Section: Divine Covenants (Covenant Theology)

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**TEACHING 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.

**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.”

**Ecclesiastes 7:29**  ... God made man upright ...

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death ...

**Romans 5:12** (NASB) Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

**Hosea 6:7** But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

**This covenant is sometimes called** the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Obedience, the Covenant of Creation, the Adamic Covenant, or the Edenic Covenant.

Tonight, we come to the next part in our *brief* overview of Covenant Theology. I say *brief* because this great area of theology is truly vast and deep.

What we are doing here in this series is really just laying the foundation and building the frame of the structure—just an introductory overview.

You could study this doctrine for years and still be working to finish the structure and fill in the rooms.

It’s truly amazing in its importance and complexity.

It’s the study of God’s plan for creation and eternity and His monumental interactions with mankind. That’s big stuff.

So, we’ll do these lessons, and we’ll continue to teach these things in our normal course of preaching and teaching the Bible here at Disciples Church.

But for now, we’ll focus on our task this lesson, that is, our next catechism question. The focus is the Adamic Covenant (which is also called *the* Covenant of Works).

This is the first covenant that God made directly with mankind.

If you look at the Divine Covenants Timeline Layout image I gave you week one, you can locate where we are.

On the very left we see in eternity past the Covenant of Redemption, which we looked at last lesson.

Then we identify the beginning of creation, and we see now the Adamic Covenant.

Our Covenant of Redemption study last week gives us the context for God creating and initiating this covenant with Adam.

* **God created mankind**

[[We covered some details about God creating (specifically creating mankind) as seen in Genesis 1 & 2 in the previous catechism lessons (such as the lesson on Adam & Eve, the lesson on Federal Headship, etc). You can reference back to that teaching if you’d like some extra review. But let us briefly, for reminder and context, review some key points of truth.]]

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

In the amazing Genesis account that God has given us, we learn that God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and then formed Eve from the rib of Adam. God made mankind with distinct, creative care. And God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life.

Man does not simply happen, nor did man progressively come to be over time. **No**, on the sixth day, *God* formed man the way He wanted him, and breathed him into being so that in the very first breath Adam draws—from the moment he opens his eyes—he is in fellowship with God, his Maker. Scripture emphasizes the majestic, the sovereign, the unique power of God in this.

**Genesis 1:26-27** Speaks to some of this:

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.” **27**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he *created* him; male and female he created them.

All things are created by God and for God, *but man* is created uniquely and with special, heightened intention, so to speak, by God and for God.

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

The text tells us that “God created man in his own image.” This is truly amazing. And the implications are significant.

We have been *given much* in being made in the image of God. We should hear the principle from Luke 12:48 and feel the weight of this, “…*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*. *This is our duty* (For example, Luke 17:7-10 teaches this point).

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

In this consideration, it’s important now to establish

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

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

When God created Adam and Eve, they were **not** created sinful, and *not even* morally neutral, instead they were righteous.

They had no sin—they were rightly in obedience *before the fall*.

Passages such as Genesis 1:31, Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 5:2, Ecclesiastes 7:29, tell us plainly that Adam and Eve were created good, blessed, and with no sin. God made them upright.

Now, it is important to note that while God made Adam and Eve this way, they were not made *infallible* nor *immutable* in their nature.

Infallible means *incapable of doing wrong*.

Immutable means *unable to change or be changed*.

What this means is that: it was not God’s desire to make it *impossible* for them to sin or fall from their good condition.

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

The 1689 Confession of Faith speaks to much of this when it says “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)**

With that foundation, we are now able to turn to consider the covenant God made with Adam. Remember, a *divine covenant is a relational agreement initiated by God that may include obligations, rewards, and/or punishments from Him*.

As we get into this, recall from our first lesson that, within the reality of God initiating divine covenants, we need to remember that covenants are an “extra thing” (or to put it another way, a supernatural thing). What is meant by this is that divine covenants made with man are added realities to man’s existence. They are not natural (they do not exist automatically by nature of creation), and they are not entitlements (mankind is not entitled to covenants with God in anyway). This relates to our current study in this way, we must note that we see in the first few chapters of Genesis that God made man, man was good and in a blessed, but mutable state, *then* God added a covenant to man’s reality. ~~This covenant, as we will see provided the offer for improvement, or for curses.~~

17th century theologian Nehemiah Coxe wrote that, “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.” Coxe rightly argued that this covenant God made with Adam is “sufficiently revealed to us” in Scripture.

With that, let’s jump into our answer for question 57.

