

BIBLE MATRIX II

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His passion is understanding and teaching the Bible.

BIBLE

II: THE COVENANT KEY

MATRIX

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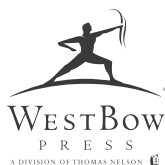
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For Peter J. Leithart
a scholar
and a gentleman

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THE BIBLE MATRIX

Creation	Dominion	Feasts
Day 1 Light - Night & Day <i>(Ark of the Covenant)</i>	Genesis <i>Creation</i> 	Sabbath (promise of rest) <i>God's rest</i>
Day 2 Waters divided <i>(Veil)</i>	Exodus <i>Division</i> 	Passover (sin covered) <i>Adam's sin removed</i>
Day 3 Dry Land, Grain & Fruit <i>(Altar & Table)</i>	Leviticus <i>Ascension</i> 	Firstfruits (priesthood) <i>Adam brought to God</i>
Day 4 Ruling Lights <i>(Lampstand)</i>	Numbers <i>Testing</i> 	Pentecost (harvest) <i>Law revealed</i>
Day 5 Birds & Fish <i>(Incense Altar)</i>	Deuteronomy <i>Maturity</i> 	Trumpets (armies) <i>Eve brought to God</i>
Day 6 Animals & Man <i>(Mediators: High Priest & Sacrifices)</i>	Joshua <i>Conquest</i> 	Atonement (sin expelled) <i>Eve removed from sin</i>
Day 7 Rest & Ruling <i>(Shekinah Glory)</i>	Judges <i>Glorification</i> 	Booths (ingathering) <i>Adam's rest</i>

COVENANT HISTORY

ARK

- 🕊️ **Creation** - World united as one blood (*Sabbath*)
NOAH

VEIL

- 🌿 **Division** - World divided by blood (*Passover*)
ABRAHAM - CIRCUMCISION - HEAD

BRONZE ALTAR

- 🏠 **Ascension** - Centralized priesthood (*Firstfruits*)
ISRAEL - EARTHLY MEDIATORS

LAMPSTAND

- 🕯️ **Testing** - The harvest begins (*Pentecost*)
THE CHRIST

INCENSE ALTAR

- 🏹 **Maturity** - Centralized priesthood (*Trumpets*)
FIRSTFRUITS CHURCH -
HEAVENLY MEDIATORS

LAVER

- 🚰 **Conquest** - World divided by water (*Atonement*)
THE WHOLE CHRIST - BAPTISM - BODY

REST

- 🍷 **Glorification** - World united by one Spirit (*Booths*)
ETERNITY

P R E F A C E

GOD LIKES TO MOVE STUFF. Motion is life and beauty and productivity. Stillness is stagnation and corruption and death.

As we saw in *Bible Matrix*, the work of God in Man is not merely a “there and back again.” Nature abounds with cyclical motions, from atomic spin to the “circle of life” to the rotation of the galaxies. But history is not a perpetual motion machine, or the identical cycles of the movements of a clock.

God’s moves are most certainly repeated cycles, but the Bible gives us a more interesting philosophy than that held by the pagan thinkers, who never expected anything to improve. Biblical history is not a spinning top but a *wheel*. It is turning for the sake of *going* somewhere. Bible history is Man on a *mission*.

God sends Man out because He wants Man to come back *with* something, and the Bible is full of such missions. Each mission can be easily recognized, because all of God’s missions have the same structure and are packaged in the same way.

But the word *mission* is a little impersonal. This arrangement is an agreement between persons, so the Bible uses a more personal, relational word: *Covenant*. God’s Covenants are the initiating Words that keep things on the move.

REALITY IS RELATIONAL

All motion in Creation consists of relationships, the predictable way in which definite things react to other definite things, like the orbit of the different planets in relation to the gravity of the sun. Physics is relational. Chemistry is relational. The tides are relational. An ecosystem is relational. Agriculture is relational.

Many fail to see that human history is entirely relational. It is the direct outflow of God's Covenantal authority over Man and Man's delegated Covenantal authority over the world. Both of these relationships involve interaction, a "there and back again," a *to-and-fro*. The *to* is the decree of God, and the *fro* is the result of our positive or negative response to it.

The Word is always Covenantal, and it never returns void. Sunlight always brings a result, either growth or decay, glory or corruption. Neutrality is impossible: there is no spiritual Switzerland. Whether our response is positive or negative, calling down God's blessings or God's curses, God makes sure there is always a result. Out of life or out of death, God will always bring some kind of progress—by Covenant.

A Biblical Covenant is neither an abstract, highbrow concept nor an esoteric, otherworldly ideal. It is an expression of the Spirit of God who gathers and holds everything together in heaven and on earth.

REALITY IS LEGAL

God's Laws are not simply for the purpose of maintaining the *status quo*, for keeping things in good working

P R E F A C E

order. They constitute a *mission*, guidelines for the achievement of something new in history. They not only establish God's authority as the Master and Man's delegated authority as worshiper; they also then provide assembly instructions, and farming methods, and investment strategies, and counsel for good relationships for the sake of future generations. His desire is for growth—*expansion*—in all of these areas.

Because God's Laws define the *appropriate* relationship between God and Man (worship), and between Man and the domains God has given to him to look after (progress), rebellion against God can only ever be an *inappropriate worship*, or an *inappropriate use* of the good, created order. Sin is either an attempted manipulation of God or a selfish manipulation of the world.

The relational and legal nature of reality is reflected in the language of the Bible. In *Bible Matrix*, we saw that all the symbols are *relationships*. A false teacher is only a wolf in sheep's clothing *in-relationship-to* those he is attempting to deceive and devour. All authority is delegated by God, and whether it is obeyed or disobeyed, used or abused, it is both *relational* and *legal*. It can be used appropriately or inappropriately, but it cannot be avoided. A husband can be a good husband or a bad husband, but he is a husband.

