

1.1 The Theme of the OT, the NT, and Scripture as a Whole (discussion)

Introduction

Can we find a string (a theme) that ties all the historical facts, all the books, and all the diversity together?

Why do many scholars (even reformed) say no?

1A. Explanation of covenant (or promise) as the unifying theme of Scripture

What is the broadest principle that can be applied that brings all of Scripture into focus? What is the skeletal frame on which all the muscle tissue of the OT and NT hangs? What, in other words, is a one word summary of the OT that contrasts with the NT overarching notion of fulfillment?

We are looking for the theme of the Bible as the record of God's purpose in history.

God has a purpose for history that He designed before the beginning of the world.

God is working out His purpose in history.

He does things in history and He interprets what He does for us in Scripture.

Why then (in two points) is Scripture covenantal (united around the theme of covenant)?

How can we bring both of these points together in a theme statement? Scripture is covenantal because it is a) thethat b) realizes

1) Dispensational versus Covenant Theology

<u>Aspects of Concern</u>	<u>Dispensational Theology</u>	<u>Covenantal Theology</u>
Redemptive History	Emphasizes Discontinuity	Emphasizes Continuity
OT to NT	Emphasizes Discontinuity	Emphasizes Continuity
Israel to Church (OT/NT)	Emphasizes Discontinuity	Emphasizes Continuity
Israel to Church (future)	Emphasizes Discontinuity	Emphasizes Continuity

Dispensational theology denies what covenantal theology affirms, namely, that redemptive history is an organic unity (like a seed to full plant), that the church is now the new Israel made up of Jews and Gentiles, and that the church constitutes the new Israel of the future.

What does "emphasizes" indicate about these two theologies?

What is Biblical Theology (BT)?

In the shift from OT to NT which view emphasizes the antithetic language about the law?

How does covenant theology relate Israel to the Church in the present?

How does dispensational theology relate Israel to the Church in the future?

2) Covenant

God's covenant is one sided; it is sovereignly administered; it is a guarantee, promise and commitment. God's covenant word is His voiced commitment to His image bearers promising eternal Sabbath rest to save a people out of the fallen human family through the seed of Eve, through Christ.

The idea of covenant overarches the entire Bible. Scripture records the unfolding of the saving purpose in which God makes and keeps covenant one-sidedly to save.

Where reciprocal conditions enter the picture (God chose Abraham so that he would obey Him, Gen 18.18; God redeems Israel for obedience not by it, Ex 19-20; believers pledge obedience in baptism, 1 Pet 3.21; Rom 6.1-4), they are subordinate to this central idea of God's sovereign and gracious purpose (i.e., the obedience of baptism flows from efficacious grace, cf. Rom 6.4, by the glory of the Father, and 1 Pet 3.21, by the resurrection).

The old contrasts with the new in the notion of fulfillment. What is it that comes to fulfillment in the NT? The new obviously fulfills the promise of the old centered on Christ. Thus, the OT records the promise of Christ anticipated and the NT records the same promise fulfilled. Christ is at the center in the eternal covenant purpose of the triune God.

2A. Biblical basis for covenant (or promise) as the unifying theme of Scripture

The biblical basis for the covenantal nature of Scripture is implicit on one hand and explicit on the other. Implicit locks us into "good and necessary consequence" (cf. WCF).

Why do we need biblical support for this claim in general and in particular?