**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’s direct interaction and covenant with Adam is critically important to all of Christian theology and understanding human history. So, before we unpack this answer, I’d like us to read a portion of the Genesis account where we see much of this covenantal interaction between God and Adam.

**Genesis 2:15-18 and 3:1-19** (Leslie, put address only in HN, I’ll ask them to look in Bible for this longer passage.)

15The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17but 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.”

18Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

**Genesis 3:** 1Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” 2And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14The Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,  
    cursed are you above all livestock  
    and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
    and dust you shall eat  
    all the days of your life.  
15I 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.”

16To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
    in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
    and he shall rule over you.”

17And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
    and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
    ‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
    in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
18thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
    and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
19By the sweat of your face  
    you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
    for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
    and to dust you shall return.”

Among other things, in that reading we see:

God impose this covenant onto Adam and what was required,

Adam’s breaking of the covenant,

curses declared and initiated because of this breaking,

and the promise of the Messiah.

* **Full covenant obedience was required of Adam**

Using our catechism answer, let’s consider this covenant in detail now. The answer begins by stating: “The covenant [that God made with Adam] required that Adam obey and trust God entirely.”

This is critical. What we need to understand is that full covenant obedience was required of Adam. There was no offer of laxity or do-overs in the Adamic Covenant. God required Adam to obey.

Here then, we must identify what obedience was required. What law did Adam have to perfectly obey?

* + **Universal Moral Law (Natural Law)**

Well, prior to the covenant, God wrote the eternal moral law on Adam’s heart (as God does with all persons created in His image).

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.

This moral law is the foundational law that has and will always exist—it is eternal and unchanging, because it is based on the eternal and unchanging God.

The Universal Moral Law exists at all times, over all of mankind. Even where it was not or is not fully communicated verbally it exists because it’s based on the authority and character of God…and mankind’s relation to Him.

The Bible teaches that Universal Moral Law is written in the hearts of all humans. *And this is why it is sometimes called “Natural Law.”*

We see this taught in **Romans 2:15-16,** where Paul tells us that even those who have never heard about God’s moral requirements of man have “the work of the law written on their hearts” and their consciences bear witness to this fact.

What law is of this *Universal Moral Law*?

We covered that in detail in a recent Midweek lesson…In summary, this law requires mankind to love God first—correctly and supremely, and to love others correctly.

So, when God created Adam, He wrote this eternal moral law on Adam’s heart. This law had to be perfectly obeyed by Adam because it is based on the authority and character of God and Adam’s relation to God as a creature created in God’s image.

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

Now, in addition to this, when God covenanted with Adam, He required Adam to rightly obey additional law (called Positive Law).

Positive Law is *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. We see this commanded in:

**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.”

This was a specific command (a positive law) given to Adam as part of the covenant God made with Adam. On top of the Universal Moral Law that all humans must obey, God added an additional requirement *to Adam* in forbidding the eating from this tree. This was literal fruit from a literal tree. Exactly what variety of fruit, Scripture doesn’t clearly say, so we don’t need to declare, but it was real fruit. And it was forbidden by God.

Nehemiah Coxe wrote, “It pleased the sovereign Majesty of Heaven to add to [the] 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*.”

Again, the 1689 Confession speaks to these things. It says, “Besides the law written in their [Adam 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**

What we are seeing here is, Adam was placed in the garden and put under probation, to test his obedience to God.

Adam was under the Universal Moral Law and Positive Law specific to His covenant. To these, God required that Adam obey God entirely.

By nature, Adam owed absolute obedience to God, but the covenant God additionally imposed on Adam added very significant terms.

And, Adam had the *natural and moral* ability to pass this test in that He was created good, blessed, and with no sin. Remember, Adam was not yet affected by sin.

But, since Adam was not immutable nor infallible, he was subject to change, for the better or worse.

The testing to which Adam was subjected had to do with whether or not he would trust and depend on God, or whether he would assert *his own desires*.

In essence, the real issue was a test of submission versus rebellion—humility versus pride—seeking God for wisdom or trusting his own thoughts and feelings. It was a matter of acknowledging and submitting to God’s rightful sovereign rule.

The essence of ALL sin involves each of us rejecting God’s rightful sovereign rule by asserting our own desires, our own desired independence.

* **What was at stake**

For this probationary test, as our answer continues now to say, “…obedience would be rewarded with eternal life and blessing, but disobedience would be punished with curse and death.”

What was at stake in this covenant for Adam (and all those he also represented) was an earning of 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**

Let’s identify here what type of covenant this is.