The stewardship delegated by any Covenant also has a definite beginning and a definite end. It is *historical*. It is a tour of duty designed to bring greater glory into the world, but it also has another purpose overlooked by many theologians.

A COVENANT IS AN EDUCATION

Covenants are God's method of moving stuff *around*, and His method of moving things *forward*. But they are also His method of raising humanity *upward*. One thing that amazes me about the Bible is God doing the same thing over and over and over, and yet in new and surprising ways every time.

God's intention is that every cycle brings things to another level, to a greater degree of maturity, status, glory and wisdom. Gamers will understand this. Each Covenant brings Man to the point where he is qualified to rule for God over a greater domain, to be a steward *under* God *over* a larger territory. A Covenant requires *Conquest*.

As every parent knows, teaching maturity is a messy process, and one based on trust. A Covenant is an education, so it requires a childlike faith. But its goal is adulthood, a stage where Man no longer requires the *external* boundaries, disciplines and routines of childhood because he is self-governing, or in this case, governed *internally* by the Spirit of God.

An Adam governed by the Law of God is an Adam fit to govern. So, every Covenant is a grand quest for the bittersweet wine of God's kingdom. That cup is only for faithful servants, men who are willing to be broken first, like bread. God wants rulers He can trust.

God moves in mysterious ways, but all His ways follow the same pattern. Throughout the Old Testament era, God would set things in motion, wait for His strategy to come to fruition, then arrive on the scene to

assess (judge) those He had put in authority. This is why there are some periods when God speaks, and others when He is silent. It is also why God, through the prophets, always speaks *to those in power*.

On the day of judgment, the Covenant Overlord rewards those *under* the Covenant. In all cases this involves the delegation of a new and greater mission to the faithful and the expulsion from among them of the unfaithful, a separation of sheep from goats.

So the Gospel really shouldn't have been a surprise to the Jewish leaders. It was just like everything that had gone before. God came down to judge His Covenant people. Yet the Gospel was a *new* mission, and it required a *greater level* of faithful obedience and maturity, an *internal* compliance to the Law. The New Covenant took the Laws of Moses and applied them to the heart. But the proud Jews believed they had already "arrived." Maturity does not come easily to the self-satisfied, to those who usurp the authority of God.

In Jesus, God judged the old authority and delegated a new one, a new *kingdom*, to faithful men. The New Covenant came because the childish things of the Old were outgrown.

A COVENANT IS A SHELTER

Covenant authority shelters a Man while God trains him to *become* a shelter for others. God's house is a fractal, like Noah's ark. It is a shelter of many shelters, a dwelling with many dwellings, a house of households.

The Word is sent out in a chosen Man, and his

obedience opens a clean, holy place, a house that is “swept and adorned” (Matthew 12:44), ready for the Spirit to fill with godly offspring.

In this way, a Covenant Man images the Covenant God. Adam mediates the same (relational) Covenant care and (legal) authority as God. And Adam is bound legally and relationally to those under his care in the same way that God has bound Himself to Adam.

MY MISSION

Once again, I’ve drawn a great deal upon the genius of theologians James B. Jordan and Peter J. Leithart, whose work continues to amaze and inspire. Also, Ray Sutton’s groundbreaking book on Covenant structure is foundational to this one, and threads of Douglas Wilson’s pithy wisdom can be seen here and there.

Of course, any theological fumbles herein are solely down to me. I felt there was a need to make plain the relationship between the structure of God’s Covenants and the shape of the Bible itself—from the big picture stuff right down to a close reading of some sample texts. There are some new (perhaps) ideas presented shamelessly but undogmatically. Where this book is wrong, I hope it at least gets you thinking.

I aim to show you that Covenant is the key to understanding all of the Bible and all of history, to establish *death-and-resurrection* as the means of godly progress, and to give you a Covenantal understanding of Scripture that enables every verse to move you mentally, emotionally, and physically.

INTRODUCTION

BEHIND THE MATRIX

BIBLE MATRIX DEMONSTRATED THAT THE BIBLE is a literary masterpiece unlike any other. Its history and influence are certainly unparalleled but its “fractal” literary structure is nothing short of miraculous. The matrix is indeed beautiful, and it answers a great many questions about the Bible. But is it of any *practical* use?

The purpose of this sequel is to show that behind the seven-fold *Bible Matrix* is God’s five-fold “how to” Covenant structure. This correspondence is not obvious, and neither was the Covenant structure itself, which was only discovered relatively recently.

This fresh, practical understanding of Covenant theology grew out of a renewed interest in applying the Bible to the whole of life.

“One of the most encouraging developments in these years of the crisis of Western Civilization is the return of many Christians to first principles. It is both heartening and exciting to see more and more Christians turning to the Bible—the whole Bible—to find the answers to all of life’s, and society’s, problems. Make no mistake about it: the answers are there; they’ve been there all along. But the Humanists have told us that the Bible is a human invention, a creation of imagination,

unenlightened understanding and time, an outmoded or baneful record of the combined superstition and spiritual or poetic insight of past thinkers and generations. The Humanists' kissin' cousins—or Siamese twins?—the theological Liberals, the Modernist, the 'Neo-orthodox,' have told us that the Bible is either what the Humanists say it is, or contains (somewhere in its hundreds of pages) the word of God without being itself the infallibly inspired, divinely revealed word of the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe and man.

