

S T U D Y   G U I D E



**SIGNED**  
*An Introduction to*  
**SEALED**  
*Covenant Theology*  
**DELIVERED**

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J.V. FESKO

S T U D Y G U I D E

# Signed, Sealed, Delivered

An Introduction to  
Covenant Theology

J.V. Fesko



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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# Introduction

How does God establish a relationship with us? Throughout history and even eternally, God relates to us through covenants. This reality is at the heart of how we read the Bible and how we understand the saving work of Jesus Christ. In this teaching series, Dr. J.V. Fesko presents the essentials of classical Reformed covenant theology, surveying the overarching covenants of Scripture: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. We'll see how God has executed His eternal plan of salvation through the perfect work of Jesus Christ, how He meets us in the sacraments, and how He joins us together as a church—all for His glory.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at <a href="http://Ligonier.org">Ligonier.org</a>.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

# Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Signed, Sealed, Delivered* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	<b>Extended 8-Week Plan</b>	<b>Standard 6-Week Plan</b>	<b>Abbreviated 4-Week Plan</b>	<b>Intensive 3-Week Plan</b>
<b>Week</b>	<b>Lesson</b>			
<b>1</b>	*	1	1	1 & 2
<b>2</b>	1	2	2 & 3	3 & 4
<b>3</b>	2	3	4 & 5	5 & 6
<b>4</b>	3	4	6	
<b>5</b>	4	5		
<b>6</b>	5	6		
<b>7</b>	6			
<b>8</b>	*			

\* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

# What Is a Covenant?

## INTRODUCTION

The culmination of God's covenantal relationship with His people is expressed in terms of a marriage, the marriage between Christ and His church. Covenant theology is the story of this marriage. In this lesson, Dr. Fesko introduces the overarching covenants of classical Reformed covenant theology and defines what exactly is meant by the term *covenant*.

## LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe briefly the covenants of redemption, works, and grace
- Define the term *covenant* and identify the characteristics of a covenant and the types of covenants in Scripture

## KEY IDEAS

- The covenant marriage between God and His people is a theme that runs throughout Scripture.
- In its most basic sense, a covenant is an agreement between two or more persons.
- There are seven primary characteristics of the covenants that are found in the Bible.
- In Scripture, we see covenants between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; between God and people; and between human beings.

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## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- What is your goal in undertaking this study on covenant theology?
- How would you define the term *covenant*?

#### *Scripture Reading*

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

—Revelation 19:6–8

- In this lesson, we will learn that this passage is steeped in the doctrine of the covenants. What might be the chief purpose of God’s covenants, according to this passage?

### During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

#### *The Doctrine of the Covenants Introduced*

0:00–6:20

- How does the end of the Bible connect to its very beginning?
- What covenants are the focus of this teaching series? Briefly describe them.

#### *The Characteristics and Types of Covenants*

6:20–22:50

- How is the term *covenant* defined?



- What are the seven features of biblical covenants?
- What are the three different types of covenants?

#### After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- How does marriage give us a picture of God's covenant relationship to us throughout Scripture?

If you are in a group, have the members read Hosea 1 and discuss their insights from this passage as it relates to marriage as a picture of God's covenant.

- How does the concept of covenant help us understand the nature of God's promises in the Bible? Consider how this applies to the three covenants that are the focus of this teaching series.

If you are in a group, have the members name and explain different attributes of God that give them confidence that God is willing and able to keep His promises as expressed through covenants.

- What is a covenant? Provide an answer that incorporates the definition, features, and types of covenants explained in this lecture. What is a danger of being too restrictive in defining *covenant*?

If you are in a group, have the members identify which of the three covenants they have the most questions or confusion about.

#### PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for His willingness to create us and enter into a relationship with us.
- Confess ways that your faithfulness has waned though God remains faithful.
- Thank God for covenanting as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to redeem a people for Himself.
- Ask God to work through His Spirit as you continue to study about covenant theology, that it be not merely informational but transformational.