Remember from our previous lessons, when a covenant requires obedience to law/commands in order to receive the rewards it promises, it as “*a* *covenant of works*.”

If a party must obey law to receive rewards, it’s a ***covenant of works*** to them.

Therefore, 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*.

Samuel Renihan writes, “When God’s dealings with Adam beyond that which was natural to him are considered, it is clear that God made a covenant of works with Adam.”

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

Later in the lesson, we’ll focus on the curses, but for now, consider further the eternal life and blessing rewards God committed to in this covenant.

*Since it was before the fall*, the rewards at stake in the Adamic Covenant did not include **redemption**—for mankind was in an upright condition, not needing redemption from sin. So, *it wasn’t salvation from God’s wrath* that Adam needed.

But what was needed was **the reward of an elevated and eternal state of blessedness.**

What does this mean? This means that an elevated and confirmed estate in eternal life was at stake.

Adam was sinless and righteous, but not made unchanging or kept perfect by God. For Him to become eternally sinless and righteous would be an elevated and confirmed reality for him to receive.

Adam was good and blessed, but not secured in that position. For Him to become eternally good and blessed would be an elevated and confirmed reality for him to receive.

Adam had ongoing life, but he was not secured with eternal life. For Him to be given eternal life would be an elevated and confirmed reality.

What was needed was **the reward of an *elevated and eternal* state of blessedness.**

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 eternal state of blessedness offered as an earned reward in this covenant included being kept in righteousness forever entirely free from sin, eternal life in the blessed presence of God, and countless other blessings.

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

It should be clear to us that Adam’s condition and circumstances were not as glorious as what God has in store in the new creation.

Pastor/Theologian Richard Barcellos writes that, “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 … Adam was not created with eternal life. Adam’s obedience [in the Covenant of Works] could have attained something with which he was not created, ‘the reward of life’ in the words of the Confession.”

With that, we should note that 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.

Since the fall, we’re looking ahead to rewards that Adam failed to earn, but Christ succeeded in earning (and now also including redemption) for the people chosen in the Covenant of Redemption.

Because of God’s plan of redemption, we, as His chosen people, receive the now needed redemption AND we look forward to the better creation and condition to come, even better than that which we see in Genesis where Adam was during this probationary covenant time. The new creation we will experience is not simply a return to the first Eden. John Owen said in agreement with this that those redeemed by Christ will be put into “a better condition than they were in before the entrance of sin.”

Considering then, Adam’s created then covenanted state:

Adam’s condition was good, but not secured.

The Garden of Eden was good, but not as good as what the new creation will be.

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**

**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 Garden of Eden, these two trees stood as a visible reminder of this covenant and its terms. They were real trees that served as symbols—a reminder of specific realties at stake—one tree symbolizing curses and the other tree symbolizing rewards.

The covenant rewards symbolized in the garden by the tree of life were certainly eschatological in nature. There was elevated and eternal blessing at stake, improvement for eternity.

In fact, in the book of Revelation (Rev 2:7; 22:2,14,19), 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 conquers. Jesus says, in Rev 2:7, “… To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” The Tree of Life is spoken of again in later consummation prophecy in Revelation 22. In that prophecy, we see God dwelling with His people and the Tree of Life is present there, symbolizing the blessed eternal life in that gloried place.

Amazing stuff.

So, the covenant rewards were symbolized in the garden by the “Tree of Life” and it all hinged on Adam’s performance—His perfect obedience “…obedience would be rewarded with eternal life and blessing...”

* **Goodness of God through covenant**

Remember at this point that for God to enter into any covenant with a creature, to give any offer of reward or promise to us whatsoever under any conditions, is in itself a good act. God is not required to promise His creatures anything. The goodness of God is seen in Him initiating covenant with mankind.

The Confession has an important statement that speaks to part of our answer, it says,

“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.”

God was good to mankind to voluntary condensed to make covenant with us, by our Head, Adam, and offer rewards—rewards *unavailable* to mankind *at that time* apart from God’s offer in that covenant.

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

The weight of this particular covenant should be evident now. Adding depth to our distinction earlier, this Adamic Covenant is not only *a* covenant of works, it is historically called *The* Covenant of Works.

It’s been named “The Covenant of Works” for a few reasons.

