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Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

Teacher: M. Kirstine

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**HANDOUT NOTES**

**Q57. What is the covenant that God made with Adam as the representative for all of mankind?**

The covenant required that Adam obey and trust God entirely. In this, obedience would be rewarded with eternal life and blessing, but disobedience would be punished with curse and death. Adam disobeyed, bringing the consequences upon mankind.

* **God created mankind**

In the first chapters of Scripture we learn that God created mankind, and the way and order in which He did this.

**Genesis 1:26-27** 26Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

* **Creatures owe full obedience to God—our Creator**

**Luke 12:48** “… Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required ...”

Being made in the image of God, mankind has a creature-Creator moral obligation to use our capacities to obey God in all He requires of us. Creatures owe the Creator perfect obedience by nature of being His.

* **In what condition did God create Adam and Eve**

The biblical account informs us that Adam and Eve were created good, blessed, and with no sin.

While God made Adam and Eve this way, they were not made infallible nor immutable in their nature.

**Infallible**: incapable of doing wrong

**Immutable:** unable to change or be changed

In His perfect wisdom, God made them sinless, but with the liberty and moral ability to sin.

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change.”

This truth about how Adam and Eve were created is important because through it we learn that God didn’t create man as sinful, already in need of redemption. Instead, God creates man good, blessed and with no sin, but with the possibly to change—for better or for worse.

* **The Adamic Covenant (*The* Covenant of Works)**

**Nehemiah Coxe:** “It is evident that God dealt with Adam not only upon Terms of a Law, but in a way of Covenant, and this Transaction with him was of a Federal Nature.”

**Q57. What is the covenant that God made with Adam as the representative for all of mankind?**

The covenant required that Adam obey and trust God entirely. In this, obedience would be rewarded with eternal life and blessing, but disobedience would be punished with curse and death. Adam disobeyed, bringing the consequences upon mankind.

**Genesis 2:15-18** & **Genesis 3:1-19**

* **Full covenant obedience was required of Adam**
  + **Universal Moral Law (Natural Law)**

God wrote the eternal moral law on Adam’s heart.

**Universal Moral Law (Natural Law)**: Unchanging law and commands based on the right and character of God, to which man is held accountable for all of life. Universal Moral Law is written in the hearts of all people, leaving them without excuse in disobedience.

In summary, this law requires mankind to love God first—correctly and supremely—and to love others correctly.

* + **Additional law (Positive Law)**

**Positive Law:** Law and commands based on the will of God for a particular people, a particular purpose, and a particular time.

When God imposed covenant upon Adam, in addition to Adam’s created obligations, he was placed under specific commitments and terms.

Critical positive law Adam was required to obey was to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Genesis 2:16-17** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

**Nehemiah Coxe**: “It pleased the sovereign Majesty of Heaven to add to eternal law a positive precept [a positive law] in which he charged man not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden. This tree was called the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. The eating of this fruit was not a thing evil in itself but was made so by divine prohibition.”

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “Besides the law written in their [Adam’s and Eve’s] hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil ...”

* **The Adamic Covenant was a probationary test**

Adam was placed in the garden and put under probation, to test his obedience to God.

Adam had the natural and moral ability to pass this test, in that He was created good, blessed, and with no sin.

* **What was at stake**

Adam (and all those he also represented) was earning the rewards or a breaking the covenant requirements unto receiving the punishments. And the implications of this cannot be understated; upgraded eternal blessing or curse and death was at stake.

* + **A covenant of works**

Since the Adamic Covenant required obedience to law/commands in order to receive the rewards it promised, it is a most certainly a covenant of works.

* + **The eternal life and blessing reward offered**

An elevated and confirmed estate in eternal life was at stake.

The reward available was eternal righteousness (being secured sinless by God), eternal blessing, and eternal life (everlasting life with/in the presence of God).

The Covenant of Works God initiated with Adam offered rewards that were eschatological in nature. This means the promised benefits/rewards offered to Adam weren’t continued status quo in Eden, but an elevated estate of eternal life.

**Richard Barcellos**: “Adam was not created in a condition or state that could be called “glory” … Adam was created in a state that could have been improved …”

After the fall, those who are redeemed by God through Christ are not seeking a return to the first Eden and the first Adam’s condition. No, a better, infallible, upgraded condition is awaiting the saved, and a better Eden, with no deceiver and no chance to fall.

There were real rewards at stake in this Adamic Covenant, and they were symbolized in the garden by the Tree of Life.

**Genesis 2:9** And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the book of Revelation, we see the Tree of Life again, given for those entering the eternal state of blessedness—these are those God gave saving faith into Jesus—who the book of Revelation refers to as conquerors.

**Revelation 2:7** “… To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

* **Goodness of God through covenant**

The goodness of God is seen in Him initiating covenant with mankind.

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been *pleased* to express by way of covenant.”

