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A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 4—Chapter 4

**OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE, AS
EXHIBITED IN THE TIMES OF
DAVID, AND THE SUCCEEDING
PROPHETS, TO THE COMING OF
CHRIST**

Christ, the great blessing of the covenant, was spoken of by all "the holy prophets which have been since the world began;" by the patriarch prophets; by Moses and others; but more abundantly by the prophets of a later date; God, who at sundry times, in different ages of the world; "and in divers manners," as by angels, by vision, by dreams and impulses on the mind; "spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets," concerning his mind and will, the covenant of his grace, and the blessings of it; to which dispensation of things is opposed that which is by Christ; "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Luke 1:70; Heb 1:1,2). From whence it appears, that the first administration of the covenant of grace, as has been observed, reached from the beginning of the world, or near it, to the coming of Christ; and now having traced it from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to David; I shall next consider it as more clearly manifested in the times of David, and by succeeding prophets, to the coming of Christ. And begin,

1. First, with David, who was a prophet, and by whom the Spirit of God spake concerning Christ, and the covenant of grace made with him (Acts 2:30 1:16; 2 Sam. 23:2-5). The grace of the covenant was displayed in him, the blessings of it were

bestowed on him, the covenant itself was made with him; not only the covenant of royalty, concerning the succession of the kingdom of Israel in his family; but the special covenant of grace, in which his own salvation lay; a covenant ordered in all things and sure, and an everlasting one (2 Sam. 23:5). This was made with him, as he declares, that is, made manifest and applied unto him, and he was assured of his interest in it. He was an eminent type of Christ, who is therefore often called by his name (Ps. 89:3,20; Ezek. 34:23,24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5). In his person, in the comeliness of it; in his character and employment, as a shepherd; in his offices, of prophet and king; in his afflictions and persecutions; and in his wars and victories. And great light and knowledge he had of things respecting Christ and his grace, as the book of Psalms, written by him, under divine inspiration, abundantly shows; as, of the person of Christ; of his divine and eternal sonship; of his being the eternal begotten Son of God, to whom this was first, at least, so clearly made known (Ps. 2:7). From whence are taken all those expressions in the New Testament, of Christ's being the only begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, his own and proper Son: phrases expressive of Christ's co-essentiality, co-eternity, and co-equality with his Father. David speaks of the humanity of Christ, of a body being prepared for him in covenant, of the formation of it in the womb of the virgin; of his being of his seed, and springing from him as man, as he did (Ps. 40:6; compared with Heb. 10:5; Ps. 139:15,16; 132:11,17; Acts 13:23). He speaks very expressly of his sufferings and death in (Ps. 22:1-31), uses the very words Christ uttered on the cross; exactly describes the persons that surrounded him, and mocked at him when on it, as well as the manner of his death, by crucifixion, signified by his hands and feet being pierced; and also the dreadful pains and agonies was then in, by which he was brought to the dust of death; yea, some minute circumstances of his sufferings are observed, as casting lots on his vesture, and parting his garments; and elsewhere, the giving him gall and vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21). He foretells his burial in the grave, which should not be so long as to see corruption, and his resurrection to an immortal life (Ps. 16:10,11; Acts 2:25-31). His ascension to heaven (Ps. 68:18 compared with Eph. 4:8-10). His session at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13). He treats of his suretyship engagements, and of his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King (Ps. 40:6-9; 110:4; 2:6; 89:27; 72:8).

2. Secondly, Solomon, the Son of David, and his successor in the kingdom, had not only the covenant of royalty established with him, but the special covenant of grace was made with him, or made known unto him; "I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son" (2 Sam. 7:14). He was both a preacher and king of Israel; and, no doubt, a good man, notwithstanding his fall; his prayer at the dedication of the temple shows it; as well as his being the amanuensis of the Holy Spirit, in various writings: an eminent type he was of Christ, who is therefore called Solomon (Song of Sol. 3:7,9,11; 8:11,12), in his name, which signifies peaceable, and agrees with Christ, the Prince of peace; in his scent, the Son of David; in his wisdom, in which Christ is greater than Solomon; in his wealth and riches; and in the peaceableness and extent of his kingdom. Much of Christ, and the blessings of grace through him, were made known unto him. He writes of him under the name of Wisdom, as a divine Person, the same with the Logos, the Word, and Son of God; of his eternal existence; of the

eternal generation of him; of his being brought forth, and brought up as a Son with his Father from everlasting, as is declared in the eighth of Proverbs; which when one reads, might be tempted to think he was reading the first chapter of John, there being such a similarity, yea, sameness of diction, sentiment, and doctrine. Solomon or Agur speaks of Christ under the names of Ithiel and Ucal; the one signifies, "God is with me;" as he always was with Christ, and Christ with him: the other, "the mighty One," or, "I am able," I can do all things; as he could, being the Almighty. He speaks in the same place of the infinite, omnipresent, and omnipotent Being, whose name, that is, his nature is incomprehensible and ineffable; and to whom he ascribes a Son, as a divine, distinct Person from his Father; as of the same incomprehensible and ineffable nature with him, and so co-essential, co-eternal, and co-equal with him (Prov. 30:1,4). The book of Canticles, written by Solomon, is a rich display of the glories and excellencies of Christ, of his great love to his church, and of the covenant blessings of grace bestowed upon her. Pass we on now.

