

CENTRALITY OF CHRIST IN THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION

INTRODUCTION

Theology is knowledge concerning God. God has revealed himself in history in his sovereign acts and in his holy word. God is the creator of all things, and the distinction of the Creator and the creature is absolute. In the study of other sciences, man is the one who takes the first step. He approaches the objective world. He subjects it to his scrutiny and compels it to his experiments and his philosophy.

In Theology, this relation between the subject and the object is reversed. Here it is God who takes the first step to approach man for the purpose of disclosing his nature, who creates man in order that he may have a finite mind able to receive the knowledge of his infinite perfections. God by his act of creator enables man to posit God over himself and then proceeds to impart to him the knowledge of himself, which man otherwise would have no access. For “the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God.” We come to know God in so far as He has revealed himself to the object of Theology.

Because of our sinful condition, while retaining some knowledge of God, we are absolutely dependent on that new self-disclosure of God which we call supernatural revelation. By the new birth and the illumination of the mind darkened through sin, a new subject is created. By the objective self-manifestation of God as the Redeemer, a new order of things is called into being. By the depositing of the truth concerning the new order of things in the Holy Scriptures, the human mind is enabled to obtain that new knowledge which is but the reflection in the regenerate consciousness of an objective world of divine acts and words.

This is the attitude of our hearts and minds as we approach the study of the Bible. In this course we will approach the revelation of God in the Bible concerning himself in redemptive history. We will see the historical context, the cultural environment of God’s acts in redemptive history and understand his revelation recorded for us by men inspired of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible testifies to a twofold revelation of God:

1. General Revelation – A revelation in nature round about us, in human consciousness, and in the providential government of the world (Psalms 19:1, 2, Acts 14:17, Romans 1:19, 20).
2. Special Revelation – A revelation embodied in the Bible as the Word of God (2 Kings 17:13, Psalms 103:7, John 1:18, Hebrews 1:1, 2).¹

¹ Gaffin, Richard B. Ed., *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation, The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, [NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980]. Pp. 3 – 24.

Today we will be looking at the historical record of redemption as revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the different men God chose at different times and in different places. The central message concerns the eschatological Christ who will come to redeem and to save his people. God initiates and acts in history revealing himself in words and acts. We will trace his plans and his sovereignty in fulfilling his promises in the redemptive history that was recorded for us. We will note that what he says will come to pass. He fulfills his plan by his gracious acts.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

- God initiates in the revelation of himself
- Revelation historically and progressively occurs and the divine revelation is in both word and deed. God displays the *Magnalia Dei* “the mighty acts of God”
- There is the organic character of revelation - there is continuum and it is interrelated and interconnected.
- The retrospective and the prospective aspect of revelation are perceptible.
- Eschatology (and especially eschatology in the New Testament) is a matter inaugural or provisionally fulfilled while at the same time something not yet consummated. To use Geerhardus Vos's term, eschatology in the New Testament is conceived "semi-eschatologically". It is conceived in terms of the "now" and "not yet". It is conceived in terms of the overlap of the two ages—the present age and the age to come. It is here; the eschaton, the eschatological, is here in measure, provisionally, now! It will yet be perfected consummately at the end of history.²

Genesis 3:15 – Adam and Eve - *Proto Evangelium*

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and **her seed**; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”* (Gen 3:15)

The covenant between God and Adam (the Federal Head of mankind)
The Promise of Salvation through the Last Adam (Federal Head of the Church)

Genesis 4:26 – Seth - **The Godly Line.**

“And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.” (Gen 4:26)

The 2 cities, the City of God (Seth) and the City of Man (Cain)

² Dennison, Jr., James T., “Building the Biblical Theological Sermon” [CA: *Kerux: NWTS* 4/3 (Dec 1989)], p. 30.

Genesis 5:8-10 – Noah - The Recreation

⁸ "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹ These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. " (Gen 6:8-10)

The Recreation of Mankind and the Recreation of the World is recorded.

Genesis 9:26 – Shem – A People Called By His Name

²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ "May God enlarge (הִתְפַּחַּ (pathah) wide or open in Hebrew) Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant." (Gen 9:26-27 NAS)

"Shem means "name" in Hebrew (שֵׁם (Shem)) – Wordplay. Blessing on Shem and Japheth. Japheth's descendants were eventually to have entrance into the covenant which would have been almost exclusively confined to the line of Shem in the days of the old covenant. God uses the imagery of tent-dwelling in this blessing. Isaiah 54:1-3 expands on this revelation. The destiny found in Japheth's blessing was realized in the apostolic mission to the Gentiles. "May God enlarge ..." The Hebrew (*patath*) means wide open. The missionaries reported how God "had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." (Acts 14:27) ³

Genesis 12:1-3 – Abraham – The Seed of Abraham

"Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12:1-3 NAS)

- Seed (זֶרַע (zera)
 - God's revelation to Abraham
 - ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply **your seed** as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and **your seed** shall

³ Kline, Meredith G., *Kingdom Prologue*, Volume 3, [MA: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 1986], p. 19, 20.

possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ *"And in **your seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."* (Gen 22:17-18 NAS)

- Paul explains the revelation

¹⁶ *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to **his seed**. He does not say, "And to **seeds**," as referring to many, but rather to one, "**And to your seed**," that is, **Christ**.* (Gal 3:16)

Genesis 26:1-5 – Isaac – The Supernatural Birth of Isaac

*"So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. ² And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and **I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.** ⁴ "And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." ⁶ So Isaac lived in Gerar."* (Gen 26:1-6)(cf. Gen. 17:19

The Messianic line will come through Isaac, child of promise.