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## REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. Where does the basic definition of *covenant* in this lecture originate?
  - a. The Westminster Shorter Catechism
  - b. Luther's Small Catechism
  - c. The Heidelberg Catechism
  - d. The Children's Catechism
2. How many times does the English word *covenant* appear in the English Standard Version of the Bible?
  - a. Less than fifty times
  - b. Between fifty and one hundred times
  - c. Between two hundred and three hundred times
  - d. More than three hundred times
3. The covenant of redemption took place after the fall.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. What does the term "cutting a covenant" refer to?
  - a. Cleaving to a covenant party through a faith promise
  - b. Confirming a covenant through cutting animals in half
  - c. Formally agreeing before witnesses through a blood oath
  - d. Splitting the terms of the covenant between two parties
5. What idea most relates to God's covenant with Abraham as described in this lecture?
  - a. Common grace
  - b. Eternal kingship
  - c. Self-maledictory oath
  - d. Perfect obedience
6. Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of a covenant?
  - a. Laws
  - b. Oaths
  - c. Promises
  - d. Ritual washings

# Answer Key—What Is a Covenant?

## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

#### *Scripture Reading*

- In this lesson, we will learn that this passage is steeped in the doctrine of the covenants. What might be the chief purpose of God’s covenants, according to this passage?

*This passage sings of the great marriage supper of the Lamb. Over the course of this series, we will learn the full significance of its connection with the covenants of Scripture, but on its surface the passage does offer us insight into the ultimate purpose of God’s covenants. Words of praise, such as “hallelujah,” “rejoice,” and “exult,” highlight the chief end of God’s covenants: that we might “give him the glory.”*

### During the Video

#### *The Doctrine of the Covenants Introduced*

- How does the end of the Bible connect to its very beginning?

*The end of the Bible connects to its very beginning through the concept of a marriage covenant. In the beginning, this concept is seen in the marriage of our first parents, Adam and Eve, but their sin introduced death, conflict, and evil into the world. They were even driven out from God’s presence. Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 3:15, and Paul identifies Him as the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the implication being that the church is the second Eve. Connecting the beginning to the end, the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 is the culmination of the marriage between Christ and His church.*

- What covenants are the focus of this teaching series? Briefly describe them.

*The focus of this teaching series is on the three major covenants of Scripture: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The covenant of redemption is the intra-Trinitarian covenant among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The covenant of works is God’s covenant with Adam that was conditioned on his perfect obedience. The covenant of grace is God’s gracious provision of salvation for His people despite Adam’s failure.*

### *The Characteristics and Types of Covenants*

- How is the term covenant defined?

*The term covenant is defined as “an agreement between two or more persons.” Isaiah 28:15 helps clarify how “covenant” is interchangeable with “agreement,” just as “death” and “Sheol” are interchangeable: “Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement.’”*

- What are the seven features of biblical covenants?

*There are seven important features of the covenants that are found in the Bible. Covenants contain oaths, laws, sacrifices, blessings and curses, love, witnesses, and covenant signs. Each of these features can be found in the various covenants of the Bible to greater and lesser degrees.*

- What are the three different types of covenants?

*Three types of covenants that are found in the Bible are God’s covenant with Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as seen in the covenant of redemption; covenants between God and man, as seen in God’s covenants with Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses, and David; and covenants between people, as seen between Abraham and Abimelech or between Jacob and Laban, for example.*

### After the Video

- How does marriage give us a picture of God’s covenant relationship to us throughout Scripture?

*Marriage is simply another way of saying covenant. The marriage of our first parents opens Scripture, but the introduction of sin, death, and evil into the world needs to be overcome through another marriage, the marriage between God and His people. This marriage is traced throughout Scripture and is seen in God’s marriage to Israel at Mount Sinai, in Israel’s unfaithfulness as pictured in Hosea, and finally in the covenantal marriage between Christ and the church.*

- How does the concept of covenant help us understand the nature of God’s promises in the Bible? Consider how this applies to the three covenants that are the focus of this teaching series.

*Covenants have a promissory character, and they emphasize what God Himself will do. God’s promises as expressed through covenants are therefore binding. God binds Himself in His promise to fulfill the terms of our covenant relationship. This is seen in the covenant of redemption and in the covenant of grace, especially when God “cuts” a covenant with Abraham, taking upon Himself the curses of the covenant, the curses that Jesus Christ, in eternity, promised to bear.*

