

- o Paedobaptists depend heavily on covenant theology to support infant baptism. But theirs is an erroneous form of covenant theology which goes beyond the biblical bounds. This explains why there are significant differences between advocates of infant baptism.
- o Many General Baptists (who are Arminian and dispensationalists) reject covenant theology all together. Reformed Baptists accept a biblically consistent covenant theology.

I. Baptist agreements and disagreements with paedobaptists.

1. Covenantal paedobaptists and covenantal Baptists are agreed on the following:
 - The decrees of God and the Covenant of Redemption before the foundation of the world. The Covenant of Redemption is the unified plan between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to redeem the elect from their sins (2 Tim 1:9).
 - The Covenant of Works that God made with Adam as our federal head. Adam broke this covenant and brought all mankind into a state of sin, death, condemnation, and misery (Hos 6:7 Rom 5:12-21). All people are born under the condemnation of the failed Covenant of Works and “under law,” until they are transferred into the Covenant of Grace (Rom 3:19-20; 6:14).
 - The Covenant of Grace, which is the fulfillment of the eternal Covenant of Redemption, worked out in history through the covenant Head, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12ff.). It began with God’s promise in Genesis 3:15, which was carried on in history through variously administered “covenants of promise” with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. It was fulfilled in the final New Covenant of Jesus Christ when He came to earth and delivered the fatal blow to Satan upon the cross, and then rising from the dead.
 - The way of salvation has been by grace through faith in God’s provision of that “seed of the woman” since the fall of man. The Sinai Covenant (made with Moses) was never given as a renewed Covenant of Works for salvation, although it was wrongly interpreted as such by the Pharisees in Jesus’s day (Gal 3:16, 19).
 - The New Covenant of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and is the clearest and final fulfillment of the historical Covenant of Grace, and therefore, of the eternal Covenant of Redemption (2 Tim 1:8-10).
2. Baptists disagree with paedobaptists on the following:
 - Paedobaptists transfer the promises given to Abraham and his seed automatically to believers and their seed in the New Covenant administration, claiming that the New Covenant is “essentially identical” to the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - Covenantal Baptists believe that the Abrahamic promises are fulfilled in Christ Himself, and in His elect seed of faith alone (Isa 53:10; Gal 3; Heb 8:8-12). The Abrahamic Covenant was a covenant of promise (Eph 2:12), which is fulfilled and replaced by the New Covenant (2 Tim 1:8-10).
 - Covenantal Baptists believe that the promises to Abraham are NOT the passing on of covenant signs to infant seeds, but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the elect Jew and Gentile seeds through faith in Christ (Gal 3:2-5, 8-9, 14, 29). Abraham is “the father of us all” who believe (Rom 4:13-16). Believers alone are the children of Abraham, members of the New Covenant and the only ones entitled to the New Covenant signs of baptism and the Lord’s supper.

II. The definition and content of a biblical covenant.

1. Paedobaptists begin their covenant theology with the meaning of the Hebrew word for covenant which is “berith,” and the NT Greek word, which is “diatheke.” The basic meaning of a covenant so derived is that of a solemn bond, oath, promise, or pledge. From elements found in particular covenants, it is generalised that all covenants, including the New Covenant, is conditional and breakable.
 - By this generalisation, elements found in some covenants are added to other covenants which are not mentioned in Scripture, including physical descendants, conditional promises, curses and blessings. The content of the covenants are therefore determined by inference never articulated in Scripture.
2. Covenantal Baptists would begin with the principles summarised by John Owen: (i) one’s definition of what is a covenant will determine one’s covenant theology; (ii) the content and form of each covenant must be determined from actual revelation concerning its precepts and promises, not from supposed good and necessary inference from other covenants.

- We believe that a covenant is a sovereign bond, promise, oath, or pledge of God to man, each covenant's content being determined by revelation concerning that covenant (Heb 6:13-19).
- We reject the paedobaptist idea that the covenants, including the one Covenant of Grace, must automatically have a genealogical or organic element that always includes believers and their seed. The Scriptures, however, describe the eternal Covenant of Redemption and the historical Covenant of Grace as consisting of the elect only (Eph 1:3-14; Tit 1:1-3; 2 Tim 1:9-10).
- We maintain that one cannot assume the content of any covenant by mere inference from another. For example, the covenant with Noah was a unilateral promise by God to Noah and to all creation never to destroy the world again by water. No conditions were given for men to fulfil (Gen 9:8-17). On the other hand, the covenant with Abraham required circumcision as a sign of the covenant and a condition of its fulfillment (Gen 17:14).

III. The unity and diversity of the biblical covenants.

1. To paedobaptists, the unity of the biblical covenants comes from the fact that they are all the outworking of one eternal Covenant of Redemption between the persons of the Holy Trinity to save an elect people. Baptists agree with them up to this point.
 - Paedobaptists, however, go on to say that the Covenant of Grace is "an organic idea, including believers and their seed," quoting such passages as Jer 32:39. But such passages do not mean that the children of believers are automatically saved. Rather, they mean that the children of believers will be blessed with the opportunity of exposure to the gospel, unlike those of unbelievers (Acts 2:38-39; 1 Cor 7:14). The argument is taken a stage farther by saying that the unity of the covenants infer that the sign of the New Covenant, viz. baptism, should be extended to the physical children of believers. The claim is that Abraham is called "the father of us all" (Rom 4:16), believers are referred to as the "seed" of Abraham (Gal 3:29), and so baptism should be given to the physical seed of the spiritual seed of Abraham (Col 2:11-12).
 2. Baptists reject the paedobaptist position on three grounds.
 - First, it depends on erroneous inferences from the OT and fails to honour its own hermeneutics that the NT must be the final interpreter of how the OT is fulfilled in it.
 - Second, its exaggerated emphasis upon unity and continuity between the covenants obscures the uniqueness and diversity of the New Covenant administration as a "new" covenant that fulfils the OT "covenants of promise" in a way that is superior to the old administration (Heb 10:1-17).
 - Third, it fails to recognise biblical evidence that the New Covenant is an effectual covenant that guarantees realised blessings in each and every member.
 - : The eternal Covenant of Redemption includes only believers and their seed in an elect sense (2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:1-3; etc.).
 - : The New Covenant administration does not include the organic idea in covenant membership in the same way the Abrahamic Covenant did. Instead, there is a new individualistic element, a heightened individualism (Jer 31:27-34; Gal 3:29; 6:15-16).
 - : This heightened individualism is revealed also in the doctrine of the remnant (Jer 6:9; 23:1-6; 31:7-8; 32:37; Isa 11:1-12; Mal 2:15; Ezek 36:24-27). All New Covenant members are individually regenerate, as is indicated also by Jesus's teachings (Mt 8:12; 13:38). John Murray was wrong to separate Jesus's teaching on baptism from Christian baptism (Jn 4:1-2; Mt 28:19-20)
 - Diversity is seen in God's changed dealings with His people in New Covenant days, from unregenerate covenant families in the covenants of promise to heart-changed individuals.
- = The Baptist model of defining a covenant, determining its content, and explaining the unity and diversity of the covenant is more consistent with Scriptures compared to the paedobaptist model which relies so heavily on supposed "good and necessary inference."