Genesis 28:11-15 – Jacob - Chosen by the Grace of God

"Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴ "Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ "And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." (Gen 28:10-16)

¹⁰ *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹ for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that **God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls,** ¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice*

*with God, is there? May it never be!*¹⁵ *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*¹⁶ *So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. (Rom 9:10-16)*

The messianic line came through Jacob, **chosen by grace**, not by works.

Genesis 49:8-12 - Judah – The Kingly Line

⁸ *"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you."*⁹ *"Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"*¹⁰ *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."*¹¹ *"He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes."*¹² *"His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk. (Gen 49:8-12 NAS)*

The context is Jacob's deathbed prophecy and blessing on his children. There is a shift in leadership. The older ones will bow to the younger—charismatic historical gift of wisdom combined with genealogical factors to lead. The imagery of the satisfied and victorious lion as tribe of Judah (military power) is portrayed. The *donkey's colt* in Hebrew is the בֶּן־חֹמֶן . This is the "ben athon" a special certain breed of donkey used in the ratification of covenants in the Ancient Near Eastern time. The Mari Tablets of the 18th BC throws light on the cutting of animals in the making of covenants. This prophecy was fulfilled in the Triumphal Entry of Christ in the gospel accounts (Matt. 21 n.b. verse 4-5, and John 12:12-16 n.b. verse 15).

The Exodus – God delivered Jacob's descendants from the oppression in Egypt after 400 years as revealed to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16

The Prophet Moses And The Birth Of A New Nation Israel.

The New Nation Israel, God's People. God made a covenant with his people Israel.

- Historical Prologue of God's faithful obligations
- History of the New Nation Israel –
- God's Covenant With Israel (Book of Deuteronomy)
 - Formation of the Nation's Priesthood
 - Instructions for the Kingship
 - The Prophets and their role in the Nation
 - Covenant Stipulations for Israel
 - Curses and Blessings of Disobedience and Obedience

1. LEVITICUS PROVIDED MORE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF **PRIESTHOOD**.
2. HISTORICAL LEGAL DOCUMENT RECORDED OF THE ACTS OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL (CHRONICLES AND **KINGS**).
3. THE **PROPHETS** REVELATION OF THE LORD (ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, DANIEL AND THE MINOR PROPHETS)

GOD’S CHOSEN KING, KING DAVID – GOD’S COVENANT WITH DAVID - THE ETERNAL KING, THE SON OF DAVID (2 SAMUEL 7:1-26)

David, descendant of Judah, was chosen by God to be King of Israel

“ So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.” (1Sa 16:12-13 NAS)

He also became the ancestor of the eternal King

“The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ¹² "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”” ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.” (2Sa 7:11-17 NAS)

THE PROPHETS – ADMINISTRATORS OF THE COVENANT

- The Books of the Prophets - Historical records of Israel’s Unfaithfulness to the Covenant.

THE EXILE AND THE RETURN OF ISRAEL

- The Exile of Israel and Judah (Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah)
- The Return of the Exiles to the Promise Land (Nehemiah and Ezra)

THE 400 SILENT YEARS (INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD)

THE TURNING POINT OF THE AGES – THE FULLNESS OF TIME - THE INCARNATION – CHRIST THE ETERNAL KING, PRIEST AND PROPHET

*“But when **the fullness of the time** came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God”. (Gal 4:4-7 NAS)*

THE GOSPELS – Historical Prologue

1. John the Baptist - the last OT prophet
2. Historical Prologue of God’s Fulfillment of the OT in Christ
3. Christ’s Birth, Death and Resurrection

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES – The Inauguration of the Church

1. Historical Account of the Church
2. The Apostles
3. Paul’s Missionary Journeys

THE EPISTLES OF THE APOSTLES – Stipulations

1. The Indicatives
2. The Imperatives

THE BOOK OF REVELATION – Conclusion of the Covenant – The Sanctions

1. The Curses and Blessings of the Disobedient and the Obedient Church
2. The Eschatological Judgment of the Seed of the Woman.
3. The Consummation
4. The Sanctions⁴

⁴ Kline, Meredith G. , *Lecture Notes on Pentateuch & Prophets* [CA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1994]

Old Covenant and New Covenant – The dividing point between the old *diatheke* and the new is the death of Christ. The end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new covenant lies in the death, or perhaps it would be more correct to say in the ascension, of Christ (Heb. 7:11)⁵.

QUESTIONS FOR HOMEWORK/DISCUSSION

1. Who initiates the revelation of God? How did Paul come to know who Jesus is? (Read Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-22, 22:1-21, 26:1-32)
2. How does God reveal himself? How did Paul come to grow in the knowledge of Christ? What resources did he have?
3. Do you see the historical progression in the revelation of God? What do you suppose was happening in redemptive history?
4. How do the Old Testament saints live the godly life? Do you see yourself in their struggles, failures and victories?

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⁵ Olinger, Danny E., *A Geerhardus Vos Anthology*, [NJ: R&R Publishing, 2005], p. 219.

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LECTURE 1 – CENTRALITY OF CHRIST IN REDEEMPTIVE HISTORY