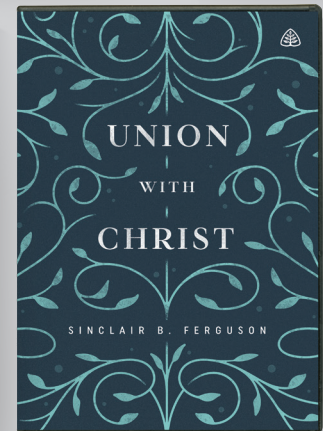
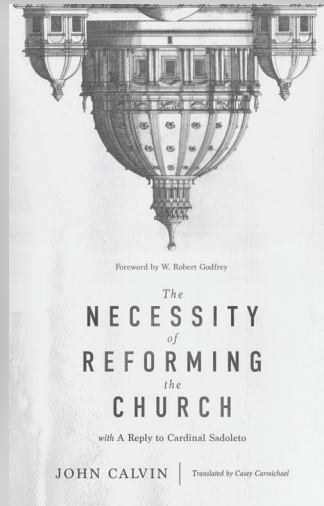
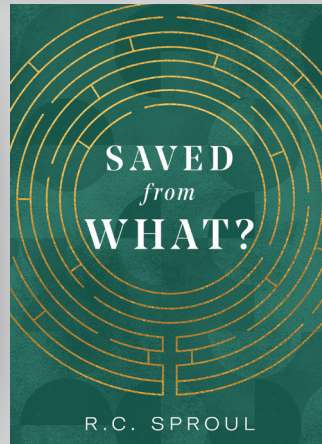
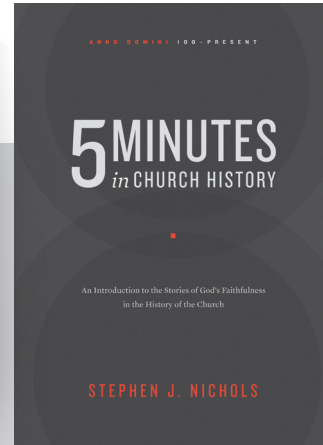
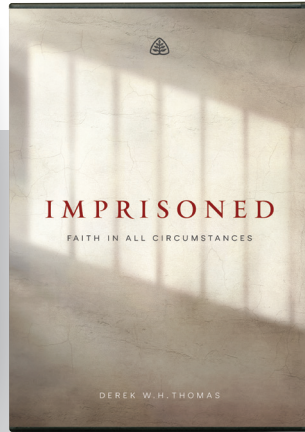
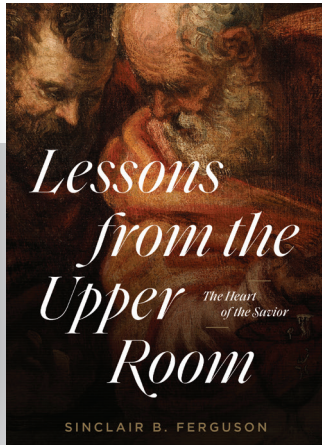
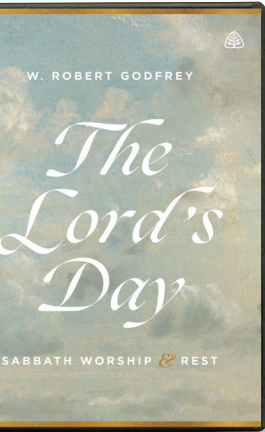
- What is a covenant? Provide an answer that incorporates the definition, features, and types of covenants explained in this lecture. What is a danger of being too restrictive in defining covenant?

*A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons, whether between the persons of God, between God and man, or between people, and often includes oaths, laws, animal sacrifices, blessings and curses, love, witnesses, and signs. While this definition captures every feature that was presented in this lecture, we do not want to be too restrictive in our definition, demanding that every covenant have every feature explicitly present.*

## REVIEW QUIZ

1. **D.**  
*Question and answer 22 of the Children’s Catechism is “What is a covenant? An agreement between two or more persons.” This definition of covenant is basic but appropriate because of the difficulty of defining the term.*
2. **D.**  
*The term covenant is difficult to define because it occurs, as an example, 301 times in the popular English Standard Version translation.*
3. **B.**  
*The covenant of redemption is an eternal covenant, and though it was made in light of the fall, it was not made after it in time. This eternal covenant was between God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to redeem a people for Himself.*
4. **B.**  
*In Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham. During this covenant-making ceremony, God passed through the cut pieces of animals, as was customary in Abraham’s day. Entering into a covenant is described in the language of “cutting a covenant” throughout the Hebrew Bible.*
5. **C.**  
*God’s passing through the animal halves had a very significant point: God was taking upon Himself both the obligations of the covenant and the curses that would come from our breaking the covenant. He was making a “self-maledictory oath.” He would fulfill it and take the penalty of our failure upon Himself.*
6. **D.**  
*Though baptism is a covenant sign that may bring to mind ritual washings, such washings are not a common element in the Bible’s covenants, which include oaths, laws, animal sacrifices, blessings and curses, love, witnesses, and signs.*

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