

Dr. Meredith Kline, Kingdom Prologue, Lecture 7

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Approbation missing

At that particular point they would have been beyond probation, and that would have been declared to them. There would have been the word of approbation. You talk about justification and so on and I'm afraid, I have this feeling at least, that even in our best discussions of justification, they don't have everything in them that they should have in them, because they don't seem to have in them this thought of approbation. They don't seem to get beyond pardon, or the recognition of some righteous nature or something that you have. That you actually encompass the work that earns heaven for you, that seems to be missing. We'll talk more about it. Approbation, that would have been the first thing.

Conferral

But what else would have happened to them immediately afterwards? In order to be in heaven with God forever, you can't be in a condition such as Adam and Eve were in at beginning. They were able to sin, or not able to sin. God can't take you to heaven and guarantee heaven to you forever under conditions where you might become a devil? So before that can take place you have to be confirmed in righteousness. Something has to happen. The Holy Spirit or the glory Spirit that creates you in the beginning now has to do a new work in you. He would have done it in the past during probation. He would have done it, he would have confirmed them so that they could no longer sin. They would have been confirmed in spiritual righteousness. Those two things would have happened to them and within that context they would have fulfilled the mission of extending the kingdom of God globally by populating the earth and subduing, and so forth, until when? Until God said okay we've got enough. Here's the predestined *pleroma*, it exists now.

Beyond probation

Now we can move beyond this first age of conferral to the second stage. Now we can move beyond spiritual confirmation to physical glorification, and that would have been the history. That would have been the happy history of a probation that was passed.

It didn't work out that way happily. However the second Adam who does it right. So all of these good things happen to us, eventually approbation and confirmation which is eternal life.

I put it this way, that if he had by-passed probation you would not get to be in the fully eschatological state of going to be in heaven, but he would be in sort of a semi-eschatological state, comparable but not exactly like what you and I are in. We're sort of in a semi-eschatological state. We're confirmed in eternal life already, but we're not yet glorified. But we are carrying on our lives within present history which does not have all the effects of sin all around us.

It didn't happen that way. God knew, God predestined, it wasn't going to happen that way. But it didn't mean that Satan was going to be the winner after all. No, from eternity God has an arrangement in view, a covenant in view, whereby it was going to happen that his original purpose to create a living temple of living human beings made in his image, as a loving place, as a temple for himself, a community that could dwell in him as a temple. It works marvelously in both ways. We are the temple in which he dwells and he is the temple in which we dwell. This was God's purpose from the beginning and it is not going to fail. There is no company from the eternity in Christ who are going to achieve that in spite of the fall of Adam. That's the gospel. There was a covenant that was made in eternity and that was predestined from the beginning.

Intra-trinitarian Covenant

So there are covenants of creation and the first one is this one. It's been called by a variety of people in the history of covenant theology, this eternal pact, or so on, this intra-Trinitarian, this committing business that we're talking about. Covenants are divinely sanctioned commitments, with the persons of the trinity making covenant with themselves in this case. That's a covenant if there ever was one. He binds and he sanctioned commitments.

But let's concentrate now on what I think you want to take account of the Spirit as well. But we can concentrate here on the Father and the Son in this particular relationship and the Father's covenant of works. Works again, huh? That's another thing where John

Murray had to jettison the traditions of covenant theology, because he couldn't think in terms of a work's arrangements of the Father and the Son as a covenant with the Son.

Covenant of Works and Christ's mission

Now this one, was the creator's covenant of works with Adam, as the representative of all mankind. This covenant was the covenant with the Son, not as the representative of all mankind, because we are not universalists, if he were representative of all mankind everyone would be saved. But with the Son as the representative of the elect, those take covenant together. The Son undertakes to fulfill the mission, of course, the mission is to do this: what the first Adam failed to do it. The Son's mission is to enter into the world as the second Adam, to undergo that probation to fulfill the particular probationary task, which was to fight the battle of Armageddon and overcome Satan. That's the probationary task that earns heaven for you, to win the battle of Armageddon and overcome Satan. Christ is going to come into the world, and he's going to do that. As a result of that the Father promises a grant to him the glory of the kingdom, and the people as his bride for whom he's going to come and do all of this. So it is a covenant of works, very similar then to the one that was made with Adam. You do this, and this will be your reward. It is merit, you earn it, okay?

