

**The History of Heaven, the Absolute Beginning and Sabbath Rest Before The Law: Genesis 1:1-2:2**  
**Part I**  
**Reformed Forum Lecture 2019**

- I. This lecture picks up where last year's lecture left off.
  - A. I want to talk to you about the Holy Spirit and the deeper Protestant conception, and map out the work of the Spirit in creation (protology) and resurrection (eschatology), focusing on the two-Adam presentation in I Cor. 15:45 and following. Toward the end of my second lecture I will draw some implications for the spiritual, yet pre-Pentecost, character of the law as an administration of the covenant of grace.
  - B. My lecture is divided into two basic sections: the history of heaven before the law (Genesis 1:1-2:2 and its implications for the covenant of works) and the history of heaven after the law (I Cor. 15:45 and the implications of Christ's ascension as the "man of heaven" in I Cor. 15:47).
  - C. This way of situating my lectures will place the law in covenant-historical context relative to the *history of heaven*.
    - 1. That history, in briefest outline, is a movement from the absolute beginning, where the Spirit creates and fills with glory a heavenly temple realm, populated with an angelic host, who offer worship to the triune God (Genesis 1:1).
    - 2. Then, following the creation of the highest heaven as the temple dwelling of God's glory in the Spirit, there are six days of creation, by which the Spirit hovers down from heaven over a formless void, and on days one through three forms creature kingdoms on earth and on days four through six places creature kings to rule over each realm.
    - 3. Then, on the seventh day, the Creator-King who condescended to form the lower, visible heavens and earth ascends into heaven to sit on a throne and enter into Sabbath Rest.
    - 4. The history of heaven is thus a movement from the absolute beginning (the alpha of creation that includes the heavenly temple) to Sabbath Rest (understood as a divine enthronement in the heavenly temple).
    - 5. This movement of creative work from the absolute beginning through days 1-6, followed by Sabbath Rest form the goal for Adam under the covenant of works. He is through covenantal obedience to enter into the heavenly temple realm to worship and Rest, as he joins with the angels, exalted above them, in the heaven temple. He is to attain this as the federal head of the human race.
- II. The Absolute Beginning of Heaven and Earth and Sabbath Rest: Context for Adam as Image Bearer in Covenant with God
  - A. It is critical to situate the image of God and the covenant of works in light of the biblical teaching regarding the history of heaven, understood as the archetypal temple dwelling of God, created in the absolute beginning, and the corresponding teaching concerning the heavenly Sabbath Rest of God.
  - B. It is the history of heaven that both informs and, at points, transforms our understanding of the foundations of covenant theology.
  - C. This material builds on some of the basic insights I tried to develop at the Wimberly conference last April.

### III. The History of Heaven in Genesis 1:1-2:2

- A. Genesis 1:1 is the foundational text that helps us begin to grasp that the highest heaven is the original temple dwelling of God, inhabited first by angels, and then to be inhabited by obedient Adam, who, for a while, is made lower than the angels during his probation testing in earthly Eden.
- B. First, the “heaven” here is a distinct, created realm that is above and beyond the visible heavens and earth.
  - 1. Genesis 1:1 is not merely a summary of the creation of the visible heavens and earth. It is more than that. Much more.
    - a. “Genesis 1:1. What this opening verse states is that God, in the beginning, created both the upper and lower spatial spheres. “The heavens and the earth” is not just a merismus, a pair of antonyms which as a set signifies totality. The phrase rather denotes concretely the actual two components that together comprehend all of creation. . . . More precisely, what Gen 1:1 affirms is that God created not just the spatial dimensions *immediately accessible to man*, but the heavens too, that is, the *invisible realm of the divine Glory and angelic beings*. This interpretation is reflected in the apostle Paul’s Christological exposition of Gen 1:1, declaring that the Son created “all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers” (Col 1:16; cf. John 1:1–3). Similarly Nehemiah, reflecting on the Genesis creation account, finds a reference there to the invisible heaven of the angels (Neh 9:6), and the only possible referent is “the heavens” of Gen 1:1...” Kline, M. G., *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers), pp. 228–229.
    - b. Kline’s point is that there is a distinct dimension of created reality, called the heavens, that is the realm of angels, who worship God in glory.
- C. There are a number of biblical texts that make this clear.
  - 1. First, Also, and this is important, the visible heavens are not created until Genesis 1:7 on day two.
  - 2. Several texts bring out this foundational biblical teaching.
    - a. Neh. 9:6, reflecting on Genesis 1:1, says: “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the *host of heaven worships you*.”
      - (1) The highest heavens and the earth is an inspired summary and commentary on Genesis 1:1.
      - (2) This distinction is important, because a basic teaching of the Old Testament Scripture is that the heaven of heaven is populated with an *angelic* host, and the earth is populated by birds, animals, fish, and, of course, man as the image of God.
      - (3) And the logic of this in light of Genesis 1:1 is that angels are created to inhabit the heaven of heaven, the invisible heavens, and Adam (man) is created intially to inhabit the earth (on day *six*).