Meanwhile, under the onslaught of heresy and Humanism in church, state and school, Bible-believing Christians have retreated from the full-orbed teachings of all of Holy Scripture, retreated into pietistic monasticism, shrinking the duties of the Church of Jesus Christ to Sabbath worship, foreign missions, the family, and personal holiness. Nothing is wrong with this except that it neglects the fullness of the Lord's dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26-28; 9:1-17; Luke 19:13, etc.), the fact that civil government is a ministry of God, established by God, to punish the evil and protect the good (Romans 13), in terms of His law (Deuteronomy 28; Matthew 5:17-19; John 14:15), the comprehensiveness of the inspiration and authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), and the fullness of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). With such crucial negligence by the Church, Christ's enemies have been

handed victory after important cultural, economic, educational and political victory. The result has been defeat after defeat for the Kingdom of God, in these spheres, even while victories continue to be won on other fronts.

How sweet it is, then, to see various individual Christians coming to the realization that God's word speaks to all areas of life: and speaks authoritatively! How great it is to see Christians coming together to apply scriptural teachings to all areas of life! How exciting to see Bible-believing folks developing specialized institutions to spread the educational and practical word that God's word is not a partial or impotent word, but an authoritative, conquering word! And how wonderful to see that Christian educational institutions, at all levels, are being established to teach Christian children and adults the fullness of God's word and the practice that it requires."¹

It was this Biblical Theological think-tank that led to one of the greatest theological discoveries of our time. Yet, strangely, it is one which hardly anyone has heard of after more than two decades. Many Reformed Christians are suspicious of anything that is "new," or newly discovered. The Reformers had minds that were open to the Bible, but often, those who honor their tombs do not. Most conservative evangelical thinkers

1 Archie P. Jones, "Educating the Sons of Issachar, An Interview with James B. Jordan," in *Occupy!*, Volume III, N° 3, March 1981.

find it hard to allow the Bible to say anything new. Eric Rauch writes:

“One of the enduring Latin phrases of the Protestant Reformation is the impressive sounding *ecclesia semper reformans, semper reformanda*. In plain English, this means ‘the church is always reformed and always reforming.’ This simple principle is one that is most often forgotten in modern discussions about theology, where a surefire way to end a disagreement is to pull out something written by Luther, Calvin, or even Spurgeon and show that they said much the same thing. Although the Reformers themselves were quite emphatic that they were not the final word (hence the ‘always reforming’), contemporary Christianity seems to be convinced that dead theologians should be the authoritative standard of interpretation.

Please don’t misunderstand me, I am grateful for and rely heavily upon the theological writings and expositions of Scripture by these and countless other men who lived and died hundreds of years ago. On the rare occasions that I find myself in disagreement with them, I tend to count myself as the one who doesn’t get it, not them. Differences in theological interpretation will always be an issue for the Church, but when groundbreaking discoveries in the biblical text are dismissed or ignored because they were not found at least 200 years ago, we must question whether theologians

have any real interest in ‘reforming.’ If 21st century biblical scholarship remains enslaved to writings of the 16th and 17th century, how can any progress ever be made?

One such recent ‘discovery’ is Ray Sutton’s five-point model of the covenant, which is extensively detailed in his book, *That You May Prosper*. If you spend any amount of time in the Church, you will certainly hear the word ‘covenant’ thrown around quite a bit. Covenant is central to a proper understanding of the biblical text. God makes covenants all throughout the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the ‘mediator of a new covenant’ (Hebrews 9:15). Jesus himself tells his disciples at the Last Supper, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood’ (Luke 22:20b). If covenant is so important to the Christian faith, then why is it so difficult to get a clear answer from theologians about just what a covenant is or isn’t? The back-cover copy of *That You May Prosper* puts it this way: “To borrow from Will Roger’s comment on the weather, “Everyone talks about the covenant, but nobody does anything about it.”

In 1987, Ray Sutton *did* do something about it, he wrote *That You May Prosper*, a jaw-dropping book that finally defines the covenant as no book has, before or since. Sutton’s book is brilliant in its simplicity, yet remarkable for its depth. A

seasoned pastor, Sutton knows how to present his material in such a way that everyone can understand it. He then builds upon this basic knowledge brick-by-brick so that by the time the reader completes the book, he has taken an intermediate course in biblical theology without even realizing it. Understanding Sutton's five-point covenantal model will revolutionize your Bible study and comprehension, and the perplexing and downright confusing parts of the Bible will finally begin to make sense."²

Now, you might be wondering why you are reading this book and not *That You May Prosper*. Reading Ray Sutton's book at some point would be extremely helpful. But this book is not that book. Once we have outlined the Bible's five-fold Covenant structure, we will be *overlaying it* onto the seven-fold Bible Matrix. When this is done, there are wonders to behold. All of a sudden, we are "in on the plan." Things that have evaded the best scholars for many centuries—and continue to do so today—become strikingly apparent. We can understand not only the *way* the Bible is written, but *why* much of it was written. Not only is the method in the madness of the weirdest prophet shown to correspond with the basics of everyday life, it can be traced back to its origin in the perfect Covenantal relationship of the Trinity. As the implications of this fundamental correspondence dawn upon us, this too, should drop some jaws.

2 Eric Rauch, *Always Reformed, Always Reforming*, www.americanvision.org

I

TRANSCENDENCE



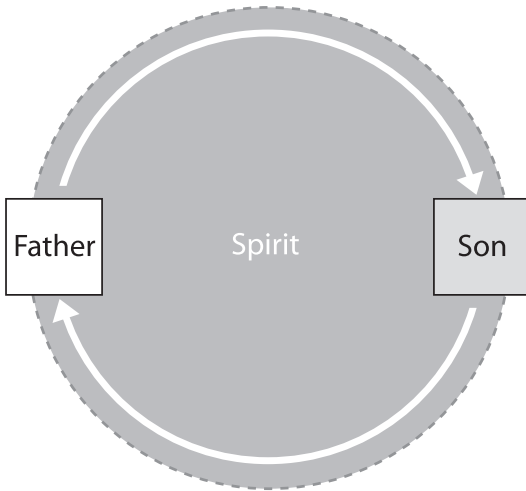
THERE AND BACK AGAIN

GOD'S WAYS ARE OFTEN MYSTERIOUS TO US because they involve movements from invisible to visible and vice versa. In the Creation week, He spends three days tearing things *out* of things (*forming*) and three days putting things *into* things (*filling*).