3. Thirdly, To the prophets who lived in the succeeding reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah; as Isaiah, Jeremiah, &c. who were holy men of God, and spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God was in them, and spoke by them; and the sure word of prophecy they delivered, was as a light or lamp in a dark place; the gospel day not as yet being broke, nor the shadows of the ceremonial law fled, nor Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, yet up and risen. These,

3a. Speak much of the covenant of grace. Of it as a covenant of life and peace, in which provision is made for the spiritual and eternal life of the covenant ones; and in which the plan and model of their peace and reconciliation by Christ was formed (Mal. 2:5; Isa. 54:10). Of it as an everlasting one, which should continue for ever, and never be altered, nor removed (Isa. 55:3; 54:10). Of the persons who engaged and entered into it, Jehovah and the branch, that should build the temple of the Lord, between whom the council of peace was; yea, Jehovah the Father, the Word of God, and his Spirit, who were each of them concerned in the covenant of grace (Zech. 6:12,13; Hag. 2:4,5). Of Christ, as the sum and substance of it, said to be the covenant of the people, in whom are all the blessings and promises of it, called the sure mercies of David; and whose blood is said to be the blood of the covenant, by which it is ratified and confirmed; and he is spoken of as the messenger of it (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; Zech. 9:11; Mal 3:1). Mention is made by them of the persons on whose account the covenant of grace was made, the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles (Isa. 49:5,6,8), yea, they speak of the new covenant, or of the administration of it under the New Testament dispensation, and give the several articles of it; which would be more clearly known, and more powerfully have their effect (Jer. 31:31-34). Which may lead on to observe,

3b. That the prophets in this period of time speak very plain of the blessings of the covenant of grace, even more plainly and fully than heretofore. As of,

3b1. The blessing of pardon of sin through Christ, which is a blessing of the covenant (Heb. 8:10,12). Not only Moses relates, that God appeared to him, and

caused his goodness to pass before him, and proclaimed his name, a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; and David describes the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and instances in himself (Ex. 34:6,7; Ps 32:1,2,5). But the apostle Peter observes, that to Christ "give all the prophets witness," that "through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). They speak of it as belonging to God, and him only, even every act of it, and as flowing from his mercy; on which account there is none like unto him (Dan. 9:9; Micah 7:18), and of his being abundant in it, or abundantly pardoning, even all that apply to him for it; and all their sins and transgressions, thou ever so many and great (Isa. 55:7 1:18), and of the freeness of pardon, as the effect of the free favour, love, grace, and mercy of God, which is very strongly expressed in Isaiah 43:25 after so many aggravated sins of omission and commission are observed; and yet they speak of it as founded upon the sufferings of Christ, and redemption, reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction procured thereby (Zech. 3:9; Isa. 44:22; Dan. 9:24). They also describe the persons that share in this blessing, even such whom God has reserved for himself in election, and in the covenant of grace, and who are the remnant of his heritage, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance (Jer. 50:20; Micah 7:18).

3b2. The blessing of justification by the righteousness of Christ; which though a doctrine more clearly revealed under the gospel dispensation, yet is "witnessed by the law and prophets" (Rom. 3:21,22). The prophets speak of the righteousness by which men are justified as an everlasting righteousness, that was then to be brought in by Christ, the Surety and Saviour of his people (Dan. 9:24), and as "well pleasing to God," because by it the "law is magnified," all its demands answered, and it made "honorable," and more so than it could have been by the most perfect obedience of angels and men (Isa. 42:21). They speak of Christ as the author of it; and hence he is called by them, "The Lord our Righteousness;" and "the Sun of Righteousness;" because righteousness is wrought out by him, and springs from him, as light from the sun (Jer. 23:6; Mal. 4:2). They speak of Christ as the justifier of them that know him, and believe in him (Isa. 53:11). And of the seed of Israel being justified in him, and glorying of him, as the Lord their Righteousness, even all the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles; and the church is represented by them as expressing her strong faith of interest in the righteousness of Christ, as her justifying one; "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24,25). Under the emblem of Joshua, the high priest, accused of, and charged with sin and guilt, yet acquitted by Christ, the Angel of the Lord is represented an elect sinner, charged with sin by law and justice, by Satan and his own conscience; but cleared from all by the application and imputation of the righteousness of Christ, to him expressed by those strong terms, "causing his iniquity to pass from him, and clothing him with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:1-4). The same with the garments of salvation, and robe of righteousness, the church declares she was clothed and covered with, and in which she rejoiced (Isa. 61:10).

