

The Covenant of Consummation
Mathew 7:15-27, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Friends, have you ever decided to take on some sort of renovation or restoration project in your home?

Maybe you wanted to finish off the basement, build a new deck, put an addition on the house, or build that dream kitchen you've always wanted.

Or maybe you've watched someone take on a renovation project, a family member, a friend, or perhaps you've seen one of the renovation shows on HGTV.

And, if you have... then you know that regardless of how straightforward the project might seem, something unexpected will come up during the renovation, and must be dealt with properly if the renovation is going to be successful.

For example, the owners of an old house want to replace some old worn-out carpet with a nice new hardwood floor.

So, they start tearing up the floor only to discover the carpet was laid overtop some old 9"x 9" vinyl tile, which is bad news because those tiles were made with asbestos.

Now if they didn't know better and just started tearing up those tiles it would be serious health risk, because they would be breathing in all those cancer-causing asbestos fibers.

So now, what started out as a simple flooring project turns into a much larger, more expensive and complicated endeavor.

To remove these old tiles safely and correctly you have to bring in the asbestos removal experts, because if it's not done right... then your home is going to pose a health risk to you and your family – even after all the renovation work is done.

So the asbestos removal experts come in, you have to temporarily move out, they will seal off the entire house, isolate the area where the tiles are, spray down the tiles while

they remove them to trap all the fibers, and disposed of them specially sealed bags.

Throughout the process the entire house must be ventilated with negative air pressure that goes through a special filter to catch any fibers that manage to escape.

And all this work is done while wearing full protective gear and respirators with a complete decontamination process afterwards.

And when they have finished, they will to run an air quality test for a couple of days to make sure there are absolutely no remaining asbestos fibers whatsoever.

Now let's stop there for a moment... not that you would actually stop the renovation project at this point and say it's finished... but for the sake of illustration let's stop because I want to compare God's restoration of the Covenant of Creation to a renovation project.

Friends, in the same way that we that we take on a renovation project in our home, God had determined to restore the Covenant of Creation because it had been broken by Adam and Eve and this renovation project is the Covenant of Redemption.

But as this project progressed, unexpected challenges and issues arose – just like they do in any renovation project.

So God adapted his plans by bringing in different covenant administrations; much like any contractor brings in specialists to deal with plumbing, electrical, or structural issues, or more serious problems like asbestos removal.

However, the failure of each administration hinted that there was a fundamental problem with God's covenant partners - sin.

So, God must find a way to deal effectively with sin or all the efforts up to this point will have been for nothing... and his renovation plans can't continue.

So, what seemed to be a straightforward restoration project has now become far more complicated – just like discovering there is asbestos in your house.

So God must send in the sin removal expert, His Son Jesus Christ, and is a complicated and expensive removal process.

The Word of God must become flesh, fully human in every way so as to completely remove all sin from the entirety our human nature.

Yet... in order to resist the temptation to disobey God, and stay with-in all the plans and building codes that God has already put forward He must still stay fully divine. You can see how it's a bit complicated.

And it's also is expensive – removing sin ends up costing Jesus Christ his life – that's the only way it can removed and disposed of, and the only way to be sure the job has been completed properly and thoroughly, is if Jesus comes back to life.

So, good news – the resurrection occurred, Sin is gone, the job was done right, it's completed... and we stop there.

Which, if we are comparing Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins with asbestos removal during a renovation, stopping at this point would seem ridiculous, right?

Removing the asbestos is a critical part of the renovation, and no one would deny its necessary, or fail to praise the expert who completed the job – but no one would say that once the asbestos is gone that the renovation is complete.

Yet so often we present the gospel we seem to suggest that the only thing that matters is that Jesus saves you from your sin so that you can go to heaven and avoid hell after death.

And friends, we do this because we are not aware of God's Covenant relationship with this world, and we don't realize that His plan to restore it underlies the story of scripture, and is the reason for the gospel of Christ in the first place.

And if we don't see Christ as coming out of these Covenant administrations, then yes... oddly enough we will stop at the asbestos removal point and call things done.

But, now that we know all about God's Covenant of Creation and his Covenant of Redemption, and as we compare it to how a renovation project progresses along - we can see how ridiculous it is to stop everything at the forgiveness of our sins.

There's so much more that has happen still for God's creation restoration project to come to its completion.

So if we continue with the renovation illustration from this point, what happens after the asbestos is removed is that the asbestos removal expert also happened to be a skilled foreman, a master tradesman, certified architect, and a building inspector...

So God can simply hand over the rest of His renovation project to Him to bring it to its intended completion – Jesus become God's perfect Restoration Covenant partner.

So let's look at how Jesus fulfills each of God's different covenant administrations and brings about restoration.

And as we learned last week, the King of Israel was charged with leading the people to be faithful covenant partners under the Covenant of Law.