+First, this title is fitting because it was in fact a covenant of works. God required perfect obedience. Based on Adam’s own performance, he (and those he represented) would be blessed or cursed. **There was no *redeeming* grace in this covenant.**

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

+And, it could also be noted that this covenant of works with Adam had eternal consequences, whereby the other covenants that God later makes with fallen man *which require personal 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

In *The Covenant of Works* Adam was assigned the roles of prophet, priest, and king of Eden. He was to obey God—He was to have dominion and uphold the word of God, all according to the law given to Him in His heart and by positive command.

While Adam had to obey perfectly, personally, and, for the length of the probationary test, perpetually, Renihan notes that, “The Covenant of Works was not an unbounded endless demand for obedience in the garden. It had an eschatological goal. For that reason, Adam’s obedience had to be tested in a definable way, and that took the shape of a probationary test.”

Therefore, the Adamic Covenant is “The Covenant of Works” in that if Adam would have perfectly obeyed, he could have earned the rewards of eternal life and blessing for those he represented, but disobedience would be punished with curse and death.

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

And that brings us to the last part of the answer: “Adam disobeyed, bringing the consequences upon mankind.”

Adam failed the probationary test. We saw this in Scripture earlier,

**Genesis 3:6**

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

At this point in the study hopefully the weight of this failure is properly being understood and felt. Adam failed. In Adam, we failed. This is heavy. God has been dishonored. The covenant has been broken by man. 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*, including spiritual death, impending physical death, total defilement in all the faculties and parts of soul and body, suffering, eternal punishment for those who won’t be redeemed, and so on.

Now, the truth we considered earlier about *how* Adam and Eve were created is important because through it we learn that God **didn’t create man as sinful, already cursed. Instead, He creates man good, blessed and with no sin, and *by ordained secondary causes*, namely, their own fallibleness and the temptation of Satan, they chose to sin against God.** Because of His creating mankind righteous and Him 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.

Much of what we’ve covered thus far, and our current portion, is stated as well in the 1689 Confession of Faith:

Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honour; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit, which God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, *having purposed to order it to his own glory*.

Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

* + **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.

In **Romans 5,** Paul makes the following observations about Adam’s disobedience:

“sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin” (v. 12).

“many died through one man's trespass” (v. 15).

“one trespass led to condemnation for all men” (v. 18).

“by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners” (v. 19).

As we consider the fall, it is vitally important that we understand the relation Adam has to all of mankind. He was not only the common parent of mankind; he was chosen by God as our Federal Head, our representative. 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. And unless that fact is clearly understood, we will not rightly or fully understand God’s dealings with the human race.

Upon Adam’s disobedience, 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 from conception.

We must understand this doctrine of Federal Headship.

In Romans 5:12, we see that “sin came into the world through one man.”

This tells us that it was because of one man, Adam, that sin came into the human race. It was not by Eve; do you notice that? It was by Adam. As we pointed out earlier, Eve sinned first. Chronologically, Eve was the first human to sin.

Since she sinned first, **why does it not say *sin came into the world through one woman***? It is because God chose Adam to be the representative—the Federal Head—not Eve. Adam was the legal, moral representative for Eve and the whole human race.

Additionally……remember that even Eve came from Adam; she had be taken out of him. She too was represented by Adam.

Upon the eating of the fruit by Eve, *the consequences of the Federal Head failing* were not brought on, but as soon as Adam eats, the consequences due Adam and those he represented begin. The eyes of both of them were opened; they knew they were guilty. They both became immediately aware of their change—things had now turned very bad.

In Genesis 2:9, God goes to Adam first about the sin. This is another way Adam’s responsibility and headship is put on display. He goes to Adam first, not Eve, to have Adam give an account. God knows that Eve sinned first, He knows what happened. But because Adam is the chosen Head over Eve and over all mankind, God goes directly to Adam.

By eating of the fruit, Adam plunged himself, Eve, and all born of man and woman after them into sin.

**Romans 5:12** “…sin came into the world through one man…” Adam.

Next Romans 5:12 says “and death through sin.”

The death we read about here as a consequence for Adam’s sin is both spiritual death and the reality of impending physical death.

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.

Bodily death and the brokenness of our bodies are consequences of Adam’s sin. The pain and sorrow of death came through Adam’s sin unto all of us.

The confession we just quoted spoke clarity to these results, these curses.

So, death came through the sin of Adam: spiritual and impending physical death.

Next Romans 5:12 says, “and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

Now this part is very important. *This again affirms Adam’s representation of all of us*.

What it does not mean is “death spread to all men because all sinned *in their own flesh*.” This is **not** saying we die spiritually and physically only after we ourselves sin. Clearly that is not correct based on what we experience, but more importantly that’s not biblically correct.