- b. And the fundamental activity of the host of heaven is made explicit: the host of heaven *worships* you.
- (1) Heaven, the highest heaven, is the original, created, dwelling place of God in his glory.
  - (2) It is a holy place that is consecrated to the glory and adoration of God.
  - (3) It is a place that, by its very nature, is set ablaze by the glory and splendor of the tripersonal God—a place where, in the absolute beginning, God created angels, who are the “host of heaven,” and they delight themselves in the worship of God.
- c. Further, what does this heaven of heaven look like, and how is it presented in Scripture?
- (1) It is a temple dwelling and royal throne-room, where God is seated in heavenly glory.
  - (2) It is this that Isaiah sees in Is. 6:1-3: “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.”
    - (a) This “highest heaven” is a royal chamber that has a throne.
      - i) As Isaiah 66:1 says, heaven is my throne; the earth is my footstool.
      - ii) And Isaiah says that he saw the “train of his robe” that filled heaven with glory.
      - iii) Isaiah saw this flowing garment of translucent glory—a light of the glory of God.
    - (b) And the “train of his robe” these garments of light, “fill the *temple*” with glory.
      - i) Heaven is not only a heavenly throne-room, heaven is also a temple.
      - ii) And the train of God’s glory that manifests in this light-infused) robe fills that temple with luminous glory.
    - (c) God’s glory is everywhere expressed by His Spirit in that heavenly temple dwelling place—the heavens of Genesis 1:1—the heaven of heavens of Neh. 9:6.
  - (3) Just as the glory of God descended to fill the tabernacle with Moses or the temple with Solomon, so there is an original “filling” of the heavenly temple with the glory of the triune God.
    - (a) The Seraphim, part of that heavenly host, encircle the throne of the Lord with ceaseless praise.

- (b) They cry out “Holy, Holy, Holy” is the Lord God Almighty!
  - d. It is this heavenly temple, this heavenly throne-room, that comprises the heavens that God created in the absolute beginning. In light of this, it is absolutely critical to observe that the location of God’s Sabbath Rest in Genesis 2:2 is *heaven*.
- D. The Creator-King sits on his royal throne in heaven, resting from his works of creation.
1. Thus, the logic internal to Genesis 1:1-2-2 is simple: having created a holy temple and royal dwelling place in the absolute beginning—the alpha of creation—the Creator-King enters into that temple-palace and sits on his throne (pointing to the omega point of that creation).
    - a. The Spirit, who hovers over the primal waters of the formless void (Gen. 1:2), forms earthly realms (days 1-3) and earthly rulers (days 4-6) and then, pronouncing the works of creation “very good” (1:31), enters into his heavenly resting place, surrounded by the angels who looked on to his mighty works of creation in worship and adoration.
    - b. The glory of Elohim is made known in that heavenly temple dwelling as he sits enthroned above the visible heavens and visible earth in a heavenly temple, filled with the host of heaven.
  2. This is why the prophets identify the throne of God in heaven with his resting place.
    - a. Is. 66:1 “Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may *rest*?”
    - b. Listen to Acts 7:47-50, which quotes with commentary from Is. 66:1: “Acts 7:47-50 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, 49 ““Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things?”
      - (1) The point is that heaven has always been the dwelling place of God.
      - (2) Heaven is my *permanent* dwelling place—heaven is my *eternal* throne.
  3. This, in summary form, is the history of heaven before the fall (and before the law): the Spirit of the divine glory, who created the highest heaven in the absolute beginning (Genesis 1:1), then moves on to hover over the formless void (Genesis 1:2), and then creates the visible heavens and earth days 1-6. And, having created the visible heavens and earth in the space of six days, he, emblematic of the triune glory, sits enthroned in heavenly Sabbath Rest.
  4. M.G. Kline, in *God Heaven and Har-Magedon*, says “Heaven is very much the focus of the seventh day. For it is concerned with God’s Sabbath, his royal rest as the one who has finished the work of creation, his enthronement in the supernal realm. Indeed, what is signified by the divine Sabbath, the everlasting royal session of the King of Glory, is the essential reality of heaven. That was the nature of heaven from its original creation, but the seventh day is marked by a

distinctive stage in the history of heaven, the Creator-Author henceforth the additional title of Finisher of heaven and earth and all their host" (GHH, 12).

