



# Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption

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The Christian religion is not an otherworldly, eternal doctrine about the nature of deity or a polite philosophical discussion about the relation of spirit to matter. Instead, it is the historical unfolding of God's covenantal involvement in this world, the culmination of which is God's coming into this world in the person of Jesus Christ.

Far as the Curse if Found is a retelling of the biblical story of God's unfolding covenant from creation to new creation. Readers are led to wonder anew at the redemptive work of God in our own history, in our own human flesh. Pastors, students, and those interested in biblical theology are among the many that will gain fresh insight into the biblical story of redemption.

## **Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption Details**

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## From Reader Review Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption for online ebook

### Randy says

A good survey of the Biblical story. I really loved the chapter on the patriarchs and his consideration of the land questions. Williams does a nice job comparing the nations-come-to-Israel structure of the OT with the church-goes-to-the-nations structure in the NT. At times this got a little too systematic for me(his extensive defense of the restorational view in the last chapter.)

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### Peter B. says

Dr. Williams tells the biblical story by focusing on the development of God's gracious covenant dealing with man. Like O. Palmer Robertson's book, Christ of the Covenants, Dr. Williams walks through the various covenantal administrations (creation covenant, Gen. 3:15, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, new covenant). While Robertson's book has its strengths, I found this book to be less dry. Dr. Williams also focuses more on the goodness of the physical creation, the narrative element of Scripture, and the priority of grace in all God's covenantal dealings. Dr. Williams treatment of the Mosaic covenant and the Old Testament law is pleasantly positive, although his comment on the civil aspect of the law on page 235 seems out of place (he is mostly talking there about the ceremonial law). "Unlike the law of fallen man, which often merely reflects the senseless world we make for ourselves, the law of God is a joy because it makes sense of the world" (p. 154).

His arguments for a restorative view of eschatology (rather than an escapist view) can also be found in his talk, "Noah & the End of the World" here: <https://youtu.be/pDCqB16jTYk>

I look forward to having him as my professor in Covenant Theology II this coming semester as he comes back from his sabbatical.

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### James says

In Dr. Michael Williams book, Far as the Curse is Found, he makes a case for reading the bible as one continuous story that arches from Genesis to Revelation. Each part of the overarching story reveals God as being constant in His personality and nature but yet expanding the story to further reveal Him in accordance with what He has already revealed about Himself. Dr. Williams integrates the biblical account of creation and God's mission all within the flow of God's covenant with creation and in particular with man. These elements in concert impact the identity of the people of God.

Interacting with the bible as one continuous narrative, one might expect Williams to begin with the creation account in Genesis. Instead, he begins with Christ's resurrection. This is of vital importance because Christ's resurrection helps us interpret the events as they unfold from Genesis onward as it does a great deal to answer the covenantal promises that God makes to man as the story progresses. In particular, the resurrection of Christ is a preview of God's restoration of His creation. Genesis is the first covenant of the biblical narrative where God creates all things and calls them good. God makes man and calls him into a relationship with Him, much like an earthly father to son relationship. Adam is given a mission: to bear God's image, to be His representative, to mediate God's rule to creation. The way that man was to do this was through

covenantal obedience (p.50). But man listens to the serpent and broke the covenant with God. Instead of destroying man, God promises that the evil one will be crushed one day, that He will redeem His whole creation. This promise carries on through God's covenant with Noah, then Abraham, and also prophets. Christ's resurrection is God making good on His promise (p.14).

