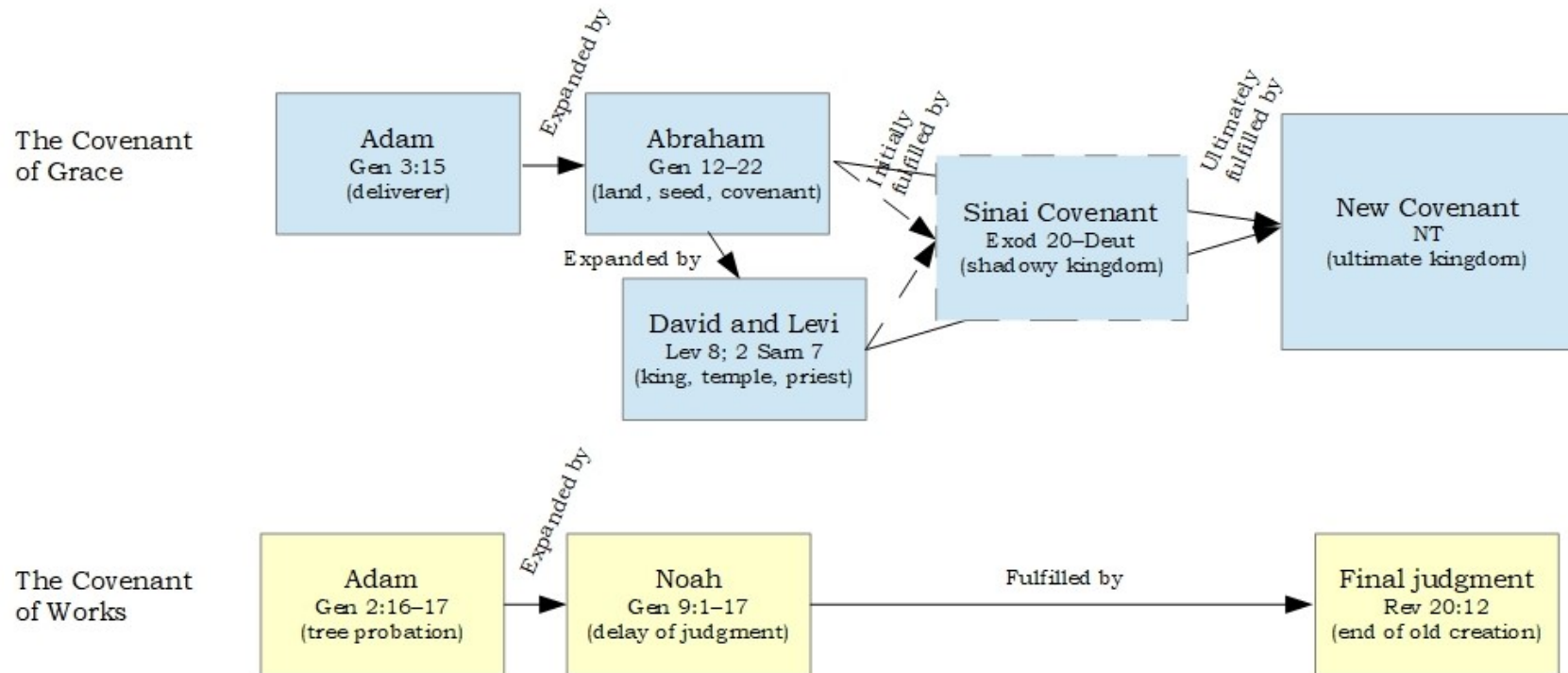


Covenant as the Goal of History

I. Review

- There are two central covenants in the Bible: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.
- The covenant of works has three phases: an initial offer of life if Adam and Eve obeyed, a sentence of death when they disobeyed, and a final judgment (yet to come).
- The covenant of grace has two dimensions: a promise (Adam, Abraham, David, Levi) and a fulfillment.
- The fulfillment of covenant of grace comes in two dispensations: a shadowy initial fulfillment in the Sinai Covenant and an ultimate fulfillment in the new covenant. The new covenant has arrived in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it will not be consummated until Jesus returns.



II. Covenant as the life of God's people

- Vos: the life of the people of God is essentially our communion with him, and that communion is the essence of *covenant*.
 - “The essential character of the Christian religion consists in face-to-face intercourse with God, mediated by Jesus Christ.”
 - “To be a Christian is to live one’s life not merely in obedience to God, nor merely in dependence on God, nor even merely for the sake of God; it is to stand in conscious, reciprocal fellowship with God, to be identified with Him in thought and purpose and work, to receive from Him and give back to Him in the ceaseless interplay of spiritual forces.”
 - This is just like “the marriage-bond, [which,] when perfect, leaves no room for divided interests or possessions.”
- All the ways God relates to us are expressions of his covenant:
 - His words are all *covenantal* words: “Revelation in a sense is the highest that God has to give because in it He gives Himself” (Vos).
 - The sacraments are *covenantal* signs and seals.
- All the ways we relate to God are expressions of the covenant (see below)
- Covenant is about committed relationship, and Christianity is all about covenant.
 - The old covenant is essentially the same religion as the new. “The New Covenant in its preexistent, heavenly state reaches back and stretches its eternal wings over the Old, and the OT people of God were one with us in religious dignity and privilege; they were, to speak in a Pauline figure, sons of the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of all.” (Vos)

III. Living covenantally

- Covenant is your connection to God. Everything you know about him is because of his covenants. Remember that a covenant is “a formal agreement involving two or more parties” (Knoppers). Formalizing a relationship doesn’t mean the loss of intimacy!
- Church membership is about making solemn vows that bind you in covenant with God. God binds you to himself with the sacraments.
- God’s covenant of grace frees you to live by grace. It gives you hope for the future. Remember that God is completely free, but in making a covenant with people, he willingly binds himself to a particular path. God has solemnly sworn to save you completely.
- Covenant renewal is how you keep up and strengthen your relationship to God. Lord’s day worship is a “Service of Covenant Renewal.”