

The School of Biblical Law

Covenant and Law

Lesson Two: "The Covenant Model: Transcendence"

The structure of the covenant contains five sections: transcendence, hierarchy, ethics, oath (or sanctions), and succession (THEOS). Man's relationship to God is not that of shared being but is rather a personal relationship best comprehended in the context of covenant. Understanding of the first section of the covenant model – transcendence – introduces man into and sustains man in right relationship with God.

1. Transcendence identifies the Sovereign One from whom covenant flows.

Transcendence identifies God distinct nature rather than referring to distance.

- God's being is distinct (or other) from all that He has created.
- This distinction is often termed the Creator/Creature boundary.
- God did not create everything out of His own being; He created out of nothing (Gen.1:1; Ps.33:6,9; Jn. 1:3; Col.1:16; Heb.11:3).
- God personally sustains His creation being present to uphold and to judge while yet maintaining distinct from His creation; He is immanent while not immersed (Col.1:17).
- God's being is uncreated, original, and independent; man's being is created, derivative, and dependent.

God identifies himself as the Transcendent One when creating covenants with mankind.

- Adam – "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen.1:1)
- Noah – "The end of all flesh is come before me . . . I will destroy them with the earth." (Gen.6:13)
- Abraham – "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great" (Gen.12:2); "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen.15:1)
- Isaac – "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed." (Gen.28:13)
- Moses – "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Ex.20:2)

To err at the point of acknowledging the God's Transcendence is to break covenant (Examples: Adam, Lucifer; Nebuchadnezzar).

2. A false view of transcendence and a false view of immanence has given rise to false doctrines and false religions.

False Transcendence defines God as distant seeking to divorce His transcendence from His immanence or nearness.

- Deism presents a God who is distant, who does not interfere, who does not judge
- Deism's god is silent; man is free to be his own god.

False Immanence defines God as so near to His creation as to be immersed and one with creation.

- Pantheism presents God as the same in being with creation and man endowed with a spark of the divine.
- Pantheism's god is silent; man is free to be his own god.

Man's relationship with God is not one of shared being. Mankind does not evolve or move up the chain of being ladder until human becomes divine. Man's relationship with God is covenantal, which makes it personal. God offers the covenant; man receives and relates to God in terms of covenant life. Covenant can be broken. Adam's sin broke his covenantal relationship and repositioned Adam from favor to judgment, not from a personal to an impersonal relationship. God has no impersonal relationship with anyone although he may not have a covenantal relationship with everyone. Man cannot escape the cosmic personalism of his Creator.