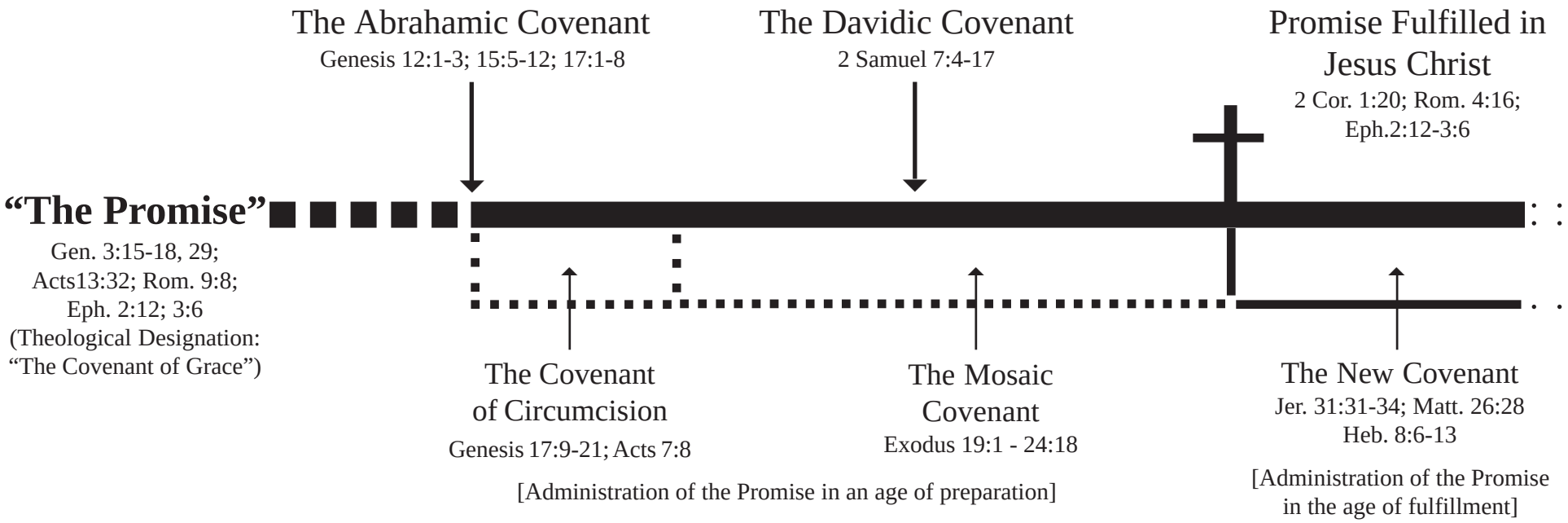
The Promise Covenants

1. The promise covenants set forth the gracious plan of God to redeem men from sin.
2. Condition for inclusion in the "promise": faith.
3. The promise covenants are fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham and the Son of David.
4. Therefore, men inherit the promises of these covenants only by being "in Christ"—joined to Him in faith.
5. There is one "promise," which is secured by the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, giving full continuity to the flow of redemptive history and the way of salvation.
6. Note: At their initiation the Promise Covenants also contained specific promises for Abraham and David, and also for their physical descendents (due to the prepratory and typological aspects of these covenants).



The Administrative Covenants

1. The administrative covenants teach the redeemed man his duties (both moral and cultic) as a member of God's covenant people.
2. Condition for prospering in the administrative covenant: obedience—blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience.
3. These covenants show man how to "be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). The terms for being "perfect" are both moral and cultic (ceremonial).
   a. Moral: standards of ethics; moral law; remains unchanged, though may be clarified and expanded in the progress of revelation.
   b. Cultic: prescribed rites and ceremonies; primary focus of OT rites was to typify the coming redemptive work of Christ; the primary focus of the NT rites are to portray the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
4. There exists both continuity and discontinuity between the administrative covenants that must be discerned by the biblical text.