The Bible is full of these *out-ofs* and *intos*, the most basic of which is the Covenant mission of Man: a journey *out* and a homecoming *into*, a “there and back again.” This finds its origin in the *to-and-fro* of the perfect relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. James Jordan writes:

“Very much of human life is ‘there and back again,’ or chiasmic. This is how God has designed human beings to live in the world. It is so obvious that we don’t notice it. But it is everywhere. This shape of human life arises ultimately from the give and take of the three Persons of God, as the Father sends the Spirit to the Son and the Son sends the Spirit back to the Father.

We can see that literary chiasm is not a mere curiosity, a mere poetic device to structure the text. It arises from the very life of God and is played out in the structure of the lives of the



images of God in many ways and at many levels. It is because human beings live and move so often chiasmatically that poets often find themselves drawn to chiasmic writing. God creates chiasms out of His inner life, and so do the images of God.

Biblical chiasms are perfect. That is, they are perfectly matched to the human chiasms they address and transform. As we become more and more sensitive to Biblical chiasms, we will become more and more sensitive to one aspect of the true nature of human life under God. We will be transformed from bad human chiasms into good human chiasms. In this way, becoming sensitive to chiasm can be of practical transformative value to human life...”

An awareness of how human life images the Trinity is extremely helpful, but as mentioned earlier, God

expects every Adamic mission to be *fruitful*. Jordan continues,

“Chiasms often have a double climax, one in the middle and the greatest at the end. The food we bought at market is put away in the cupboard and refrigerator when we get back home. Moving forward to a final climax is what all literature does, whether it has a middle climax or not. (Shakespeare’s five-act plays always move to a climax in the third and in the fifth acts.) This is just another way that human life matches literary production, in the Bible as well as in uninspired human literature. Becoming familiar with the shape and flow of Biblical texts will have a transforming effect on human life.”¹

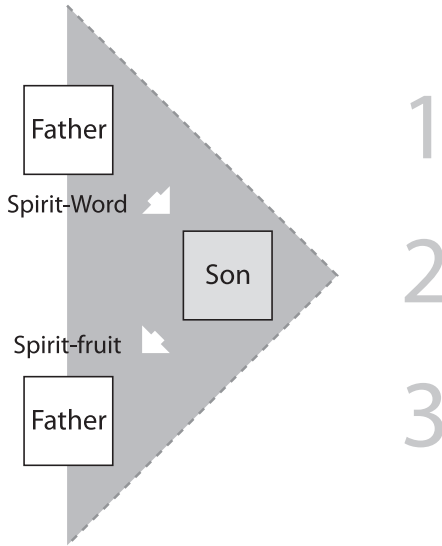
Going to the market is not pointless, and neither is the Trinity. The expression of God’s Life is relationship. The Son images the Father perfectly as He responds to the Father’s love. The Son loves the Father, and so keeps His commandments. Somehow, in some eternal way, the Son’s obedience moves things *forward*. As Dr. Leithart wrote in the foreword to *Bible Matrix*,

“The Triune God is not so much a timeless God as a God who has always already realized His future. He is the Alpha that has always already been, equally and simultaneously, Omega. He is the infinitely productive seed that is always already eternally tree and fruit.”²

1 James B. Jordan, “Chiasm and Life” in *Biblical Theology Basics*.

2 *Bible Matrix*, p. 3.

When this *to-and-fro* is given a linear form in human history—a beginning and an end—we can recognize the V-shape of the Bible’s literary chiasms.













As in human relationships, the Father’s Word demands a response; the Father’s investment demands a “return.” The investment is singular and the return is plural. In the Trinity, the return is the “fruits of the Spirit.” The Living Word of the Father is multiplied, expounded upon, *worked out*, in the perfect obedience of the Son.

“For in him the whole *fullness* of deity dwells bodily...” (Colossians 2:9)

The *forming* Word of the Father is fulfilled in the Son. Jesus breaks the seals on the scroll. Like any good minister, He *opens* the Covenant Word.

But then, this initial *to-and-fro* within the Trinity is

only the first level. We see this in the Creation Week. Even though Days 1 to 3 *form* empty spaces, they end with a preliminary filling. The Grain and Fruit plants are the “fruits of the Spirit.” They are the bread-and-wine obedience of the Son under the knife of the Father that founds the three-level house.

Head			Body		
Father rules		1	Ark	1	
		2			
Father delegates		3	Veil	2	
		4			
Son rules		5	Altar	3	
		6			
Son delegates		7	Table		

But it is an empty house. And it is not really a feast. It is only a prefigurement, a promise of a much greater celebration to come on Day 7. Glorious as they are, the grapes of Eshcol are only a *promise* of wine.

As with Abraham who received great promises from God, the filling of the Land on Day 3 forms and fills a Covenant Head, but it is a Head without a Covenant Body.

Abraham’s personal exodus was fulfilled in a true heir, a “house.” But there was a greater exodus, and a greater *filling*, to come. The Son of the promise needs a bride.

THE LAW OF LOVE

A Covenant is legal, but it is also relational. It is both legislation and love. Like a house, it is a carefully constructed form designed for filling.

Adam himself was formed from the dust and filled with the breath of life, yet he was not complete. It was not good that the Man should be *alone*. He did not need a woman. He needed a *wife*. Marriage is both legal and relational. It is love within a safe, predefined space.

