

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION Chapter 6 Its Arrangement

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## Transcript

### THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

#### Chapter 6

#### Its Arrangement

In our last we dwelt upon God's decision to redeem and reconcile fallen rebels. His love originating, His will determining, and His wisdom planning the outworking of the same. In illustrating how the Divine wisdom found a solution to all the formidable problems which stood in the way, we unavoidably anticipated somewhat the ground which we hoped to cover in future articles. That Divine decision and scheme was "eternally purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11.), for God's purpose to reconcile and His provision for the same are inseparable. That purpose respected not simply the exercise of mercy unto His lapsed people, but also the exercise of it in such a way that His Law was honored. Yet it must not be supposed that God was under any moral necessity of saving His people, or that redemption was an expedient to deliver the Divine character from reproach on account of the strictness of the Law in condemning all transgressors—no atonement was provided for the fallen angels! Rather has redemption vindicated the Law, and that in such a way that no transgressor is exempted from suffering its curse, either in himself or in a Substitute. Reconciliation has been procured by the incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the grand and all-sufficient Provision of God for the accomplishing of His purpose. But it was effected by the Lord Jesus in fulfillment of a Covenant agreement. Unless that be clearly perceived we are without the principal key to the understanding of this stupendous undertaking. There was a time when Christians generally were well instructed in Covenant truth, but alas, a generation has grown up the great majority of which have heard nothing or next to nothing on it. It will therefore be necessary for us to proceed slowly in connection with this fundamental aspect of our subject and enter into considerable detail, for we do not ask the reader to receive ought from our pen until clearly convinced it is in full accord with and has the definite backing of God's Word. A few of our readers are more or less familiar with what we shall advance, yet it will do them no harm to have brought before them again the foundation on which faith should rest and to ponder the proofs which we now bring forward. The great majority of our readers know that "it is the blood (and that alone, plus nothing from us) that makes an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11), but we wonder how many of them have pondered and grasped the purport of that blessed and remarkable statement "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20). That implies, first, that

there was a covenant-agreement between God and our Lord Jesus; second, that it was a covenant made with Him as the Head of His people—"that great Shepherd of the sheep;" third, that Christ performed the condition of the covenant; fourth, that it was as the propitiated and reconciled One that God here acted; fifth, that it was in fulfillment of covenant purpose that He raised Christ; sixth, that Christ's blood was the meritorious ground on which He (and all the saints in Him) was delivered from the prison of the grave; seventh, that hereby the Church has Divine assurance of its complete redemption and salvation. We cannot dwell upon these points but would request a careful weighing of them as introductory to what follows. Three things are necessary in order to a "covenant" the parties, the terms, the agreement. A "covenant" is a solemn pact or contract in which there are certain "articles" or conditions to be performed, in return for which performance an agreed award is promised and assured. It is a mutual agreement in which one party guarantees a stipulated return for the other's fulfillment of the work he had pledged himself to undertake. It is an agreement entered into voluntarily by both parties (see Matthew 26:15). The two parties in "the everlasting covenant" were the Father and the Son—the Holy Spirit concurring therein, being the Witness, and agreeing to co-operate in the same. In Scripture the Father is represented as taking the initiative in this matter, proposing to His Son the terms of the covenant. The Father proposed a federal transaction in which the Son should take upon Him the Mediatorial office and serve as the Head of His people, thereby assuming and discharging their liabilities and bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them. The Son is represented as freely and gladly consenting to it. It needs to be pointed out and emphatically insisted upon that the Son was not so circumstanced antecedently to His susception of the Mediatorial office that He could not have avoided the humiliation and sufferings which He endured. We shall explain later the precise meaning of His words "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), "neither came I of Myself but He sent Me" (John 8:42), "this commandment (to lay down His life) have I received of My Father" (John 10:18); sufficient now to point out they have no reference whatever to His condition and position prior to the Covenant, for He then enjoyed absolute equality with the Father in every way. The Son might have resigned the whole human race to the dire consequences of their apostasy and have remained Himself everlastingly blessed and glorious. It was by His own voluntary consent that He entered into covenant engagement with the Father. In that free consent lay the excellency of it. It was His willing obedience and personal merits which gave infinite value to His oblation. Behind that willingness lay His love for the Father and His love for the Church. On the other hand it is equally true that though the Son had pitied, yea to loved the elect (fore viewed as fallen) that He was willing to become their Surety and Substitute, yet He could not have redeemed them without the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice. The Father too must consent to such an undertaking. Thus, there must be a mutual agreement between Them. The relation which Christ assumed to His people and the work He did for them presupposed the Father's willingness to it. Before passing on it must also be pointed out that in consenting to become Mediator and Servant, and as such in subjection to the Father, the Son did not surrender any of His perfections not relinquish any of His Divine rights, but He agreed to assume an inferior office and for a season to be subordinate to the Father's will. This was for the glory of the whole Godhead and the salvation of His people. After He became incarnate He was still in possession of His essential glory, though He was pleased to veil it in large measure from men and make Himself of "no reputation" in the world. Before adducing proof-texts of the covenant made between the Father and the Son, let us call attention to a number of passages which clearly imply it and which otherwise are not fully intelligible. Take Christ's very first recorded utterance after He became incarnate: "Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). Did not that intimate He had entered this world with a clearly defined and Divinely designed task before Him? "I came clown from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38) is even more explicit. Such subordination of one Divine person to another argues a