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Circumcision and Baptism

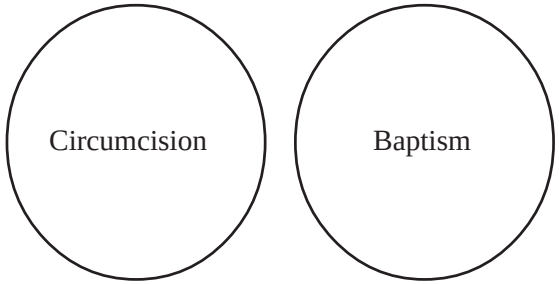


Fig. 1. Dispensational Baptist - Anabaptist View

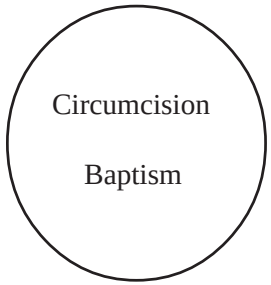


Fig. 2. Paedobaptist View

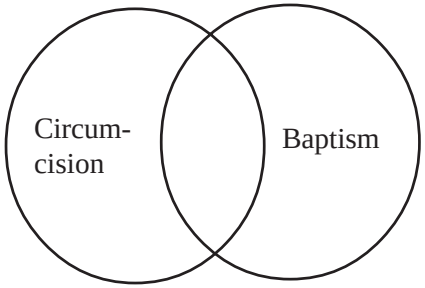


Fig. 3. Reformed Baptist View

The Anabaptist - Dispensational Baptist position (Fig. 1.) sees circumcision and baptism as entirely distinct from one another. Stresses full discontinuity between them.

The Paedobaptist position (Fig. 2) sees baptism as replacing circumcision and that they are virtually the same—what is said of OT circumcision can be said of NT baptism. Stresses a near complete continuity between them.

The Reformed Baptist position (Fig. 3) sees baptism and circumcision as analogous, with baptism superseding circumcision. Stresses that there is both continuity and discontinuity between them.

Circumcision and Typology

1. Typology refers to a divinely intended relationship (correspondence) between certain persons, events, institutions, and ceremonies of the OT and certain persons, events, institutions, and ceremonies of the NT. OT typology foreshadowed things that were to come to be or to come to pass in the NT.

2. Circumcision pointed forward to Christ and regeneration through the Holy Spirit through the redemptive work of Christ.

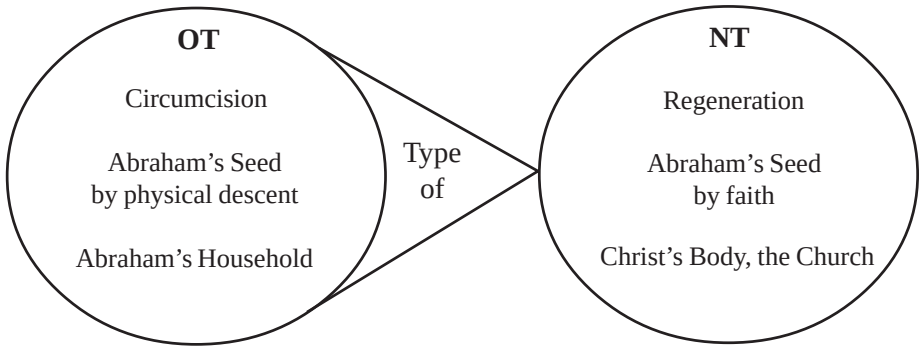
3. As a *type* of regeneration it signified that only those who were regenerated were to be counted as the seed of Abraham and members of his household—the covenant community of God.

4. Thus, Abraham's circumcised household—Israel—was a type of the true people of God, the elect, the Body of Christ, the NT church.

5. Those circumcised in heart (regenerated) by faith in Christ are the true and only seed of Abraham by virtue of their union with Christ.

6. Baptism, which supersedes circumcision, is applied to all who believe in Jesus Christ and who, thus, become Abraham's seed.

7. The analogy between circumcision and baptism is this: all who were identified as Abraham's seed in the OT administration received circumcision, and all those who are identified as Abraham's seed in the NT receive baptism.