Love has a Covenant boundary for the sake of the protection of those under that Covenant. Its laws are limiting, but they promote true freedom. Its purpose is the cherishing, education, maturity, shelter and future of those it protects.

Concerning this interplay between law and love, between structural and personal, Ralph Smith writes:

“Marriage, the very first covenantal relationship among men and the foundation of all others is the quintessential covenant. The relationship binds —‘till death.’ It is a structured relationship with authority and roles distributed between husband and wife. It is a personal relationship—‘husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.’ A man and woman living together without the bond of the covenant may have a personal relationship, but they are guilty of fornication. A man and woman married may fulfill the structural requirements of the covenant bond, but fail to love one another, separating the

personal from the structural aspect of the marriage covenant.

The covenant oath, the personal love, and the structures of authority and responsibility are all required for a Biblically righteous marriage. What the marriage covenant illustrates is that the covenant is a ‘social structure.’ As Jordan points out, in the Biblical notion of the covenant, law and love, form and freedom, are in harmony. The love of the covenant is expressed not in spite of the oath or in spite of fulfilling the duties of the covenant, but precisely through the solemn taking of an oath and the faithful fulfillment of one’s duty.”³

A BRIDE FROM OUTSIDE

The Covenant is fulfilled as those *within it* are formed and filled. As usual, this adds another image of the Trinity, another level to the Covenant “fractal.”

In Genesis 1, we see the empty house “formed and filled,” but then that house is the forming of a greater pattern. Just as Adam was formed and filled, he became the form of a greater Covenant to be filled.

Just so, the Father’s *physical* creation of the universe through the obedience of the Son was to be replicated in a *societal* creation—a bridal city—through the obedience of Adam.















3 Ralph Allan Smith, *James Jordan’s Trinitarianism*, www.trinitarianism.com

The “head first” pattern we observed in *Bible Matrix* is a direct outflow of the Godhead. The Woman comes out of the Man. She is a body, a “collective noun,” gathered by the Spirit to glorify and extend the dominion, the “house,” of the Covenant Head.

Eve is somehow an extension of the “fruits of the Spirit” in the Trinity. The *fro* of the relationship is bridal. Like Michal, she is the plunder of David’s bloody tour of duty. Adam risks death to find her, and when Adam finds a wife, he finds a good thing. He goes *out* and brings her *in*, like riches “rescued” from the enemy, and the couple are united by Covenant.

COMMENTS

The complete Week is the perfect relationship of the Trinity fulfilled in Creation. All the information for the full-grown tree is contained in the seed. But the seed has to fall into the ground and die. Every filling leads to a greater breaking and an even greater filling.

Head		Body	
Father rules	 1  2	Ark	1 
Father delegates	 3  4	Veil	2 
Son rules	 5  6	Altar	3 
Son delegates	 7	Table	
Spirit rules		Lampstand	4 
Spirit delegates		Incense	5 
Father receives		Mediators	6 
		Rest	7 

Of course, this is related not only to the Creation Week, but the Dominion pattern as well.

Jacob presented food to his father Isaac and received the bittersweet Covenant blessing. The son of the promise became bread and wine and fled into the wilderness for *Testing*. But he didn't return empty-handed. He returned to his father's house as Israel, with a full house: children, livestock, and riches. The faithful Son returns with His own household.

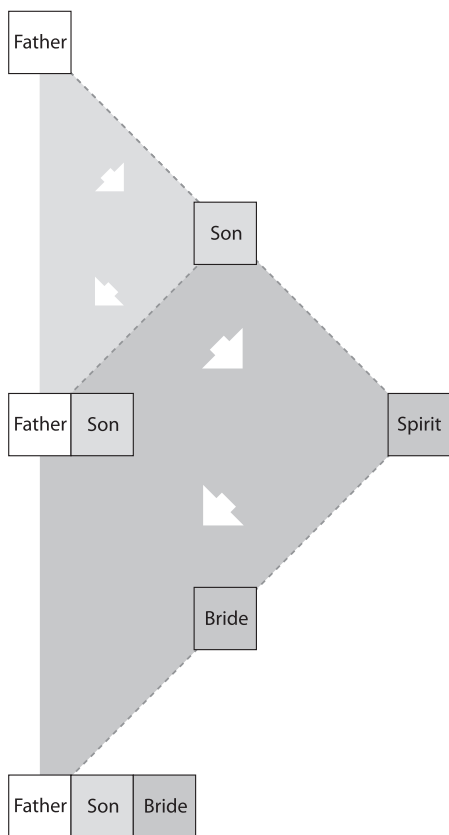
ALL IN ALL

This fullness is bridal. Even though He has been formed and filled as Covenant Head, the Son's glory is not completed in Himself but in His Bride. She is the glory of the nations called and hauled into the space which He made clean. She is His robe, His city. The Woman is the glory of the Man.

Christ was obedient to the point of death. After His *Ascension*, Christ sent the Spirit to fill the Church. He presents her as "fruit" to the Father, which gives us the next verse of Colossians 2, a *greater* level of fullness.

"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority." (Colossians 2:9-10)

Once the Church is complete, She is presented by the Son to the Father, which fulfills all of history.



COMMENTS

This chart is not as complicated as it might look at first glance. There are really only two things to notice.








Firstly, that the pattern of the relationship between Father and Son is replicated “fractally” at a greater level in the Bride, the Church.

Secondly, that the Son’s *Ascension* to the Father allows the Father to send His “oldest servant,” (Genesis 24:2) the Spirit, to search for the Bride. Like Abraham’s servant, the Spirit finds her at a well, the Laver.

“When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28)

We begin to see that the love of God is expressed in the Created order at every level, but it is not a warm-and-fuzzy-feeling kind of love. A Covenant not only includes us in the relationship of the Trinity; it also requires us to include *others* in this relationship.