So Jesus fulfills the Covenant of Kingship being born in the line of David, as an heir to the throne of Israel. And Jesus fulfills his Kingly role in his ministry by teaching Israel the correct way to respond to the Law, and by offering His life as the fulfilling sacrifice to pay for their covenant unfaithfulness.

That's why John the Baptist called Jesus *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29)

So in these roles we could see Jesus as the Foreman in charge of the renovation, and as mentioned, like the asbestos removal expert, but... as Jesus fulfills the Covenant of Law, it's also like He is Building Code expert.

He enables us, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to have the norm of the Law written on our hearts – at the core of who we are – and then to discern how that norm needs to be given appropriate form in our actions; as a demonstration of our gratitude and worship of God.

And as Jesus fulfills the Covenant of Promise, it is like he becomes the architect for this renovation project.

He takes the initial sketches of how the Promise given to Abraham would look; becoming a great nation, being given land, having kings come from him, being a blessing to all nations... looks at how it had been developed so far – and He expands it beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

In Jesus the promise many offspring becomes all the people of God – his covenant partners from Creation to the New Creation. The promise of a great name and Kings – well what greater name is there than King Jesus- King of Kings! The promise of land becomes a renewed heavens and earth, where the people from all nations will dwell with God.

Now sometimes in a renovation it seems easier just to tear everything down and start again – and God was sorely tempted to do that at one point.. but promised that He wouldn't in the Covenant of Preservation.

So as Christ fulfills the Covenant of Preservation, it's like he becomes the Heritage Committee, which ensures that certain things are preserved in a restoration project.

Just as God responded to Noah's burnt offering by promising to preserve the earth from destructive judgment, Christ brings this to fulfillment with his sacrifice and brings God's peace.

As Paul says, God has *"reconciled to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through [Christ's] blood, shed on the cross."* 1 Col 1:20

Now if you watch those renovation shows on HGTV – you know that there are unscrupulous contractors out there who will take advantage of unsuspecting home owners and scam them out of money by not doing the renovations properly.

So as Jesus fulfills the Covenant of Commencement by crushing the head of the serpent, He is like that TV Renovation host who “Makes it Right” and fixes the all damage those contractors caused but... He is able to go one step further and round up that no-good contractor and bring them to justice, to ensure this sort of thing never happens again.

When Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations, overcame Satan’s power by healings and miracles and casting out demons, and took away Satan’s ability to accuse us by giving us His righteousness instead – Jesus makes it right, and ensures that Satan’s power over us is broken for good.

So, when we say that Jesus Christ fulfills the all purposes of the prior covenant administrations compared to renovation – it’s like Jesus Christ becomes the foreman, the asbestos removal expert, the building code expert, the architect, the heritage preservationist, and the “renovation sheriff” all in one.

And since Jesus is the Word of God by which all things were made in the beginning (John 1:2) the fulfillment and completion of God’s restoration project by Jesus Christ is called the Covenant of Consummation.

Meaning that all of God plans and purposes come together in their consummate purpose in Jesus Christ. The Word by which all things were created has now become the Covenant Partner by which all things have been and will be re-created.

Does this make sense? Do you understand that God’s Covenant purposes don’t stop at the forgiveness of our sins – as critical and important as that is?

Because if God’s plans go beyond our sins, then all of a sudden the Christian faith and following Jesus has all sorts of new applications for our day to day lives, and for the destiny of this world.

There’s so much more to Christianity than simply “getting saved” in order to go heaven and avoid going to hell.

And once you grasp this Covenant reality - you just can't present the gospel, or live out the Christian faith in such a simplistic manner anymore.

That's the point the Apostle Paul is making in 1 Cor 3:10-15 where he uses the construction analogy to teach us about the importance of going beyond the forgiveness of sins as we build our lives and work and ministry.

It's not a question of whether we will or won't build – the question is what materials are we going to build with?

And Paul wants us to know friends; that if we stop God's renovation project at the forgiveness of our sins, then how we end up living our lives from that point is like building on the foundation of Jesus with wood, hay and straw.

And when Jesus returns, completing the restoration of Creation, and brings his purifying test of fire – what we have built with wood hay and straw will be consumed by it, leaving

the builder to barely escape with their salvation - everything else is lost.

One the reasons this series is important – even though it's challenging to grasp, and might not seem imminently practical - is because at some point friends, we have to make sure we know how to move on past our forgiveness and work towards maturity in the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:13)

And we need to be able to determine if we are in fact wasting our time and effort right now by building with wood hay and straw or if we are building for eternity our building our lives with gold, silver and precious stones.

Because when gold, silver and precious stones are subjected to the fire – it purifies them... they are not consumed, they survive and are refined and they end up better than before.

So – the good news friends is that knowing the Christ of the Covenants gives us a source where we can get the gold, silver and precious stones, with which to build our lives, and helps

us to locate the right kind of foundation-rock that we can build upon.

Now, for those of you with renovation and restoration experience, you will know that picking out the right materials for your project is very important, but it takes work, right?