- a. Kline's point needs to be understood: there is an eschatology to heaven—a dynamic development to heaven.
  - b. And Kline then adds that "there is yet another stage in the history of heaven and earth. The King of heaven will at the hour appointed consummate his cosmic temple" (GHH, 12).
  - c. That stage is reserved for Adam, the image of God, under the covenant of works, passing probation and entering into that heavenly Sabbath Rest.
5. Building on Kline, and forming the archetype for Adam's work in Eden and his promised rest once his work is finished, you find the paradigm of the Holy Spirit's agency in creation and rest.
- a. The creation in Genesis 1:1, the absolute beginning, marks the alpha point of the history of heaven.
    - (1) The Spirit forms and fills the highest heaven with his glory.
    - (2) He forms the heavenly temple, filling that place with the angelic host, who behold the filling of the highest heaven with the glory of God.
    - (3) This is what Kline in his work on Genesis 1:1 calls the "indoxation" of the Spirit—the Spirit fills the heavenly temple with glory and then displays that glory to the angelic host (GHH, 13).
    - (4) The glory of the Spirit is the permanent embodiment of God's glory in a created temple realm—a heavenly holy place designed to make the glory of God.
    - (5) And the work of creation, the work of the creation week, involves the production of earthly replicas of that heavenly temple dwelling, through realms on days 1-3 and rulers on days 4-6, climaxing in Adam as the image of God.
  - b. The Sabbath Rest of Genesis 2:2 is the climax of the work of the Spirit and a subsequent entrance into Sabbath Rest.
    - (1) The Spirit, who initially inhabits the glory of heaven in the absolute beginning, and from that place "hovers" over the waters of the formless void, forms and fills that formless void in the creative fiats.
    - (2) And on the seventh day the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Spirit of glory, rests from the work of creation and enters into that same temple as the work of creation is finished.
    - (3) Having pronounced all his work "very good" he comes to rest from his labors in the heavenly temple, enthroned in glory.
6. Now, how does this inform our understanding of Adam, created as the image and likeness of God, under the covenant of works?
- a. There is to be yet another stage in the history of heaven: if Adam, formed in the image and likeness of God, obeys under the covenant of works, he too will enter into Sabbath Rest amidst the angelic host to worship the

- glory of the enthroned Creator-King—to see the Spirit’s glory that sets ablaze the heavenly temple.
- b. To put it in a formulaic way: the two stage movement of the history of heaven, viewed from the divine side as Alpha creation (indwelling the heavenly temple in the absolute beginning) followed by omega consummation (enthronement in Sabbath Rest in the heavenly temple at the end of the creation week) forms the archetype that image bearing Adam will follow in his movement from dwelling in the earthly temple where he works (probation testing in earthly Eden) to the heavenly temple where he will join the angels and enter into Sabbath Rest (Genesis 2:2).
  - c. The two stage work of the Spirit provides the explanatory model for the two-estate movement of Adam.
    - (1) Adam is to move from work-testing in Eden to Sabbath-resting in heaven.
    - (2) As he does this, he images God, the Creator and Consummator. stage is Adam, the image of God, under the covenant of works, passing probation and entering into that heavenly Sabbath Rest.
      - (a) Hebrews 4:4, interpreting Genesis 2:2, makes clear that Sabbath Rest is not only descriptive of something into which God enters as Creator-King, but it is something that his covenant people are commanded to enter.
      - (b) Before the fall, Sabbath rest is to be inaugurated by Adam’s perfect, personal, exact and entire obedience by Adam under the covenant of works (Adam).
      - (c) Sabbath rest is entered by faith in the promised and ascended Messiah (who has entered into that Sabbath Rest) after the fall under the covenant of grace (believers under the Old and New Covenant).
    - (3) The point is that Eden, like the tabernacle, is an earthly copy of the heavenly temple—but it differs in its function.
      - (a) The earthly temple realm is for probation-testing.
      - (b) The heavenly temple realm is for Sabbath-resting.
    - (4) Adam is to follow the pattern of his Creator-Lord. Just as the work of creation is followed by Sabbath rest on the divine side(Genesis 1:1-2:2), so Adam’s obedient work of guarding and tending the Eden temple is to be followed by Sabbath rest in a heavenly temple on the creaturely side.
    - (5) Adam’s potential advancement from the earthly temple to the heavenly temple mirrors the movement of the Creator-King, who passes from six days of work, forming the visible heavens and earth, to an eternal Sabbath Rest in heavenly glory.
7. The point we need to emphasize for our purposes here is this: the realm of the Spirit’s glory, the supernal realm where that glory dwells permanently, is not in earthly Eden (the probation temple) but in heaven (the Sabbath Resting temple).
- a. Sabbath Rest in the temple above and beyond Eden is associated with the