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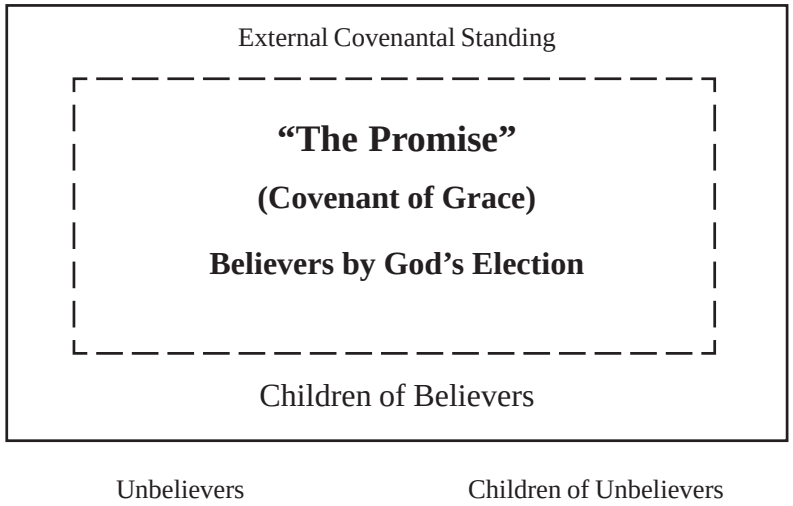
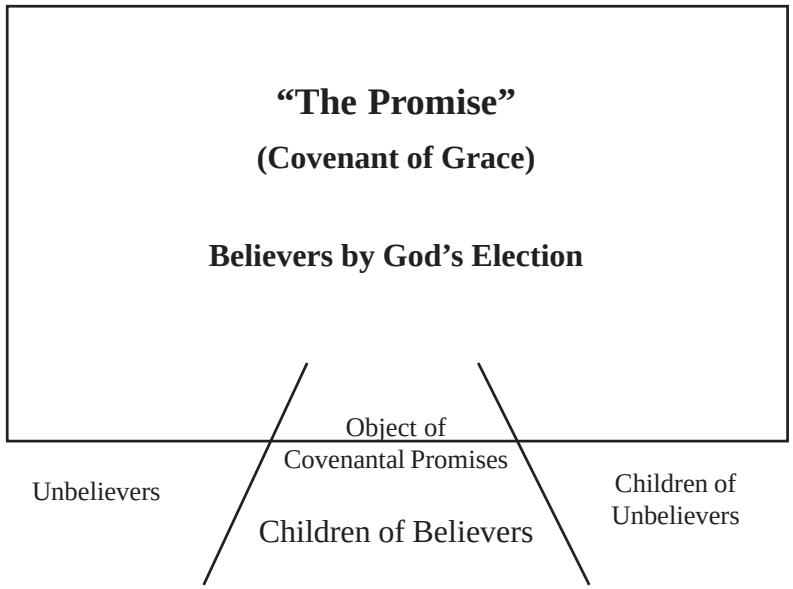
Reformed Paedobaptist View



1. Believers are in the Covenant of Grace (the Promise) by God's sovereign election and the gift of regeneration and faith and partake of all its benefits.
2. The children of believers are *in* the Covenant of Grace by virtue of the faith of at least one of their parents and partake of its "external" benefits.
3. The children of believers are still unregenerate and must believe in Christ (be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit) to become partakers of the spiritual benefits of the Covenant of Grace.
4. The children of believers are baptized because they are in the covenant by virtue of their birth into a Christian home. Their baptism is the sign and seal of their external covenantal standing, but it does not confer upon them the full covenantal standing of true believers.
5. The children of believers are baptized in *anticipation* of their faith and because they are presumed to be of the elect on the basis of the promises to Christian parents.
6. Parents are responsible to teach their children the Word of God with a view to their conversion and acceptance of the covenantal standing conferred on them through the parents' faith in bringing them for baptism.
7. When these children come of age, the church is responsible to either admit them into full communion on the basis of their testimony or (if those who hold this position are consistent) to formally excommunicate them from the church for the lack of a testimony.

Reformed Credobaptist View



1. Believers are in the Covenant of Grace (the Promise) by God's sovereign election and the gift of regeneration and faith and partake of all its benefits.
2. The children of believers are *not in* the Covenant of Grace by virtue of their parents faith, though they are the object of God's specific promises to His covenant people.
3. The children of believers are unregenerate and must believe in Christ (be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit) to become partakers of the spiritual benefits of the Covenant of Grace.
4. The children of believers are not to be baptized because they are not in the Covenant of Grace and because their baptism would not answer to the biblical meaning of baptism nor the Bible's instructions regarding it.
5. The children of believers are baptized when they believe in Christ and in *fulfillment* of the covenant promises to parents because they give evidence that they are of the elect.
6. Parents are responsible to teach their children the Word of God with a view to their children's conversion and acceptance of the Gospel which then will be sealed through their child's obedience to the commands regarding baptism.
7. The church is responsible to baptize on the basis of a credible profession of faith. The recommendation of the parents concerning their child's faith and suitability for baptism is important.

