

April 11th, 2021

# The Covenant of Grace: Adam and the Protoevangelium

Genesis 3:7-24

## The Covenant of Works

If you recall from last time, the Covenant of Works answers the question: how did God bind Himself in a relationship with man in the beginning? Remember that is what a covenant is: “a commitment that establishes a relationship between two or more people.”<sup>1</sup> God established a relationship with Adam as humanity’s representative by giving him general responsibilities which were both commands and blessings: the ordinances of labor, marriage and sabbath. And He entered “...into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, of which the tree of life was a pledge; and forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.”<sup>2</sup> Here’s the catch: there was no remedy if Adam failed. There was no escape clause in the Covenant of Works, no fine print that says ‘if you sin, here is the cure.’

## Christ and the Covenant of Works

Enter the Covenant of Grace. What is the Covenant of Grace? Essentially it is this: Christ became the Second Adam and succeeded everywhere Adam failed. He representing all of God’s elect by fulfilling all of the conditions of the Covenant of Works, and suffering all it’s curse on our behalf. Have you ever just sat and meditated over the *specific details* surrounding our Savior’s sufferings? It’s quite easy to miss the significance of those small details. Why did He *sweat* blood? (**Luke 22:44**) Why was He compared to *the serpent* that Moses lifted up in the wilderness? (**John 3:14**) Why did He have a *crown of thorns* placed on His

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<sup>1</sup> *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological and Historical Perspectives*, Ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, & John R. Muether, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2020), pg. 589

<sup>2</sup> WLC Q.20

head? (**John 19:2**) Why was He nailed to *a tree*? (**Luke 23:33**) Why did He have to be buried in *the ground*? (**John 19:42**) Are these details *merely* unimportant facts that *just happened* to fall out this way? Or are these things remarkable signs indicating that Jesus suffered the curse of the Covenant of Works, opening up the way of salvation?

☆The First Curse

☆The Second Covenant

☆The Last Adam

## I. The First Curse

### **Adam broke the TEN when he took the bite**

Luther once said because of Adam "...every infant that is born into this world, is wholly in the power of sin, death, Satan, hell and everlasting damnation."<sup>3</sup> The world scoffs at that: 'how could so small an offense as eating the forbidden fruit, plunge the whole world of mankind into such a gulf of misery?'<sup>4</sup> At first glance it may seem like a small offense, but the reality is, in that one act, Adam committed an intolerable injury against God and man. In fact, in eating the forbidden fruit, Adam broke all Ten Commandments at once. This is the case that Edward Fischer makes in his masterpiece "The Marrow of Modern Divinity." To paraphrase: in eating the forbidden fruit, Adam broke...

**1st commandment:** He chose himself another god when he followed the devil.

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Fischer, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, (Scotland, UK.,: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), pg. 57

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

**2nd commandment:** He idolized his own desires and then worshipped those desires as Paul says in Philippians 3:19 of the enemies of Christ: ‘their god is their belly.’

**3rd commandment:** He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not

**4th commandment:** He kept not the holy rest that God had given him

**5th commandment:** He dishonored his Father who was in Heaven, and therefore his days were not prolonged in the land which the Lord his God had given him.

**6th commandment:** He murdered himself and all the human race

**7th commandment:** He committed spiritual adultery for that is rejecting God and chasing idols is, Ezekiel 6:9 “I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols.”

**8th commandment:** He stole, just like Achan did (Joshua 7:20), by taking something that was set apart for the Lord, thereby bringing trouble on the whole world just like Achan brought trouble on all Israel.

**9th commandment:** He bore false witness against God, when he believed the witness of the devil instead of the witness God, 1 John 5:10 “...whoever does not believe God has made him a liar.”

**10th commandment:** He coveted the very thing which God forbid, he coveted the fruit more than he coveted God.<sup>5</sup>

Adam broke all 10 commandments in one bite.<sup>6</sup> This is in keeping with the testimony of **James 2:10** “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.” So no this wasn’t a small offense, it was the most intolerable injury against God and man.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 57-58

<sup>6</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism recognizes this truth. Q.92 What did God first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience? A. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, besides a special command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *was the moral law*. Cf. Romans 2:14-15. It latter goes on to say that this moral law is summarized in the ten commandments - Q.98

## How far is the curse found?

So if that is the crime, what then is the curse? God threatened that on the day Adam ate the fruit, he would surely die (**Genesis 2:17**). How did Adam die? We need to remember first of all that Adam's sin did not just affect himself, but because he was a representative man, meaning he was the head of the Covenant of Works, he affected and infected the whole human race with his sin. So what happening to Adam happened to us. In other words, the fall explains everything about you and me and everything else. So consider the four devastating results of the fall.