So, through the expansions of the covenant with Adam onward, God's mission for man to mediate His rule to creation remains. The problem of man's sin persists though. From Adam onward through successive generations, God reveals Himself to be the faithful covenant partner in spite of repeated covenant breaking by man. Even when God acts in judgment, He does so to preserve the material world, the structures and patterns of creation, and most notably, His promise of a redeemer and for the sake of His creation (pp.89, 99). After the tower of Babel and the divisions of peoples and languages, God's mission to be known through a mediator is passed to Abraham (p.103). For God to make Himself known is to bless. So, God makes a covenant with Abraham that he will be made into a great nation, that God will bless him, and God will make his name great in order that through Him all the peoples on the earth will be blessed (pp.108, 109). Dr. Williams also gives two pictures that help understand God's people execute His mission throughout the covenants. The pictures are of centrifugal and centripetal motion in regards to the way that God's people function as mediators of God's covenant to the rest of the world. God did not place Israel, His people, in their land because it was prime real estate that was impervious to foreign attack or the most fertile land on all the earth. Rather, God placed Israel so that it would be on the major trade route of the ancient world. People from all nations would be exposed to God's covenant people as they were drawn in as in a centrifuge as opposed to what we see in the centrifugal picture of God's people in the New Testament in Matthew 28:19 and Acts (p.120). The nation of Israel is to carry out God's covenant mediatory role to all the nations of the earth. God's people do this by being God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (p.135).

The identity of God's people is to be realized through this lens then. As people in covenant with their Creator, called to mediate knowledge of God to the rest of the world, God's people are called to model the moral character of people who have been called as a treasured possession, a kingdom priests, and a holy nation "as a witness to the watching nations, giving winsome expression to [their] relationship with him, and to His redemptive concern for his world (p.147)." God's people do this by living according to His law. Dr. Williams refers to John Calvin's third use of the law as seeing it as "an operators manual to the covenantal machine (p.156)." Living guided by God's law reflects the relationship between Him and His people. The law gives "contours of the love of God and neighbor...flow[ing] from covenant membership." Further, because God is unchanging and in the covenant with Adam He called mankind to image Him, the law eternally binds man (p.161). In their every endeavor, God's people just as then should now be identified by the way that they display "fairness, holiness, justice, and mercy (p.165)."

God's people today have the benefit of being able to observe the many failures of God's people recorded in scripture without blindly committing the same kinds of covenant violations, failing to bear God's image and to act as mediators on His behalf. Israel got carried away with the fact that they were God's chosen people and so it eventually surfaced as disdain for their neighboring nations. They thought by "their visible traditions—temple, priesthood, possessing the promised land, the sacrificial system, the Davidic monarchy, and even the office of prophet—guarantee[d] divine favor (p.197)." This is clearly a lesson of what not to do in realizing the identity of God's people. We can find modern examples to parallel each of these parts of visible traditions in the church today. Christians can fall into the trap of thinking that they are truly God's people because they go to the right church, that their church members and officers are the true ones, that they have the best country to live in, their church practices all the right liturgy and celebrates the sacraments just so, etcetera, that we are guaranteed God's favor in all things. As the people of God, we should have our eyes open to the danger of "divorcing the internal from the external" aspects of living in covenant with God (p.212).

The truth of the matter is that modern people of God need to realize the thing they very much have in common with the people of God from ancient times. The people of God need to identify themselves as covenant breakers in need of grace from God. We must be people dependent on God Himself to be the one to maintain His covenant. We are to be people who identify with Christ, the only one who fulfills the covenant (p.224). We are to "bear the name of Christ (p.247)." God's people are still to be "a chosen race, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, and God's own...(p.250)." God's people take their identity not from fallen Adam but from the sinless Christ (p.252).

We are to live as in the centrifugal picture of God's people. We bear God's image and act as His mediators to both Jew and gentile (p.254), empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (p.261). We are to recognize that the church with Christ as its head is an extension of covenantal representation to the word (p.266). We are identified as people who are committed to scripture to fulfill God's mission (p.269). Finally, we are people who are expectant of God's regeneration of His creation. We expect that God will rehabilitate His first creation (p.279). We are people who long not for a restored creation or coming heaven alone but we are people who eagerly await the return of our perfect covenant keeping Lord, Jesus Christ (p.302).

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### **Charlie says**

A surprisingly readable tome that draws from a century of Reformed covenant theology and biblical theology to present the Bible as a single, coherent story.

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### **Lara says**

I took my time reading this book because it's pretty dense, but I'm coming away with a much better understanding of the biblical story as a whole. I used to have so many questions about how the Old and New Testaments are connected. The author does an amazing job of tying them together, explaining how the Bible truly is one, cohesive story, and making the Old Testament seem relevant in a way I've never experienced before.