Throughout the Bible, God keeps “enlarging the borders of His tent” (Isaiah 54:2), and He mediates it through His right hand Man.

-  *Creation* - God gives life to a man
-  *Division* - The man is set apart for service
-  *Ascension* - God brings him near and gives him a mission
-  *Testing* - His loyalty to God is tested
-  *Maturity* - If successful, the man is rewarded with plunder
-  *Conquest* - The man appears before God again
-  *Glorification* - God gives rest to the man. Because he was faithful, God also gives him greater authority

FORMING & FILLING

THE ETERNAL *TO-AND-FRO* WITHIN THE HOLY TRINITY is a forming and a filling. The Word of the Father, by the Spirit, gives *form* to the relationship. The obedience of the Son opens a new *space* which the Spirit *fills*. The Spirit creates the *environment* of worship by joining Father and Son. The reason Creation is filled with *intos* and *out-ofs* is because the life of God is expressed as “indwellings,” as *architecture*.

SACRED ARCHITECTURE

As with the Bible’s tents and temples, God’s house transcends all other houses because it is multifaceted. It is a dwelling of Word (Colossians 3:16), flesh (John 1:14) and Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). These facets cannot be separated without damaging the whole. Peter Leithart writes:

“Scripture often makes it impossible to distinguish images neatly from one another. When Paul talks about the ‘body of Christ’ growing up into its ‘head’ (Ephesians 4:12, 15), he has conflated images impossibly, but such connotations are not original with Paul. The temple of Solomon has multiple dimensions of significance, none of which could be isolated as the basic meaning of

temple. When we attempt to move from temple imagery into [the field of church studies], we should make every effort to leave these layers of meaning undisturbed...

Sacred architecture is one of the Bible's chief idioms for revealing the character of the church. Long passages of the Torah, the historical texts, and the prophetic literature describe, in sometimes numbing detail, the features of the various sanctuaries of Israel (Exodus 25-40; 1 Kings 6-8; Chronicles 1-7; Ezekiel 40-48)...

Few if any of Israel's sanctuaries could be constructed architecturally from the biblical record. But that is not the point. These biblical sanctuaries are all verbal sanctuaries, and these texts are given to the church not to enable it to rebuild a temple but to edify—to construct—the body of Christ.”¹

Everything the Lord does is like building a house. He forms it and then fills it. Man's domain has boundaries, or *external* walls, and every delegated sub-domain is formed with *internal* walls. These are all spaces to fill.

Reality, like the Bible, is a house of many Covenant rooms. And reality, like the Bible, has corners. It can be quite angular and sharp, because it is *formative*. It is not always pleasant, because it is a tool for the construction of something beyond our own experience and, indeed, our own ability. Yet, like the Bible, each room is *sacred*.

1 Peter J. Leithart, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible—1 & 2 Kings*, p. 54.

LAW AND GRACE

As mentioned earlier, God pulls things *out* of things (*forming*) and puts things *into* things (*filling*). All of *Creation* is out-ofs and intos: farming and food, construction and shelter, sex and childbirth, nakedness and covering, childhood and adulthood, (the awkward child sprouts up and “fills out”).

This two-part pattern, *forming and filling*, is also the heartbeat of the social order (*Division*). It is journey and homecoming, and the “leaving and cleaving” of Genesis 2:24. It is student and master, delegation and promotion, investment and return, planting and harvesting, education and industry. It is also obedience and wisdom, bread and wine, priesthood and kingdom, boundaries and liberty. *Law* builds a safe dwelling, and *Grace* indwells it.

This same distinction finds its way into the ministry. Ministers and churches tend to fall into one of two categories: they are lawful, or they are graceful, legalistic or loving. The best men and ministries are the ones which are able to combine the two.²

John Piper says that pastors should be compassionate men who have backbones of steel.

Douglas Wilson says that some churches are doctrinally pure, but unloving. They are all backbone, all skeleton, no flesh. These are formed, but empty. Other churches are all flesh, all goeey love, a vulnerable body

2 This can be extended from ministry and preaching to Christian literature. As in the arts, godly limitations and constraints produce ingenuity, true beauty and cultural longevity. From there, of course, it applies to every human domain or endeavor.

with no boundaries. Neither extreme has any future.

Sin divides Law-Word from Life, but God is able to put these two together, and it takes a miracle (Ezekiel 37). It is the work of the Spirit to fill, to marry head and body, structure and glory.

In the Bible, forming ends with death, and filling brings resurrection. Law and Grace is flesh and Spirit, *externals* and *internals*. Each Covenant is designed to move from *external* Law to *internal* Law, from obedience to wisdom. The mission is formed and (ful)filled.

At a greater level, we have the same movement from external to internal when we compare the Old Testament with the New. The Old Covenant *formed* the house (Law), and the New Covenant is *filling* it (Grace). Grace does not replace Law any more than your furniture replaces your roof and walls.

Outward obedience (Law) is the domain of the state. It forms a safe place, and motives are mostly irrelevant where transgressions are concerned. It is only concerned with external compliance.

But as with a Covenant, the state can only ever provide a platform, a stage, a *vacuum* that must be *filled* with something. So unless this empty house is filled with an internal obedience, the Covenant will be broken: the outward safety *will not last*.

This applies to all human domains, all families, all churches, all businesses, all nations and all cultures. What goes on behind closed doors—whether it be in the bedroom or in the boardroom, whether it be good or evil, lawful or lawless—is always, eventually, shouted from the rooftops. This is the process of

Maturity. The tablets hidden in the Ark—or their counterfeits—will always be lived out. *Cultus* (faith) always flows into culture. It builds up, or it tears down.

Outward (state) submission is a temporary, *corruptible* beauty. If it remains an empty house, a tree with no fruit, it has no future, no lasting reward, no Covenant *continuity* (Matthew 6: 2, 5, 16). But the internal submission of “a gentle and quiet spirit” is “incorruptible,” and “very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:1-4). Filling is always *bridal*.