### 1. The fall of Adam destroyed man's relationship with himself

Look at **Genesis 3:7**, after Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, we read "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths." Before they sinned, **2:25** says they "...were both naked and were not *ashamed*." "Their nakedness had symbolized their innocence, openness, and guiltlessness."<sup>7</sup> But now sin has come into the world and with it *shame*. Shame is different than guilt. "Guilt...is the feeling of *doing* something wrong, [but] **shame** is the feeling of *being* something wrong."<sup>8</sup> By putting on clothes, they weren't hiding their wrong actions, they were hiding themselves. A murderer will hide his gun—the evidence of his wrong. But Adam and Eve hid their bodies—because they were *the wrong*. As a result, every human is in a miserable war with himself, because he feels this wrongness in his bones. His conscience is defiled (**Titus 1:15**); it constantly accuses him of wrong (**Romans 2:15**). His heart is never satisfied (**Ecclesiastes 1:8**); his desires are never quenched (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**). Suicide is the ultimate picture of man at war with himself ever since the garden. Why does man kill himself? Because sin has made man hate his own person.

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<sup>7</sup> *Covenant Theology*, pg. 101

<sup>8</sup> Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/shame-the-quintessential-emotion/> accessed November 25, 2017

**Matthew 27:5** “And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, [Judas] departed, and he went and hanged himself.”

## 2. The fall of Adam destroyed man’s relationship with fellow man

In making clothes for themselves, human beings hide themselves from each other. One other said “Adam and Eve became desperate to control what the other knew, to hide and create facades to block each other’s gaze.”<sup>9</sup> We still do this today—we hide from each other—terrified to be found out by others who we really are. Why? Because sin has made us accusers of each other. Look how Adam accuses and blames his own wife. **Genesis 3:12**, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Human relationships are now fundamentally characterized by hiding from each other and accusing each other. Additionally **the ordinance of marriage** has suffered a devastating blow: husband and wife now have a natural animosity towards each other. The wife’s bent is to try to rule her husband, and the husband’s bent is to be harsh with his wife. The NET of **Genesis 3:16** captures the essence of it: “You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you.” In short, even the most intimate relationship on earth has been ruined. Why? Because sin has not only ruined his relationship with himself, but with the rest of his fellow man. Murder is the ultimate picture of man’s ruined relationship with man. **Genesis 4:8** “And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”

## 3. The fall of Adam destroyed man’s relationship with God

The most tragic consequence of the fall is that man lost his communion with God. In the beginning, the Lord walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of day, but when sin entered the world, **Genesis 3:8** “...the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.” And the rest of Scripture explains what this hiding from God means. It means that we have lost

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<sup>9</sup> Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Word to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.,: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 87

all righteousness (**Romans 3:10**). It means that we never seek God (**Romans 3:11**) or do good (**Romans 3:12**). It means that we erase God from our thoughts (**Psalms 10:4**). It means that we naturally hate God (**John 15:18**). It means that “...we are under His displeasure and curse; so as we are by nature children of wrath, bond slaves to Satan, and justly liable to all punishments in this world, and that which is to come” (WLC Q.27). With sin came the first death and the second death. Eternal life with God was lost, thus cursing **the ordinance of the Sabbath**. No more could man rest in the presence of God. That is what was signified in **Genesis 3:24** “[God] drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

#### 4. The fall of Adam cursed at the entire cosmos

As Calvin said, even “...creation bears part of the punishment deserved by man.”<sup>10</sup> Why? Because the universe was made for mankind to enjoy, and that enjoyment must now be ruined because of sin. God tells Adam in **v.17** “...cursed is the ground *because of you*.” As Paul would say later in **Romans 8:21-22**, creation is in bondage to corruption, it’s groaning in the pains of childbirth. Adam infected the entire plant and animal world—birds, beasts, fish, trees—with a deadly virus. “Truly, the universe is now in an unending cycle of birth, growth, death, and decay; nature itself is now in a state of deterioration and decay.”<sup>11</sup> Which means that **the ordinance of labor**, God’s mandate for man to subdue and have dominion over the earth is cursed as well. God tells Adam that all labor will now be painful, both the labor that women have in childbirth (**v.16**) and the labor that accompanies our vocation. **v.17** “...in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.” This explains why our work is so often frustrating, exasperating, overwhelming, meaningless, and idolatrous. No matter where we turn to create or build or

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<sup>10</sup> *Covenant Theology*, pg. 99

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 101

paint or buy or sell or build or tear down, the thorns—both visible and invisible—accompany us everywhere. There’s no place the curse is not felt.