Now as the son fulfills that covenant of works and in history he comes into the world in the incarnation. He fulfills the probation, he receives that Father's word of approbation, which is expressed in his words of exaltation, which results in the resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. He's up in that seventh day, that Sabbath rest, and the heavenly throne at the right hand of the majesty on high in his exultation. He's given authority, a name which is above every name. He's given the Holy Spirit, as the promise of the Father. In turn then, he gives to his people on earth in order to bring them to salvation and to himself.

The Covenant of Grace

So what I'm saying then is, that here is this eternal covenant, and as a reward for carrying that out, for fulfilling the probationary task, as a reward for that, as part of his exultation, the son is made now to be the Lord of the Covenant of Grace. The son is, as a

result of his obedience giving his life unto death, he is given the position now of being the mediator of a Covenant of Grace whereby he is able then to share what he has earned by grace with his elect people.

The Covenant of Grace

So that brings us then to the recognition of this second covenant which we have called the “Lord’s Covenant of Grace.” Here I’m going to use the word “church.” This is getting into some other things we will be talking about, I don’t use the word “elect” at this point, I use the word “church,” covenant community, because this covenant of grace is actually administered in history. It is administered to a community, and we did say something about this last week. You have the elect within it, but which has others than the elect within the covenant community within the church. When you’re talking about the Covenant of Grace, the New Covenant, let us say, you are not just talking about the elect you are talking about all those who are within the New Covenant.

So it is as a reward for his fulfilling this covenant with the Father that the Son is given the status of being the one who is the Lord of the Covenant of Grace. Luke 22:29-30 I think is very helpful here, where Jesus says to his disciples, “even as the Father covenanted,” now the word there is the verb from which you get the word *diatheke* the word for “covenant.” So I’ll translate it instead of the point of just translation “covenant.” Jesus said “even as the Father appointed unto me a kingdom,” great is the reward for what I’m doing, “even so now I covenant unto you.” So there are the two levels, as the Father covenants unto me, and then in that covenant the son is the servant, and the eternal covenant with the Father, son, the servant, the Father appointed unto me, the servant, for your faithful service. So now in the position of the Lord I appoint unto you that you should share with me so I can sit down in the blessings of the covenant.

There is some confusion, in some of our formulations of these two things in our own catechisms and so on. These two things get can confusingly blended together, but that is a big mistake because they are totally different. The parties are totally different, here’s the Father and then the Son, and the Elect. Down here it includes others than the elect. The role of the Son is completely different. There he’s the servant. Here he’s the

Lord. The principle of operation is completely different. There the principle is works, the Son gets the reward not as an act of favor or grace on God's part, he earns it the old fashion way. He earns it by his active and passive obedience. So works is the principle up there, but grace is the principle that characterizes this one, as you and I get the reward not by our works but not apart from works either, but the works are his. He has done it for us. He has done it for us and he gives it to us by grace.

Christ's role in the Covenant of Grace

That Covenant of Grace then, alone, is the legal basis for it is in the fullness of time when Christ has entered the world here in his incarnation. On the cross he has won the battle of Armageddon. Then he is exalted unto heaven and from there as Lord of the Covenant of Grace, he administers. But it isn't just from that point on we have the Covenant of Grace. Rather it's this situation, Adam could fail or couldn't fail. As a matter of fact he did fail, but the Son of God could not fail. It was absolutely certain that he would fulfill that covenant and earn the blessings of the kingdom for his people. So certain it was that even before it happened the benefits already were being bestowed. So here we come back to after the fall of Adam and so on. Right from the beginning the Son of God, by the Holy Spirit who was given at Pentecost. But the Holy Spirit was not operating in the world it wouldn't have been regeneration or any of these things. But the Holy Spirit was given before and therefore the Covenant of Grace had been operating even before Christ came. Of course, it continues to operate after he came to offer after he had come on into the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit is given in a fresh way from God.