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 or credited to me, you, and everyone else. God brings that judgment, that consequence on all of us, because Adam represented all of us.

We all are guilty at conception. Yes, before you or I committed one sin in our own flesh, we are guilty. That is what our verse (and the rest of Scripture) teaches.

We are legally constituted sinners by the disobedience of our federal head.

Again, what we are seeing is that when Adam sinned in the garden, he broke the terms of the covenant he was in with God, bringing forth hostility between Him and God. That hostility includes not only himself but all of those whom he represented by the appointment of God.

In all of this, we need to remember that Adam was legally appointed by God. God chose Adam, and God decreed this system.

In addition to this affecting Adam and all humans he represented, his breaking the covenant affected the rest of creation as well. Since man is placed as the delegated authority over creation with dominion over it, the creation was subjected to the fall as well.

In addition to this affecting Adam and all humans he represented, his sin—his breaking the covenant—affected, in various ways, the rest of creation as well. Since man is placed as the delegated authority over creation with dominion over it, the creation was subjected to the fall as well. For example, the animals that mankind was to rule over, now some cause injury or fear in us. That’s not how things were before the fall, and it’s not how creation will function in the new creation. The breaking of this covenant had vast and significate consequences.

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

So, do you see how significant this Adamic Covenant is—this covenant of works is? We need to understand how monumental this covenant is. It was the only covenant in which the fall, sin natures, death was at stake. It threatened mankind with body aches, illness, lying, adultery, idolatry, deadly earthquakes, etc. But most importantly, it threatened mankind with separation from blessed fellowship with God.

And, our God-appointed representative failed. 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. God’s plan of redemption based on the Covenant of Redemption is best. How do we know this? Well, for many reasons.

One being that it highlights to creation God’s justice and glorious grace, which is something that we saw in Ephesians 1 last lesson. We saw in that passage that redemption was unto the praise of His “glorious grace.” Or look at

**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 that His glory is made manifest as He sees fit. This should humble us.

And, the most practical or plain reason we know this plan is better is that: 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’s best. If God decreed it, it’s by His perfect wisdom.

* **God immediately proclaimed the gospel!**

Renihan again, “Adam’s breach of the covenant activated its curses, expelled him from the temple of God's presence, and condemned him to death. This means that the Covenant remains in force today and that its curses continue to apply to all of Adam's offspring. But the covenant does not remain in force today in the sense of promising life to those who obey his commands. … the [offer of rewards in] the Covenant of Works has permanently shut up and abrogated.”

Let’s not miss something before we move on from the Adamic covenant. This is absolutely critical to the rest of our series, track with me here….

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.

We read in Genesis 3:15 that *as* God was informing creation of the curses of the fall, He graciously reveals and promises the glorious plan of redemption, the glorious plan of the Redeemer to come. This is called the protoevangelium—the first gospel deceleration made known to man of the Messiah.

This is amazing; The covenant is broken by Adam, the fall happens, misery and death is the punishment, but our great God promises the most amazing promise possible.

He basically says, “I will fix this mess. Adam failed, but I have a plan to fix this. I promise to do what no one else can.” This is amazing. Look at…

**Genesis 3:15** God says:

“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 Messiah being promised. 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.

Sam Renihan notes powerfully that, “The promise of a deliverer [here in Genesis 3:15] was not a command of work in Adam or Eve. It was not a new commission for self-deliverance or self-improvement. ... It was a promise that God must make good, a promise to be received and believed. It was the beginnings of the revelation of the New Covenant of Grace established on the infinite goodness and kindness of God, freely delivered to all those who trust and rest in its promises. It was the first dawning light of the mystery of Christ, His covenant, and His kingdom. And the rest of the Scriptures trace this promise as it is carried, expanded, augmented, increased, and unveiled by further steps from Adam to Christ.”

In regard to Covenant Theology, we need to understand this within the timeline.

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. This is key—a new covenant is coming in the future by which Christ gives salvation.

People often ask how people where 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.

Speaking of this new covenant to come, the 1689 Confession of Faith again:

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.

See, we, in this time, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, we look back to the finished work of Jesus for salvation. But before Jesus came, they looked forward to the person and work of Jesus for salvation. Same Jesus. Same *one* way to salvation. God was able to give salvation on the basis of His unchangeable decree for Jesus to do what was required.

At that moment in the garden to the very first humans to every live, redemption was made known through the promise of the coming Messiah. By grace, through faith, in this promised Messiah, the chosen ones of old received redemption based on the promise of God. He calls the elect and redeems them despite their fallenness.