- temple dwelling of God in heaven.
- (1) That realm, as we have seen, is created in the absolute beginning and populated with an angelic host.
  - (2) The Spirit's glory never departs from that heavenly temple realm.
  - (3) The Spirit's glory dwells there in a permanent way.
- b. But the point about Eden, and, by extension, the tabernacle and the temple under the law and during the time of the prophets, is that these temple dwellings are in the nature of the case impermanent dwelling places—places that can become ichabod—the glory of the Spirit can and does depart from them.
- (1) But this is not true of the heavenly temple dwelling of God.
  - (2) The Spirit dwells permanently in that heavenly temple dwelling.
    - (a) But as long as either (a) Eden or (b) the law stands as an administration in covenant history, the way into the heavenly temple, the way into heavenly Sabbath rest, has not been attained.
    - (b) And, given Adam's sin and fall in Eden, the glory did in fact depart from the Eden temple, and Adam was cast down from the mountain of God within it.
- E. It is in light of this basic profile of the Spirit's dwelling that we must understand the promise given to Adam after the fall that finds its binding center in Christ.
1. And Kline is quite useful here.
  2. Where do we find a permanent dwelling of the glory of God? We find it it prefall in the indoxation of the Spirit in the heavenly glory-temple and we find it after the fall the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
  3. Here is what he says: "The Glory-Manifestation of the Spirit and the incarnation of the Son are alike in that each is a permanent embodiment of a person of the Godhead in a created entity, the epiphanic glory (the heaven temple) and the human nature, respectively" 13.
    - a. The point to note is the permanency of the dwelling of God within a created reality.
    - b. It is to Christ that you must look to find the dwelling of God with his people, whether you think of him as promised in the Old Covenant or climactically revealed in the New Covenant.
  4. However, and this is what we will address in the next lecture, it is not only in the *incarnation* that we find the permanent dwelling of God's Spirit-forged glory in the midst of his people. It is in the humiliation and especially *in the climactic event of Christ's ascension into heaven and endowment with the Spirit that we find this permanent dwelling of God with his people brought to fulfillment.*
    - a. The incarnate Christ, endowed with the Spirit who raised him from the dead, enters in his ascension into the temple realm created in the absolute beginning and sits enthroned as the Lord of Sabbath Rest.
    - b. But heaven is not opened until the ascension of Christ.
      - (1) When Christ ascends by the power of the Spirit he enters into the heaven temple created in the absolute beginning and he sits

- enthroned in Sabbath Rest.
- (2) The Spirit of Christ, in resurrection and ascension, opens this path into heaven, first for Christ, and then for those united to him.
  - (3) It is precisely this that the law could not do, as it consists in an administration of promises, types and shadows that reveal yet veil the glory to come in the ascended Christ.
- c. The law, then, as we will see, pre-enacts this basic reality of Christ's suffering and glory in promises, types and sacrifices that both reveal yet veil the glory of God to come in the humiliation and ascension of Christ.
  - d. This is a point that pervades the teaching of the New Testament, finding unique emphasis in Paul and the author of Hebrews.
5. This means that the law, as an administration of the covenant of grace in the history of redemption, intervening the time between the fall of the first Adam and the historical advent of the Last Adam, must be viewed as:
    - a. (a) *spiritual* in that it brings the redemptive presence of the Spirit to the people of God in union with the promised Messiah through promises, types and sacrifices, but
    - b. (b) is not able, due to its preliminary and preparatory relation to the advent of the crucified and ascended Christ, to open the way into heaven.
  6. Entrance into the highest heaven, to sit on the throne of the majesty on high, is suspended on the resurrection and ascension of Christ, who in his exaltation becomes the life giving Spirit (I Cor. 15:45) and the man of heaven (vs. 47).
    - a. And those who are united to him by the Spirit and through faith become a heavenly people who are conformed to his perfected image as the man of heaven (vs. 48-49).
    - b. This, in bare outline, is what we will trace in more detail in our second lecture, making comments toward the end of how the spiritual character of the law must be understood in terms of its provisional character to pre-enact the person and work of Christ in promises, types and sacrifices.
  7. I will give special attention to Moses' mediation in the renewal of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 32-34.