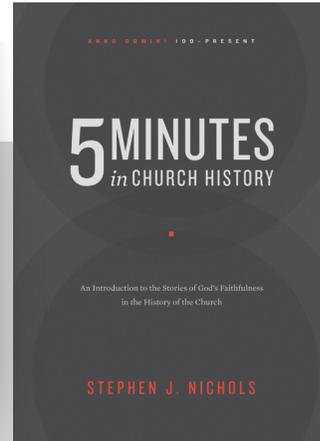
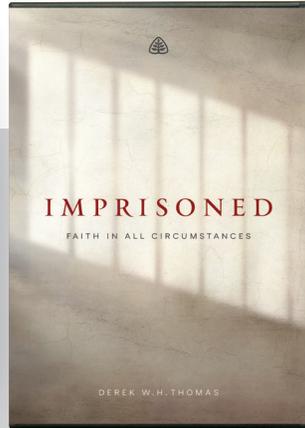
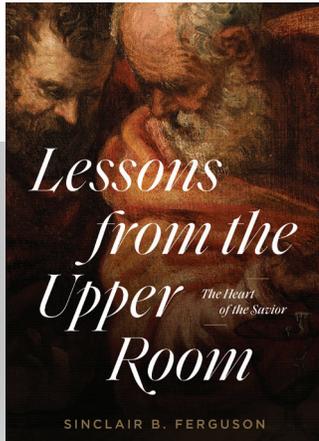
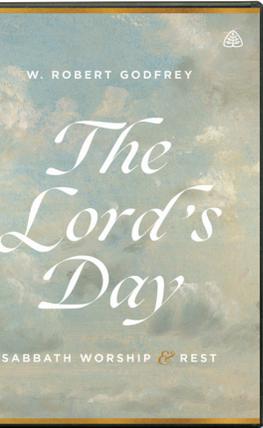
## BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain how the covenant of redemption relates to the salvation of sinners in time.
2. Are there any portions of Scripture that come to mind when discussing God's definite plan for his work of redemption?
3. Is the covenant of redemption inconsistent with the idea that we have the free will to choose according to our desires? Explain your answer.
4. In the covenant of redemption, did the Father agree to call out classes (i.e., a certain group of people) or individuals into the service of the Son?
5. Can you define or describe any faulty views that you may have heard or read on this subject? How would you respond to the person who argues that the idea of this covenant is pure speculation?
6. In what sense is Jesus the Son subordinate to God the Father?
7. What portions of Scripture show that Jesus voluntarily took His task upon Himself (for starters, John 10:18, Phil. 2:8)?

## SUGGESTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Christ of the Covenants*, pp. 3-25, 91-2

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