Internal obedience, the domain of the church, is what adorns, beautifies, the Law. It makes both the Law—and the church—attractive, irresistible.

Law forms, Grace adorns, and the relationship has a future:

“Your *testimonies* are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
 O Lord, *forever.*” (Psalm 93:5 [NKJV])

A fulfilled Covenant is a house where Law and Grace miraculously dwell together as they do in God.

Coercion forms us when we are immature. *Submission* fills us when we are mature. Here is the first Adam and the Last. The Law written on stone is written on flesh. The Temple of stone and wood is slain by the Law and resurrected by the Spirit as a Temple of fruitful flesh, a house of worship that reproduces itself in smaller houses—the branches of Booths—until the whole is a shelter for all nations.

TRUE RELIGION

Behind every one of God's endeavors with Man is a Covenant consisting of these two parts, Law and Grace. Just like the Creation, the Covenant is *formed* (structure) to be *filled* (glory). It is a legal treaty which establishes the *mission* and the *reckoning*. Every Covenant involves rules (structure), and every king requires results (glory).

As mentioned earlier, the Word is sent out in a chosen Man, and his obedience to this "*Law*" opens a clean, holy place, a house that is "swept and adorned," ready for the Spirit to fill; a space for *Grace*. If the space is not made holy by priestly obedience, it will be filled with something *unholy*, and the future will be forfeited.

This explains James' charge against the Judaizers in the first century church. True religion is not sitting around hearing truth that we may simply understand; it is hearing truth and then putting it into action for others, "visiting widows and orphans" (James 1:27), those who require shelter, an accountable (Covenant) covering, in every sphere of human life. The Jews who trusted in the Scriptures but rejected the Spirit of its Laws only had the "form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:5). They had the written testimonies the nations desired, but their visible testimony—a den of thieves, a court of accusers instead of a ministry of advocates—was shameful. They were a shelter to no one.

When God commands us to be still, it is only so we can listen long enough to rest up and hear exactly what He wants us to *go and do*.

FORMING

- 🕊️ **Creation** - “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man,
- 🕊️ **Division** - he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.
- 🕊️ **Ascension** - Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’

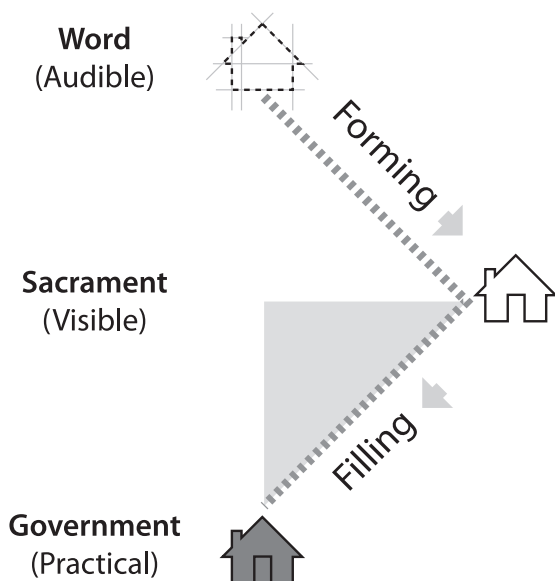
FILLING

- 🕊️ **Testing** - And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.
- 🕊️ **Maturity** - Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself,
- 🕊️ **Conquest** - and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

FUTURE

- 🕊️ **Glorification** - So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

(Matthew 12:44-45)



The Word is a “frequency” that causes *action*. The *audible* takes on a body and becomes *visible* in flesh to become a *practical* shelter for the helpless. Audible, visible, practical is Word, Sacrament, Government; Garden, Land, World—the complete House of God.

HEARTBEAT

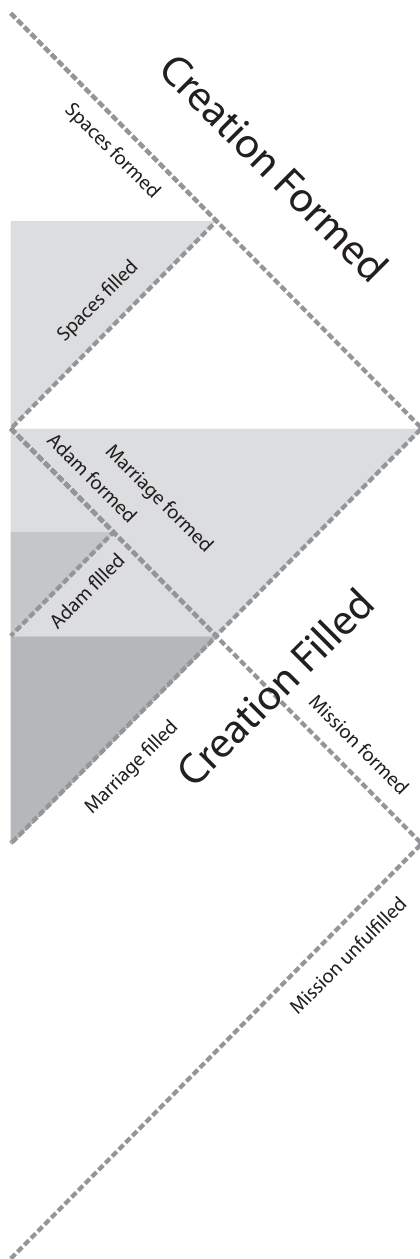
Humanity itself is Covenantal. To be a Man—an Adam—is *to be* a mission. The mission is to image God, to reflect His holy character as a living, loving, lawful symbol. As Covenant beings, Adam and Eve were formed but not filled.