mutual agreement between Them, and that, for some unique end. "Say you of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the World; You blaspheme, because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36). Observe carefully the order of the two verbs: Christ was "sanctified" by the Father—that is, set apart and consecrated to His mediatorial office—before He was "sent" into the world! "Other sheep I have . . . them also I must bring" (John 10:16)—why "must" unless He was under definite engagement to do so? That Christ went to the cross in fulfillment of a covenant-agreement may be gathered from His own words: "truly the Son of man goes as it was determined" (Luke 22:22), with which should be linked "Of a truth against Your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27, 28). When you stand before the cross and gaze by faith upon its august Sufferer recognize that He was there fulfilling the compact into which He entered with the Father before the world was. His blood shedding was necessary—"ought not Christ to have suffered these things!" (Luke 24:26). He asked—because of the relation He sustained to His people as their Surety. He was pledged to secure their salvation in such a way as glorified God and magnified His Law, for that had been Divinely "determined" and mutually agreed upon in the everlasting Covenant. Had not Christ died there had been no atonement, no reconciliation to God; equally true is it that had there been no covenant, Christ had never died! Every passage where Christ own the Father as His God witnesses to the same truth. When Jehovah established His covenant with Abraham He promised "I will. . . be a God unto You and to your seed" (Gen. 17:8), and therefore when He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob" (Ex. 2:25) and revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush preparatory to delivering His people from Egypt, He declared Himself to be "The Lord God of your fathers: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: this is My name forever and this is My memorial to all generations" (Ex. 3:15). This is My covenant title and the guarantee of My covenant faithfulness. So too the grand promise of the new covenant is "I . . . will be their God" (Jer. 31:33 and Heb. 8:10). If then the Father had entered into covenant with His Son we should expect to find Him owning Him as His God during the days of His flesh. And this is exactly what we do find. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" was not only a cry of agony, but an acknowledgement of covenant relationship. "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). So also after His ascension. He declared, "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God. . . and I will write upon Him the Name of My God, and the name of the city of My God" (Rev. 3:12). Turning to the Epistles we find many passages which presuppose the Father's covenant with Christ before creation on behalf of His people. "Who has saved us. . . according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Even at that time, if time it may be called, there was a federal relationship subsisting between Christ and the Church, though it was not made fully manifest until He became incarnate. That subsisting relationship formed the basis of the whole economy of Divine grace toward them after the fall, as it was the ground on which God pardoned the O. T. saints and bestowed spiritual blessings upon them. "In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world was" (Titus 1:2). Does not that "promised" imply an agreement that God made promise to Christ as the Covenant Head and to His people in Him? Christ was faithful to Him that appointed Him (Heb. 3:2). As "obedience" implies a precept, so "faithfulness" connotes a trust, and a trust wherein one has engaged himself to perform that trust according to directions given him. Passing now from indirect allusions to what is more specific, we begin with Psalm 89:3. "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My Servant." The immediate allusion is to the historical David, but the spiritual reference is to David's Son and Lord. This is clear from many considerations. First, the striking and lofty manner in which this Psalm opens intimates that its leading theme must be one of great weight and value. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever,

