

OPENING ADDRESS · SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 · 9:00 A.M.

# Before the Foundation of the World

## *The Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace*

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### THE ANCHOR TEXT

“This pact of salvation... forms the link between the eternal work of God toward salvation and what he does to that end in time. **The covenant of grace revealed in time does not hang in the air but rests on an eternal, unchanging foundation.** It is firmly grounded in the counsel and covenant of the triune God and is the application and execution of it that infallibly follows.”

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215

### FOLLOWING THE ADDRESS

#### 1 Introduction

2024: *Ordinary Means, Extraordinary Ends*. 2025: *The Things Concerning Himself*. 2026: what holds them together?

Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:44

#### 2 The Question Behind the Question

To whom did God promise eternal life before the ages began? He made the promise to his Son. Dickson at Glasgow, 1638.

Rom. 4:20

#### 3 The Covenant Life of the Triune God

The Son is sent, given a people, promised a reward, and consents. One will, three subsistences: neither tritheism nor Sabellianism.

John 3:16; 17:6; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 2:8; Acts 2:33

#### 4 A Foundation That Cannot Move

One eternal counsel comprehends both covenants. The covenant of works and the covenant of grace “stand and fall together.”

#### 5 One Covenant, Many Administrations

One promise unfolding from Genesis 3:15 to the coming of the Son. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*: thirty variations, one bass line.

WCF 7.5–6; Heb. 2:13

#### 6 One Covenant, Two Sides

Unilateral in origin, bilateral in operation. Luther’s question and the Reformed answer: look to the surety.

Heb. 7:22; Eph. 1:6

#### 7 Conclusion

Your salvation is older than the world it saves.

Eph. 1:3–4

### BEFORE THE AGES BEGAN

EPH. 1:4

πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου

“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world.”

2 TIM. 1:9

πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων

“His own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”

TITUS 1:2

πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων

“Eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”

### KEY TERMS

#### Covenant of redemption (*pactum salutis*)

The eternal agreement in which the Father gives the Son as head and redeemer of the elect and the Son presents himself as their surety.

Vos, *RD* 2:91

#### Covenant of works

God’s covenant with Adam before the fall: a promise of life attached to obedience.

WCF 7.2

#### Covenant of grace

“The gracious bond between the offended God and the offending sinner in which God promises salvation in the way of faith in Christ.”

Vos, *RD* 2:92

#### Surety

The Son’s pledge, made in eternity and kept in history, to answer for his people.

Heb. 7:22

#### Substance and administration

“There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.”

WCF 7.6

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:564–79; 3:213–31.

Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 256–61.

Geerhardus Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*.

J. V. Fesko, *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*.

Richard A. Muller, “Toward the *Pactum Salutis*: Locating the Origins of a Concept,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 18 (2007): 11–65.

### THE STANDARDS

Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1–6; 8.1. Larger Catechism 30–35.