Nevertheless this administration of the Covenant of Grace is something that the Son was doing right in the beginning of a long way. That's the Covenant of Grace, that whole long thing, which then as you read through your Bible you see subdivided into a series of covenants. So here's the New Covenant, and there was the Mosaic Covenant, along with the old covenant and before that there was the Abrahamic Covenant. In fact before that the Old and the New covenant are two stages of the fulfillment of that. Before that there were the covenants that go all the way back to the Sethites and so on. So it

becomes a further question now to analyze all these Covenants of Grace and all these seven administrations of the Covenant of Grace.

Mosaic administration of the Covenant of Grace

We think of them and let me just say that this will be the closing thing. This is where we will end leading to a big discussion. When you come to Moses and the Old Covenant, you encounter a new organization of things. You have a theocratic organizing of the kingdom where by the ultimate goal of heaven gets intruded on the earthly scene. Now today the kingdom of God is not outwardly expressed anymore. Before Moses came in the patriarchal period, the covenant community didn't have the form of an external kingdom. But it's in the Mosaic period that you get sort of a second layer. Here is the covenant, here is the principle of grace working for salvation all the way through the one principle of salvation by grace and in Christ. That's the bottom there--the Mosaic covenant. It goes all the way through. There's a second layer whereby the kingdom of God was typologically present. So there is this typological kingdom. Here's where it's difficult and a very much debated thing is going on.

Paul and law and grace

What principle was operating on that second level? How is it that Paul in the New Testament can say the law is not of faith? We will be looking at all the passages, Jeremiah 31 for a prophecy and then Romans 10 and then Galatians 3 and Galatians 4 and 2 Corinthians 3 and all these other passages where Paul emphatically insists that there's the gospel and there's the law and that there's a big contrast between them. The law is not of faith, there's a work principle he insists: "do this and you will live"--Leviticus 18:5. Paul says, "do this and you will live" is what characterizes this Old Covenant and it is the opposite of the gospel. He says there was a works principle operating there. Getting this straight and working your way through the exegesis and seeing that you have to end at that conclusion. But then also it is necessary to see how it is that Paul can say that although this is a covenant of works it did not annul the promise that came those centuries before?

So Paul was able to say both things. He's able to say this covenant was a covenant

of works over against faith and yet it didn't annul the gospel of faith and grace. How could that be? I submit to you that the way I have come up with this two way concept is the only way you can do it. Paul was not a dispensationalist. He believed in the continuity of the covenant of grace.

So he would have held that there was a bottom line, as far as individuals getting to heaven are concerned, that was a matter of grace. But simultaneously he was affirming that as far as corporate Israel was concerned, they were holding onto the land of Canaan only if they came through and fulfilled the works of the covenant. Because they didn't, that is why they were destroyed! That's why that covenant went down the tubes in 70 A.D. It wasn't consummated in glory it was terminated in doom—the 70 A.D. the desolation of Jerusalem. The wrath of God had come upon them to the uttermost, the loss of election. You can't account for it if you say that the old covenant is grace at both levels. The only way you can remain a Calvinist and account for the loss of Israel's national election which they have lost is to recognize that that wasn't a matter of sovereign grace that's a matter of works. That's the kind of thing that we have to mull over and talk through.

Principle of works

So this whole principle of works then as we encountered in the Old Covenant and as we encountered in the covenant with Adam is one that we'll have to discuss. It is associated with Fuller Seminary with Dan Fuller of Fuller Seminary. The books that he has written and those who are his followers like John Piper is supposed to be a great Calvinistic preacher and so on. He hates the idea of the covenant. He hates the ideas of works and so he is destroying the gospel in the stuff that he writes. Whatever good things he's saying in some books makes me urge upon people not to read him. Things are mixed up. He proposes this stuff that undercuts the gospel of saving grace because he says there's no room for the ideas of works. That means there's no room for the idea of Jesus' works either as the meritorious ground of your salvation. So there is Fuller and Piper and at Westminster Seminary of Philadelphia there was Norman Shepard so we fought that case from 1970 to the present. So this is a very current thing.