with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever, Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens" (vv. 1, 2). Such language denotes that no ordinary or common "mercies" are in view, but those which when apprehended fill the hearts of the redeemed with holy songs and cause them to magnify the fidelity of Jehovah as nothing else does. Thus, such an introduction should prepare us to expect Divine revelation of extreme importance and blessedness. Second, "I have made a covenant with My Chosen" (same word as My Elect in Isa. 42:1). I have sworn unto David (which means Beloved) My Servant. In the following passages it may be seen that Christ is expressly referred to as "David" by the prophets (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Hosea 3:5) and let it be duly borne in mind that all those predictions were made long after the historical David had passed away from this scene. "You spake in vision to Your Holy One and said: I have laid help upon One that is mighty, I have exalted One chosen out of the people (Deut. 18:15), I have found David My Servant, with My holy oil have I anointed Him" (vv. 19, 20). Who can doubt that a greater than the son of Jesse is here before us? But more: God goes on to say "I will make Him My Firstborn higher than the kings of the earth.. .My covenant shall stand fast with Him" (vv. 27, 28)—does not that establish beyond a doubt the identity of the One with whom Jehovah made the covenant! Such declarations pertain to no mere human being. Third, the covenant promises here made establish the same fact. "His seed will I make to endure forever and His throne as the days of heaven" (v. 29)—the throne of the historical David perished over two thousand years ago! That this promise was to be fulfilled in Christ is clear from Luke 1:31-33, where it was said to Mary. You "shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Another proof that it is not the typical David who is viewed in this Psalm appears in "If His children forsake My Law . . . then will I visit their transgression with the rod" (vv. 30-32). Had it been the successor of Saul who was the subject of this Psalm it had said "If he shall break My Law. . .! will visit his transgression with the rod" —as he was sorely chastised for so grievously wronging Uriah. No, it is Christ and His spiritual children who are referred to, and it is because of God's covenant with Him that He casts them not off. (See vv. 33-36). Fourth, in Acts 13:34 Paul proved the resurrection of Christ thus: "As concerning that He raised Him from the dead to return no more to corruption, He said on this wise: I will give you the sure mercies of David." But in what did that quotation from Isaiah 55:3 provide proof? By the resurrection of Christ the "sure mercies of David" are confirmed unto His children. If they are in possession of them, then Christ must have risen! That word of Paul's looks back beyond Isaiah 55 to Psalm 89, which, as we have seen, begins thus: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever." The principal mercies are "I have made a covenant with My chosen . . . Your seed will I establish forever, and build up Your throne for all generations" (vv. 3, 4). Here then are "the sure mercies of David:" that God has covenanted to raise up Christ and set Him at His own right hand from where, on His mediatorial throne, He communicates those mercies to His seed. All doubt on this point is removed by Peter's avowal that through David God had sworn that "Of the fruit of his loins . . . He would raise up Christ to sit on His throne" (Acts 2:30 and see v. 33). On Psalm 89:3, 4 the immortal Toplady said, "Do you suppose that this was spoken to David in his own person only? No, indeed; but to David as the type, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. 'I have sworn unto David My Servant' unto the Messiah, who was typified by David, unto My co-equal Son, who stipulated to take upon Himself 'the form of a servant.' 'Your seed' all those that I have given unto you in the decree of election; all those whom you shall live and die to redeem. Those 'will I establish forever,' so as to render their salvation irreversible and inadmissible. 'And build up Your Throne:' Your mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect. 'To all generations:' there shall always be a succession of favored sinners to be called and sanctified, in consequence of Your federal obedience unto death, and every period of time shall recompense Your

covenant sufferings with an increasing revenue of converted souls, until as many as were ordained to eternal life shall be gathered in" (Author of that precious hymn "Rock of Ages").

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