In Genesis 1, the *formless, empty* world was *formed* and *filled*. In Genesis 2, Adam was *formed* and *filled*. But this same pattern in the intended marriage of Law-and-Grace, quest-and-results, was estranged in Genesis 3. Instead of a Garden swept and adorned and ready for the Spirit, it was a house of the unclean and the naked. The intended rulers willingly became slaves. Their potentially glorious house was left desolate. The potentially glorious couple was left homeless. Those who should have *become* shelter *required* shelter.

A vast chasm opened up between Law and Grace, a deep valley with which every faith and non-faith still struggles. A lawless, deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9) is a dilemma whose tension confounds even the brightest lights of Christianity. It is a rebel not only against God but against the very pattern of the Creation. The cause of all the confusion and tragedy in the world is within our very selves. Our disobedience brings barrenness. A people without form becomes void.

The Covenantal heartbeat of reality was based on the perfect obedience of the Son to the Father. The Father speaks, the Son is the Word, the Spirit the fruit. Likewise, in the world, a true human heart empties itself that it may be filled, bringing life to the growing, maturing body again and again, until the whole body images perfectly the heavenly pattern. In Adam, this rhythm stopped. The Word returned empty.

Adam failed to humble himself under the Law of God (*forming*) and subsequently failed to carry out his mission by enforcing that Law. Enforcement was not explicit in the single command, so he was to *develop*



wisdom by crushing the serpent (*filling*). Adam was to plunder the **beast** and protect his **wife**, becoming a ruler who was wise as a **serpent** and harmless as a **dove**. He could then present his bride to the Father as spiritually “chaste” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Instead, Adam was plundered, and humanity became a race of widows and orphans.

CRAFTY BEAST

God didn’t tell Adam about the serpent. He expected Adam to grow a brain and do some faith-filled logical thinking based upon the revealed Word. Adam was supposed to “read between the lines” in the light of God’s character and understand that anything being withheld from him was for his own good and only a temporary prohibition until he was ready for it.

Instead, Satan “filled in the gaps” in what God said. He “read between the lines” in a way that slandered God’s character. When the Lord’s Day came, the legal expectation was for Adam to have wrestled with the angel (as Jacob, Job and Jesus later did) and be standing there waiting for God, with a bruised heel (and a limp?) on a crushed serpent’s head. Wise **Government** was expected of a **Sacramental Adam** under the authority of God’s **Word**.

The Word did not become flesh. Thus, our first parents were unprepared for the arrival of God to feast with them in celebration of the defeat of the un-Word. The Father, His Law, and indeed the entire Creation, cried out for blood.

History only continued because the blood kept

flowing. After Adam's sin, the Lord made a *new* Covenant in the blood of substitutes. Throughout the *formative* Old Covenant, God's people fought visible, flesh-and-blood enemies until they were mature enough to wrestle with the unseen spiritual forces which *filled* them. Under the New Covenant, we no longer wrestle with flesh and blood. A spiritual battle requires the Spirit of God. We fight fire with fire.

THE COVENANT KEY

Our God expects us to read between the lines, to search things out as New Covenant kings. This is how we grow in wisdom. As we read the Bible, He gives us boundaries, certainly, but He also gives us plenty of room to explore, to notice things (like parallel events) and draw some conclusions.

Every step along the way to this maturity was a new Covenant, and an understanding of this facet of the Bible not only brings the depths of the Old Testament to life, it makes the entire Bible extremely practical, even for life in the modern world—*especially* for life in the modern world, where believers face new moral and ethical dilemmas with a frequency unseen in all previous Church history. All those lives were lived, all those events written down, for us, as examples to show us how to live *under* God *in* the world with wisdom.

God's Word is true. As Christians, our faith is true. Under Adam's broken Covenant, we were widows and orphans. We now shelter under a New Adam. But many would have us believe that salvation is the end of our faith. That is not true religion. Jesus has more

glorious plans than that. Grace is the Law *fulfilled*. He has something for us *to do*.

The end of the New Covenant age is a world where every nation is disciplined, a world governed by wise, Spirit-filled Man. If every sphere of life is Covenantal, history belongs to those who can marry Law and Grace, truth and spirit, in each one of these domains, and marry them not just in word but in deed. All our domains will be conformed to His; our shelters are the microcosmic physical expressions of Jesus' cosmic one. The Father's house has many dwellings, so the kingdom of God, like the Bible, is a fractal, with every member *ordered* and *operating* by the Spirit of love.

Judaism and Islam understand only Law. In the place of Grace, just like Adam, they put a distorted law that suits their own understanding. They have a *form* of godliness but no *filling* power. They have an altar but no Pentecostal fire. It is an immature obedience, maintained not by love but by coercion.

The Reformation gave Christianity a renewed understanding of Grace, but when the Church becomes *lawless*, unclean, it too becomes a desolate house. We demand fire without the lawful altar of obedience.

The Western Church has invented other strategies to paper over the Law/Grace chasm. With modern methodologies, marketing, and manipulation we have whipped up a crowd, but the real test of what we are building is our long-term legacy in history.

Much of what we thought was grain is actually chaff, and our realization of this is good. Wisdom comes at a price. We are left with the Bible, with *Covenant*. And that, too, once we realize it, is good.

- 👉 **Creation** - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
- 🌿 **Division** - but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
- 📦 **Ascension** - And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
- 🎯 **Testing** - Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
- 🏹 **Maturity** - that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on [the Land], and of those under [the Land],
- 🗡️ **Conquest** - and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
- 🏆 **Glorification** - to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:5-11)

COMMENTS

Those on the raised Land were the Jews. Those “under” the Land were in the Gentile “Sea.”

Please note the position in this stanza of “every tongue should confess.” As we analyze the Covenant structure, this will become very significant.

II

HIERARCHY