* **The Adamic Covenant is “The Covenant of Works”**

It is named “The Covenant of Works” because it was the decisive test—the decisive covenant of works—that would determine mankind’s fall into sin and subsequent need of redemption.

The other covenants that God later makes with fallen man, which requirepersonal obedience as the deciding factor for blessing, were not offering eternal life and blessing for obedience. The other covenants of works made directly with finite man based on obedience only offer temporary blessing in and of themselves

* **Adam failed.** **In Adam, we failed.**

This is heavy. God has been dishonored. The covenant has been broken by Adam. The perfect, almighty, and worthy God has been dishonored.

Adam did not obey perfectly, breaking the covenant, so he *and all those he represent* receive the curses of the covenant—namely death.

Because of His creating mankind righteous and ordaining secondary causes, God is not to be blamed for sin—man is. God’s word is abundantly clear in this. Their choosing to sin was God’s ordained will, but they did it willingly themselves. In them, there was a lack of maintaining in righteousness. They are to blame.

* + **The curses are** **ours by natural Federal Headship**

This reality of sin, guilt, and condemnation of Adam is imputed to his wife (being that he represented her as well) and to all those born of both man and woman to come after them.

Beyond Adam’s created condition, by covenant, he was placed in the role of mankind’s Federal Head. Adam did not act for himself alone; he acted also for all who would naturally descend from him.

**Romans 5:12** … sin came into the world through one man …

God chose Adam to be the representative—the Federal Head.

**Romans 5:12** … and death through sin …

Adam and Eve immediately died spiritually, and all persons conceived of man and woman, under Adam’s Federal Headship, are now spiritually dead in sin at conception. Additionally, all humans have the reality of physical death upon us.

**Romans 5:12** … and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

This statement is precisely saying that the consequences of Adam’s sin are a reality for mankind because Adam acted on our behalf.

When Adam sinned as our representative, his sin was counted (credited) to you, me, and everyone else.

* **The plan of God, according to the wisdom of God**

God’s choice was perfect and wise—we were represented most accurately. We learned in the previous lesson that God decreed the fall, because it is a part of His glorious plan of redemption.

The plan including the fall highlights to creation God’s justice and glorious grace.

**Romans 9:21-23 21**Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? **22**What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **23**in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory

God shows His attributes in His perfectly wise way in light of the fall. Without the fall, we would not know of His saving grace as we do, for salvation wouldn’t have been necessary. Without the fall, we would not know of His justice and wrath as we do, for there would be no humans under His just wrath. In His perfect wisdom, God decreed things to be as they are as a powerful way for us to know and see Him—His attributes. In His perfect wisdom, God decreed things to be as they are so His glory is made manifest as He sees fit.

God makes no errors. God’s ways are the right ways—perfectly right—and we can rest in and trust that. If God decreed it, it is best. If God decreed it, it is by His perfect wisdom.

* **God immediately proclaimed the gospel!**

After the Covenant of Works was broken in the garden, God immediately proclaimed the gospel; He promised the means for man to be redeemed from this fall.

**Genesis 3:15** “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This is a declaration of victory based on the future work of Jesus Christ—a new covenant is coming in the future by which Christ gives salvation. This is the great promise of redemption now revealed to mankind.

The fall has now happened and, from this very point, redemption from the fall exists in the form of a promise of the Messiah to come. This is important. Christ’s work wasn’t completed yet; in time, Christ was yet to come. But since this a real promise of God based on the unchanging decree of God, redemption is available to all who, by grace, have faith in this Messiah.

People often ask how people were saved in the Old Testament. The answer is the same as in the New Testament: because of the Covenant of Redemption, because of an unchangeable God, because of an unbreakable promise, because God has planned and promised a new covenant. Salvation has always been by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.”

**1689 Confession of Faith**: “Because the covenant of works was broken by sin and was made unable to grant life, God was pleased to proclaim the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and producing in them faith and repentance. In this promise the gospel in its substance was revealed and made effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.”

* **Desperate for the better Federal Head—the Antitype.**

In Romans 5:14, it says Adam “was a type of the one who was to come.”

What sinners are desperate for is to be moved to the Federal Headship of one who does not fail.

Adam was a type--the proto-type—of the one who was to come, the better unfailing Federal Head Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul affirms this by referring to Jesus as "the last Adam." There are only two Federal Heads in this way—affecting the eternity of those they represent.

**Romans 5:17-19** 17For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

With Christ’s Covenant of Redemption success, through the New Covenant that we will study later, those Christ represents throughout all of human history, when they are one by one reborn by the Holy Spirit and given saving faith in Jesus, are transferred to be under Christ’s Federal Headship and are given eternal life with the King of kings! This is not according to ethnicity, family lineage, parent’s belief, or anything else other than the sovereign election and work of God for particular individuals.

* **Application**
* **Worship, sanctification, evangelism**
* **Bible reading and interpretation**

As we read on in Scripture, we now have the details and results of the broken covenant of works to help us understand why things progress the way that they do. Adam failed, but God is at work for glory.