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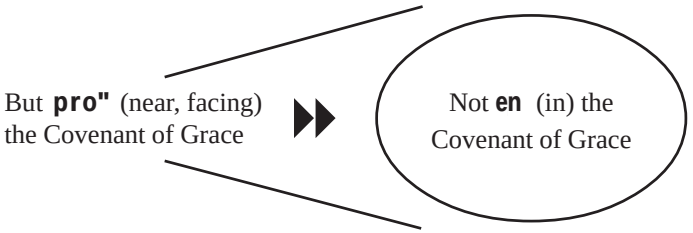
Figure 1.

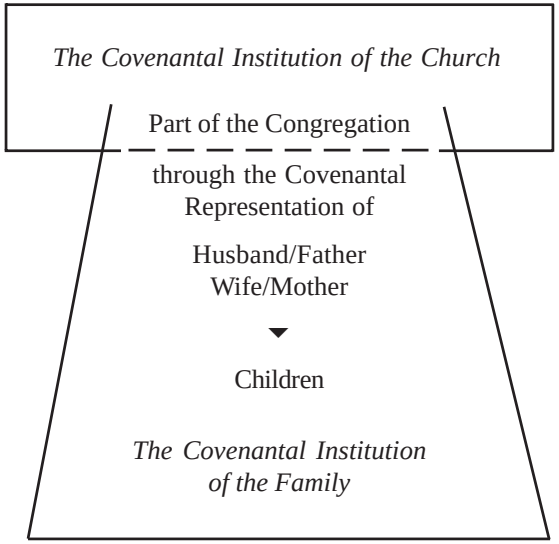


1. Figure 1 seeks to illustrate the status of the children of believers in regard to the Covenant of Grace (the Promise).
2. By the use of these Greek prepositions we are attempting to illustrate the point that though the children of believers are not *in* the Covenant of Grace, they stand in a position that is defined by and oriented to the Covenant of Grace.
3. The preposition **pro"** *[pros]* refers to that which is near or facing. It is used: 1) to indicate motion, a moving towards something; 2) to indicate position in terms of closeness and proximity—near, at, or by the side of; 3) to indicate orientation towards something—with a view to, concerning, in view of. All three of these senses accurately define the position of the children of believers in regard to the Covenant of Grace.
4. The paedobaptist would have us reduce the relationship to a simple *in* or *out.* But this is simplistic, and does not recognize the distinctions that need to be made. The Greeks had more than these 2 prepositions (**en** or **ek)** to express the relationship between words and so we too need more than "in" or "out" to define the relationship of children of believers to God's Covenant.

As Covenantal Reformed Baptists we believe:

1. That the family is a covenantal institution in distinction from the church.
2. That God works in and through families to accomplish His purpose and expand His kingdom.
3. That God has given Christian parents special promises concerning His grace and mercy to their children. He uses believing parents to mediate His grace to their children.
4. That Christian parents are charged by God with the solemn duty of raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
5. That the children of Christian parents have a covenantal standing in the church through the faith, baptism, and headship of their father (or parents).
6. That baptism is given to the children of Christian parents in fulfillment of God's promises to be merciful to their seed; i.e., at such a time when the child gives credible evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. That there is continuity of the highest degree between the OT and NT in regard to the family , the duties of parents, and the promises of God concerning the children of those who are in covenant with Him by faith in *the Promise* of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Figure 2.



1. Figure 2 seeks to depict how the Christian husband/father (with a Christian wife as his one-flesh companion) establishes his family in the congregation of a visible church through the principle of covenantal headship. This chart depicts how all the members of the family are *a part* of the *congregation* of a local church by the covenantal bond between the church and the representative head of the household.
2. There is, therefore, a covenantal connection between the child and the church through the authority and representation of believing parents.
3. The child's association with the church is as a member of a Christian family that is covenantally connected to a visible church through the faith and baptism of the father (or of the mother, and in many cases of both parents).
4. By their own repentance, faith, and baptism children of Christian parents become *communing members* of the visible church—they are recognized as believers who are *in* the covenant of grace and baptized members of the visible church.
5. The Lord's Supper is only for the members of the family who have received baptism, and who through faith can discern the Lord's body.
6. Whether or not this is the best way to express the relationship of a child to the visible church, it recognizes the importance of the Christian family as a covenantal institution separate from the church, and shows how all the members of the family can sustain a specfic relation to the local church according to the principle of covenantal, federal headship. It also shows that the unbaptized child of believing parents is not cut off from God or the church, and enjoys the privilege of godly parents who, in connection with the local church, mediate to him or her the external blessings of the covenant of grace: prayer, the Gospel and the Word of God, Christian education, godly discipline, and loving nurture.

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