The 1689 Baptist Confession says this point this way:

“*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.*”

This is amazing.

* **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.”

This is very important.

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

We’ve mentioned typology a bit in this series—saying, theologically, there are types and antitypes. The type is the thing foreshadowing something to come, the antitype.

So, 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.

By Federal Headship, mankind is condemned in Adam, but by Federal Headship, God can save His chosen people in Christ. By it Jesus’ perfect life can count for the elect. By Federal Headship, Jesus can take on the wrath due us on the cross; by it Jesus can secure our salvation and the eternal blessedness Adam failed to earn. And this is the good news in all of this. Let’s read:

**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.

There it is: redemption from the fall of Adam is only a reality because of the perfection of the second and final Adam, the one God-man, Jesus Christ. By this, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone, we get the free gift of Christ’s imputed righteousness!

Renihan argues rightly that, “*any* objection to this foundational biblical doctrine [namely, regarding Adam’s Covenant of Works] is a serious matter. Undercutting Adam’s role as a federal head of mankind undercuts the very heart of salvation. … If we fail to grasp this foundation, we will be building on sand from the start.”

I hope you see how significant this Adamic Covenant is. Being the first covenant made with man, and having one of only two Federal Heads that affect eternity as its covenant head, it is most critical to know rightly.

In addition to its eternal conquests or implications, it also conditions the world that we all live in. The world is broken and passing away because of this broken covenant. Mankind is wicked and sinful because of this broken covenant.

With the entrance of sin into mankind’s reality, God is just to punish sinners with eternal wrath, and yet, amazingly He has chosen to save His elect from that consequence, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that we will one day, enter into an eternal state of blessedness that Adam failed to obtain. By God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, Jesus is redeeming people to be reconciled back to Him, and to be able to enjoy Him forever.

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.

At the coming consummation God will remove the affects and consequences of sin, restoring believers, and He will infallibly keep His saved ones for eternity in a good, blessed, and sinless reality. Oh, praise God for this great hope and future!

Before we close, let’s consider a bit of **APPLICATION** to be thinking about for your discussion time and personal pondering.

* **Application**
* **Worship, Sanctification, Evangelism**

So, How does this help us worship God / what does this mean for our sanctification / how does this lesson spur on evangelism?

(GIVE A LITTLE HN SPACE HERE)

Our God is amazing. He is perfect, wise, gracious, and just.

Yet, because of Adam’s breaking of his covenant, we are feeble, mutable, and unrighteous. So, we must look to Jesus in faith for our hope, joy, salvation, and growth. Let us press on, not living idly, but growing in our conformance to Christ—living to worship Him alone. Let’s be active in growing as believers in discipleship, because our great God is at work.

In that this lesson should also seriously encourage our testifying to the gospel. Since the fall, what man has always needed is the good news about Jesus Christ. This is the means that God has ordained as the prerequisite to Him, causing new birth and saving faith.

So let’s go with boldness, because Scripture tells us that God will save His people, and this creation will remain until that has happened. People need the gospel and the call to repent and trust in Jesus alone. God has commissioned us to share the good news—verbally, lovingly, boldly. Let’s enjoy this commission.

Finally, I told you upfront that these covenant theology “lessons will significantly benefit you in your understanding of God and His word.” So… What does the truth in this lesson mean for my hermeneutic?

* **Bible Reading and Interpretation**

As we said the first week, we must keep the Covenant of Redemption in mind as we read the Bible. We must remember that “*all of what we read about in the Bible happens because of that covenant. All of what we read in the Bible serves to fulfill God’s perfect plan to which the focus of that covenant informs us*”

Practically then, we must not read the Old Testament, including the portions of Genesis we were in today, apart from the solid foundation of the Covenant of Redemption. If we try to understand the happenings we read about in the Old Testament without that foundation, we will miss important things and we could come to conclusions that are not correct. Hopefully you see this today. Hopefully, the fall makes more sense in light of the Covenant of Redemption.

And, 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.

And always keep in mind that there has only been one way to be saved since the fall: by grace through faith, in the Messiah. Knowing this firmly will help you understand so much of the Old Testament, as we’ll see more the coming lessons.

Let’s pray…

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Next week we are going to look at the Noahic Covenant. I trust you will benefit by the teaching we are bringing and hope you’ll make it a priority to be here to hear it. So many of us have been confused as to so much of what is happening in the Old Testament. Next week will really help remove some confusion. See you next week.