I've already told all of my Christian friends that they need to read this book. If you've ever wondered "what's the point?"/"how is this relevant to me, as a Christian?" in reference to the Old Testament, this book is a must. If you haven't wondered that, read it anyway because it will blow your mind.

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### **Emily Zell says**

WOW. This book took me a long time to read because every few pages it seemed that I needed to pause and soak in what I had just read. This is 300 pages full of the story of our God, who is so so faithful to the faithless. This is truly beautiful and a unique lens in which to examine the Biblical narrative. This is a must read.

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### **Abby says**

I had a much better understanding of covenant theology after reading this book! I would have loved to see some of the initial chapters flesh out more. I was a little confused about some of the references to other lines of Christian thought and would have loved to see a little more explanation there. I didn't grow up learning covenant theology and felt like a little bit much was assumed about the reader's understanding. I also think he was wrong in the chapter about Noah - it seemed to me his argument didn't account for the full biblical picture of Noah (Heb 11, etc.), but I can definitely articulate covenant theology better after reading this. I loved the sweeping look at the pervasive effects of the fall and the glorious restoration coming!

## **Bambi Moore says**

Learned a lot from this book. The author takes the reader through the Bible with a covenant lens on the eyes. Much exegetical insight here. The eschatology of the last chapter left me with questions and I will re-read that portion.

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## **Rachel says**

This was a really, really excellent book. I highly recommend that every reformed Christian read it. It's a little heady at times, but \*so\* worth it. I think Michael Williams avoided the pitfalls that I have seen in some covenant theologians and provided what I think was a very solidly biblical look at the covenant story.

There were a few sections that I did not agree with, mainly the one on the law. Michael Williams did a very good job of giving a Calvinistic (as opposed to Lutheran) view of the law, and upheld it's third use in keeping with the reformed tradition. He's not theonomic, and that is where I disagreed with some of his treatment, however, he did uphold it as a standard of holiness (and a positive, not negative standard at that) for the believer. I also thought his treatment of the eschaton was a little disappointing and fell short of the glory it could have had.

BUT my copy of this book looks like a sketch pad... it's underlined all over and has so much writing in the margins! A very thought provoking read that I would rank with other favorites like "The Calvinistic Concept of Culture" by Henry Van Til and "Plowing in Hope" by Bruce David Hegeman. I approached it with caution and some skepticism, but I was very pleasantly surprised. A must read.

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## **Leigh Gilliland says**

I would give this more stars if possible. I finished this book one Sunday morning, sitting on my front porch. The moment I finished, I put the book down and said to my husband, "I don't know what this means, but I can't be the same after reading this book."

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## **Corey Hampton says**

This was a great book on biblical/covenantal theology. I have read a few books on biblical theology as of late: Dominion and Dynasty, Gospel and Kingdom, What is Biblical Theology?, and God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment. All of them have been really helpful, but this book by Dr. Williams was my favourite. He has given helpful introductions to many ideas within biblical/covenantal theology and has wet my appetite for continuing further study. I've ordered The Presence of the Future by George Eldon Ladd and am excited to read it after William's intro to its thought!

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### **Shannon Ture says**

Helpful in getting a broad understanding of the story of God's redemptive work on earth, and not just in people, but in all of creation, a major point.

It explains covenant theology (vs. dispensational and others), and helps create a sound framework for answering major questions and living life in light of a Biblical, redemptive worldview.

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### **Robin says**

Great Read- Covenant theology - a hearty amen!

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### **Kirsten says**

I first read this book freshman year of college, and it was one of those books that I found to be quite helpful in developing a deeper understanding of theological truths I'd sort of known for years. As someone who loves stories, looking at Scripture as telling a single coherent covenant story really helps me to grasp how things fit together and flow from the Old to the New Testament, which deepens both my love for the Bible and my amazement at how God worked and continues to work in the world. I also just finished a year-long read-through of the entire Bible, and appreciated coming back to this book after that to be reminded of how the story that I'd just read in full ties together across history. 4.5 out of 5 stars, rounded up for the impact it had on my thinking when I first read it.

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### **Becky Pliego says**

Such a great read. Enjoyed every page of this book.

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