You may have to go to several stores to see if they stock what you are looking for, look at dozens of samples, compare it all with paint swatches and other samples and so on – its time consuming work.

And I emphasize this work part friends, because we have to put in the time and effort and work to mine the gold, silver, and precious stones out of the Covenants and their Christ.

And quite simply “mining” means putting in study-time, reading scripture, reading commentaries and what bible scholars and theologians want to teach us about the covenants.

We need to take what they are teaching and use it - train ourselves to keep it in mind as we read scripture, and use it to form how we think and shape our worldview.

Let me give you some examples from the Covenant of Creation, and the administration of Commencement.

So, first off – you start reading the creation account in Genesis and you keep in mind what you’ve learned and you frame what you are reading to be understood as a Covenant.

And you’re remembering that a Covenant is a bond spoken into reality, dealing with life and death, sovereignly administered - so this work that you do starts to yield all sorts of good material you can work with.

So you might decide to reflect further on God’s creation of humanity as male and female in His image and you realize that connects with the tasks God gave to Adam and Eve – to multiply and fill the earth, rule over the creatures etc...

You conclude that being made in God's image has to do with how men and women together, reflect God's rule over His creation, as they working with it and subdue it.

And then take that and use it intentionally to frame how you understand life and the world around you. I hope you can see that it would have an huge impact on all sorts of decisions and actions you make...

For example, your job isn't just a means to make money – it is part of how you rule over the creation; affected by sin though it and you may be; *which is another assumption you would have coming out of the Covenant of Commencement.*

And this would affect how your approach in deciding what you want to do for work, and how you want to prepare and be educated for that work your – it's not just a job, it's part of how you image God to the creation!

That is gold friends... you should build with it.

And as you are studying the Covenant of Commencement - you notice as a consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience God places a curse on male-female relationships so that women attempt to possess men and men dominate them in response – so that men and women clue into the fact that something is drastically wrong and needs a solution.

And so your worldview now has a foundational understanding behind the battle of the sexes. It doesn't happen because women are from Venus and men are from Mars, it occurs because of a curse – and since God put this curse in place only God can provide the solution, which he does in Jesus Christ.

So now both men and woman work on Jesus' renovation crew to finish of the restoration of Creation – not because of “girl power” or “gender equality” or because men finally let them – but because of Christ lifted this curse through the removal of our sin... so you can see why it's important that we don't stop with the forgiveness of sin but continue to build beyond that.

This is a real jewel, friends you need to build with it.

So, are you starting to get a sense of how have to put in the effort and work and thinking... to mine these covenants for quality building materials for our worldview? Good.

Now, as Paul notes we're building with these materials - on the foundation of Jesus Christ – and that ties into what Jesus himself says in Matthew 7: 24 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”*

And I want to point out that in the past two sermons we've noted how the background of the Covenants gives Jesus' words the context by which they are properly understood and applied as we looked at Jesus saying *“I did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfilled them”*

And this dynamic, not only gives us another source to mine good building materials from, but it also helps us double check and ensure that the rock we use as a foundation is actually Jesus – the Christ of the Covenants.

Because we often quote Jesus' words as the foundational reasons for why we ought to pursue social justice, human rights, tolerance and love, and so on... for example Jesus said *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.”* (Mat 4:18)

What else could be good news to the poor but poverty relief? So, this is the foundation of what it means to follow Jesus!

But- if we don't know Jesus as the Christ of the Covenants, then His words won't drill down deep enough - to their fullest meaning, and they won't function as a proper foundation.

In this case you end up with a social gospel that is basically humanitarian and development work dressed up with very select quotes from Jesus. *(most likely the historical Jesus)*

But if we hear these words being spoken by the Christ who fulfilled the Covenant of Preservation - where God promises to preserve the world from destructive judgment in spite of human sinfulness so that there is time and space for his

restoration plan to be completed before He brings the final judgment of fire - then our understanding of Jesus words in Matt 4:18 takes on a whole new level of meaning.

Yes – good news to the poor means addressing important surface issues such as poverty – to fulfill God’s covenant intentions of preserving and sustaining human life – but the purpose in preserving is to give people the time and space that they need in order to realize and confess their own covenant unfaithfulness and come to see the Christ of the Covenants as the one who can provide forgiveness for that.

Do you see the different this makes?

Friends, if we don’t move beyond the forgiveness of our own sins and come into the maturity of the fullness of Christ – the Christ of the Covenants – ironically we may end up standing in the way of others actually receiving the forgiveness of their sins...

And far worse, we would be denying them the opportunity to discover how much more there is to God’s restoration project as it has been consummated in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Friends I know that this is not what we want – so as we wrap up this series – I pray that with all we’ve learned the Holy Spirit will help you make use of it to go and mine gold, silver and precious stones; so you can be sure your lives are being built into God’s ultimate restoration plan for this world.

Friends – I leave with the words of scripture from Hebrews 6:1 *“Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”*

Amen.