

## **Introduction to Christology**

### **The Promised Redeemer**

- **Did God leave all humanity to die in the miserable state of sin?**

Out of His good pleasure and from all eternity, God did enter into a covenant of grace in order to deliver His children from the bondage and misery of sin, and bring them into a state of salvation by the work of a Redeemer.

Question: Who designed the method by which sinners would be redeemed?

#### **1) God makes a Unilateral Covenant of Grace from the Beginning.**

- Covenants in Scripture are solemn agreements, negotiated or unilaterally imposed, that bind the parties to each other in permanent defined relationships, with specific promises, claims, and obligations on both sides (e.g., the marriage covenant, Mal. 2:14).

When God makes a covenant with his creatures, He alone establishes its terms, as his covenant with Adam, Noah, Abram/Abraham, Moses, David, and every living creature shows (Gen. 9:9). When Adam and Eve failed to obey the terms of the covenant of works (Gen. 3:6), God did not destroy them, but revealed his covenant of grace to them by promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15).

God's covenant rests on his promise, as is clear from his covenant with Abram/Abraham. He called Abram to go to the land that He would give him, and He promised to bless him and to bless all the families of the earth through him, or more particularly his 'seed.' (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham heeded God's call because he believed God's promise; it was his faith in the promise that was credited to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:18-22).<sup>1</sup>

Question: How is the miserable kingdom of rebellious humanity highlighted in Abraham's response to God's offer?

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<sup>1</sup> Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

## 2) God chose the method of salvation and knew the Redeemer from the beginning.

### ▪ **Blood-Path Covenant explained:**

Aramaic treaties were formed with a ceremony including the sectioning of animals in halves and placing them on opposing sides of one another. Ancient texts from Mari and Alalakh feature the killing of animals as part of the ceremony of making the treaty. Walking through this sacrificial pathway could be seen as a symbolic action enacting both the promise and the curse on the one who violates the promise.

Military alliances and border agreements between kingdoms are all known to have used the Blood-Path Covenant symbolism. The blood path rite was also typical for arranging marriages in Middle East desert communities and is still practiced today in isolated parts of Egypt.

The animals were cut in two and placed opposite each other so that the blood formed a pool, a so-called blood path, in between the pieces as they drained. The two parties—the greater party who establishes the terms of the covenant first, and the lesser party who either accepts or rejects the terms second—then walked through the blood as a way of saying, “May what was done to these animals be done to me if I do not keep this covenant.” The one who failed to keep the covenant paid for it with his life.<sup>2</sup>

### ▪ **Blood-Path Covenant exemplified:**

Jeremiah 34:18 – “And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts.”

### ▪ **God’s Covenant with Abram**

Genesis 15:9-10,12,17-18 – “[God] said to [Abram], ‘Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.’ And [Abram] brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half... As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him... a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.”

Question: How does Abram exemplify the kind of role humanity plays in God’s redemptive plan and work?

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<sup>2</sup> Stanglin, Allan. *Abram’s Animal Ceremony in Genesis 15*. [www.allanstanglin.com](http://www.allanstanglin.com).

### 3) From the very start, God takes the initiative and responsibility.

- God's covenant with Israel at Sinai (Mosaic Covenant) took the form of a Near Eastern suzerainty treaty [a region or people is a subdivision of a more powerful entity which controls its foreign affairs while allowing the tributary vassal state some limited domestic independence], that is, a royal covenant imposed unilaterally on a vassal king and a servant people. Although that covenant required obedience to God's laws under the threat of his curse, it was a continuation of his covenant of grace (Exod. 3:15; Deut. 7:7-8; 9:5-6).<sup>3</sup>
- Deuteronomy 7:6-9 – "6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations..."

Question: Was Jesus chosen to fill the role of Redeemer because He was best suited to fulfill the requirements?

### 4) There are many types and shadows, but only One Savior.

- God's covenant with Israel [i.e. the Mosaic Covenant] was preparation for the coming of God himself, in the person of his Son, to fulfill all His promises and to give substance to the shadows cast by the types (Isa. 40:10; Mal. 3:1; John 1:14; Heb. 7-10).<sup>4</sup>
- Hebrews 9:1-15 – Christ is the Lamb of God, the High Priest for all who believe, the Temple of God, and the One who sets sinners free. "1 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2 For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna,

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<sup>3</sup> Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

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and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 These preparations having thus been made, **the priests go regularly into the first section**, performing their ritual duties, 7 **but into the second only the high priest goes**, and he but **once a year**, and **not without taking blood**, which he offers for himself and for the **unintentional sins of the people**. 8 By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that **cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper**, 10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed **until the time of reformation**.

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the **greater and more perfect tent** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus **securing an eternal redemption**. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

15 Therefore **he is the mediator of a new covenant**, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since **a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.**"

Question: What are some of the benefits that one receives or experiences when he or she has a better understanding of God's covenant to save?