We can work together on it and come to some conclusions. The Covenant of Grace all the way through is how individuals get to heaven. Now we come to the Mosaic covenant and we get a more complicated situation with another layer. It's a kingdom. What principles govern the tenure of Israel within this?

So it is a principle of works that gets introduced into this arrangement and that leads Paul when he speaks of the Old Covenant. What is really remarkable is the way Paul looks at that and he talks as if the whole thing were only the second layer sometimes. So the law is not okay and yet everything else he's saying, of course, he's telling us and he is quite aware that the gospel he was preaching was continuous with everything that was included in the prophets and Moses. So there's a bottom there.

[Student Question: I'm a little confused on approbation and you talked about glorification.]

Kline's answer: Yes, okay, it all involves the thought that the probation itself involves a specific task. It isn't just in Adam's case that he would just continue sort of indefinitely refraining from the fruit of this tree. It's something much more specific than that, it's that he is to encounter the enemy. In heaven, the real Armageddon in the heights of heaven, hell has broken loose and Satan's rebellion is against God. God knows and has arranged that Satan's challenge against his reign in Armageddon will express itself in Eden. God assigns to Adam the task of being heaven's warrior. He is to guard, and that's part of Genesis 2:15. He's to guard the garden, that's not to keep the weeds out, it's to keep Satan out. He is to challenge him and to damn him when he's appears on the scene and to win the battle of Armageddon, because that's what Satan is doing. Satan is intruding in the presence of God's reign as if this is where he first belonged and this was his mountain. Adam should repudiate that. So there was a specific task and if he had accomplished it then God would have pronounced the words "good job my good and faithful servant" a word of approbation. "You have earned heaven and you are on your way."

Student question: how did approbation connect with the notion of conferral?

Kline's answer. The conferral of all the blessings, whether in God's covenant in

terms of the covenant from the beginning as expressed in the tree of life and in the Sabbath itself. So symbolically from the outset God had expressed what the reward would be. He had verbalized what the penalty would be: “in the day you eat thereof you will die.” He had symbolized what the reward would be in the tree of life. Included in all of that then was the idea of both of the confirmation eternal life and the physical glorification. Only I’m saying these two things are folded into two stages for the reasons that I gave that the cultural mandate had to be a pre-glorified thing. Does that make sense?

Then Jesus comes in as the second Adam and he does it. He wins the battle of Armageddon at the cross. He sees things falling from heaven and he himself is exalted there. He proceeds to confer the blessings now on his people. The conferral of the blessing starts already beforehand and he gives the Holy Spirit in the lives of those in the Old Testament.

Student question:

Kline’s response: The typology is there. So here is the picture of heaven and if you are going to enjoy occupying this prototype of heaven, then it is a matter of fact that you must maintain these works. The fact that Israel doesn’t comes to expression first of all in the exile to Babylon. What it is is apostasy sets in.

Now clearly you didn’t have the absolute demands that you have for getting into heaven that would be sinless perfection. But what you have here is you have to keep the message legible. What’s the message? Here’s the picture of heaven, who belongs to this realm of prosperity-- the godly the pious. So that’s the picture. The pious occupy heaven. But if Israel is completely failing on the side of piety by failing service of Yahweh for the service of Baal especially if their leaders are doing that. Then the picture that God wants to present to the world of what heaven is like is no longer legible. Now it looks like the wicked. So they are under that principle of works to maintain a proper level of covenant fidelities and then they will continue in the land. If they fail in that they will be cut off . They are cut off in the Babylonian captivity. In an act of mercy God puts them back into the land--once again under Moses and under the law, therefore under works. Once again

more tragically they fail and kill the prophets, now here's the son let's kill the son and get the inheritance for ourselves. So they fail even more miserably and so 70 A.D. is the last word. There is a return from Babylon but there is no return to the theocratic order, the typological order is past history.

Time to go home?

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