3b3. The blessing of adoption is another covenant blessing, spoken of by the prophets; not national adoption, included in the national covenant made with the

people of Israel; but adoption by special grace. The prophets speak of God's putting some among the children that were unlovely, unworthy, and deserving of his displeasure, and yet were the objects of his love and delight; his dear sons and pleasant children, and whom he owned in such a relation (Jer. 3:19; 31:20), of some that were given to Christ as his children, and to whom he stood in the relation of an everlasting Father (Isa. 8:18; 9:6; Heb. 2:13). And though the saints under the former dispensation for the most part had not such a measure of the Spirit of adoption, as under the New Testament, yet they were then heirs, and so children; and some of them had a strong assurance of their interest in God, as their Father; "Doubtless, thou art our Father" (Isa. 63:16). And the prophets also speak of a large number of adopted sons and daughters of God, as in the latter day, in each of the parts of the world, both among the Gentiles and among the Jews (Isa. 43:6; 45:11; Hosea 1:10).

3b4. Salvation, spiritual and eternal, in general, is the great blessing of the covenant of grace (2 Sam. 23:5), and this the prophets inquired after, and diligently searched into and spoke of; of the author of it, declaring it was not in hills and mountains, nor to be expected from thence, but in the Lord God only; they affirm that Christ was appointed as God's salvation to the ends of the earth; that he would come and save, and as having salvation; they represent him as mighty to save, yea as if salvation was then already wrought out by him (Jer. 3:23; Isa 49:6; 35:4; 63:1,5; Zech. 9:9). They speak of the nature of it as an everlasting salvation, and describe the persons interested in it as the Israel of God, both Jews and Gentiles; even such who are at the ends of the earth, and who are encouraged to look to Christ for salvation (Isa. 45:17,22), and they speak of the time when it should be wrought out (Dan. 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:10,11).

3c. There are various things relating to Christ, his person, office and grace, which are copiously and frequently spoken of by the prophets in this period of time; as his incarnation, which though not till many hundred years after, is spoken of as if then done, because of the certainty of it in the purpose and promise of God, "to us a child is born" (Isa. 9:6), his birth of a virgin, with the name given him, Immanuel, God with us; and which is represented as wonderful, new and unheard of, as it justly might (Isa. 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Jer. 31:22; Dan. 2:45). The place of his birth, Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-6; John 7:41,42). Some things following his birth, as the murder of the infants about Bethlehem; his being carried to Egypt, and called again from thence, and residing in Nazareth (Jer. 31:15; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13-23). The parts where he should chiefly live, converse, and minister (Isa. 9:1; Matthew 4:13,14). His state of humiliation, sufferings, and death, which are particularly described in Isaiah 53:1-12. The circumstances of his being sold for thirty pieces of silver by one of his disciples, forsaken by them all, and his side pierced with a spear (Zech 11:12,13; 13:7; 12:10; Matthew 27:3-10; 26:31; John 19:34-37). The prophets also speak of the time of his coming and of his sufferings: Daniel fixes the exact time of them, from a date given; and Haggai and Malachi declare he should come into the second temple, and give it a greater glory than the former; so that he must come and suffer as he did, before the destruction of that

(Dan. 9:24,26; Hag. 2:7,9; Mal. 3:1). And the same prophets, with Zechariah, who were the last of the prophets, speak of his near approach, that he was just at hand, and would soon, Suddenly, and at unawares, come into his temple; and of his forerunner (Zech. 3:8; 6:12; 9:9; Hag. 2:6; Mal. 3:1; 4:5), but though the prophets mentioned were the last of the inspired writers, prophecy did not wholly cease with them; as appears by the instances of Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, who prophesied of him, and of the Messiah; and good old Simeon, to whom it was revealed by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ; and Anna the prophetess, who spoke of him to those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 1:67; 2:25,26,36,38). So true it is what our Lord says, that "the law and the prophets were until John;" which finishes the Old Testament dispensation, and the first and old administration of the covenant of grace; after which the kingdom of God, or gospel of Christ, was preached more clearly and fully, and God spake no more by the prophets, but by his Son (Luke 16:16; Heb. 1:1,2), when the second and new covenant, or administration of it, took place; of which we shall treat in the next chapter. And from what has been observed it appears, that the former administration of the covenant of grace, reaching from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ, was by types and figures, by shadows and sacrifices, and by promises and prophecies of future things, which are now fulfilled; Christ, the sum and substance of all, being come, the great blessing of the covenant of grace, and in whom all are included.