Adam’s breaking the Covenant of Works explains all the brokenness that is in the world today. It explains why labor is so hard, why marriage is so hard, why we are uneasy with ourselves, why we don’t trust others, and why we have such an aversion and avoidance of God. The world is explained perfectly today by Adam’s breaking the Covenant of Works.

## II. The Second Covenant

### **The covenant of grace**

The WCF 7.3 says this: “Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace.” I love what O. Palmer Robertson says here:

“God had absolutely no obligation to man once he had revolted against the Almighty’s will and aligned himself with the serpent, who is Satan...But God is gracious—[and] he bound himself by oath. Although man proved to be an ungrateful, self-willed rebel, God chose to obligate himself to the sinner.”<sup>12</sup>

Where sin abounds grace abounds all the more. But God was even more gracious to Adam and Eve! Look at the passage. Where does God start meting out the punishments to Adam and Eve? Not until v.16.<sup>13</sup> The Lord graciously announces mercy before He pronounces sentence. Mercy precedes judgment.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 103

<sup>13</sup> He sentences the woman in v.16 and then the man in v.17ff.

## The protoevangelium

Look at **v.15**. This is famously called the *protoevangelium*—the first announcement of the gospel. God speaks to the serpent: “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.” Now what I want you to see here is that contained in the protoevangelium are all the elements of a covenant.

### 1. The parties

The **first party** is the Lord Himself. He says at the beginning of **v.15** “I will...” He is the subject of the sentence. *He is causing* the enmity. *He is promising* the bruising. The **second party** is the offspring of the woman. This word *offspring* is in the plural.<sup>14</sup> It is a collection of individuals, a plurality. But this offspring is not based on blood, it is a spiritual offspring. Both the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman are to be understood as spiritual descendants. Christ referred to this idea of spiritual offspring in **John 8:44** when He said to the Pharisees: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning.” Clearly he’s referring to the devil, and is saying that these Pharisees are his children, his spiritual offspring. Whereas the woman’s offspring, are ultimately to be understood as God’s elect. There is a **third party** in this covenant. Look at the end of **v.15** “...*he* shall bruise...” Notice now the pronoun is singular, no longer referring to offspring which is *many*, but to “he” which is *singular*. Now this *He*

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<sup>14</sup> *Covenant Theology*, pg. 105



is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. So those are the parties. God, the elect, and the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. The promises

What is the promise in this covenant? That the Lord Jesus will bruise the head of the serpent, meaning He will crush the head of the serpent, thus killing him. The devil who tempted Adam and Eve into sin will be destroyed. God would execute vengeance upon Satan, and Adam and Eve would have victory. The enmity or warfare that was foretold in the beginning of the verse and that has defined all of human history would come to an end, thus setting God's elect forever free from the curse of sin and death. Both Christ and His elect gain the victory. Paul said in **Romans 16:20** "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

## 3. The condition

What is the condition for the Covenant of Grace? What must man do? *Believe*. It is implied that this promise of the serpent being crushed by the offspring of the woman must be believed. It seems very clear that Adam and Eve understood faith was required. As Jonathan Edwards says: "Eve seems plainly to express her [belief]<sup>16</sup> on that promise, in what she says at the birth of Cain, **Genesis 4:1** "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD" [in other

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<sup>15</sup> WLQ. 31. With whom was the covenant of grace made?

A. The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.

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Revelation 12:13-17 "And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to **the male child**. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on **the rest of her offspring**, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea."

<sup>16</sup> original—"dependence"

words], as God promised, that my seed should bruise the serpent's head; so now has God given me this pledge and token of it, and I have a seed born. [Eve] plainly owns, that this child was from God, and hoped [this was] her promised seed...though she was mistaken."<sup>17</sup> Throughout the rest Scripture, faith is clearly the condition of the Covenant of Grace. However, even this faith is of grace. God has promised "...to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe."<sup>18</sup> He gives us a new heart causing us to walk in His statutes (**Ezekiel 36:26-27**); He draws us to the Son (**John 6:44**); He opens our eyes and turns us from darkness to light (**Acts 26:18**); He works in us both to will and work for His good pleasure (**Phil. 2:13**). So faith is both the condition of the Covenant of Grace, and one of it's gifts.

#### 4. The curse

What then is the curse? The curse is that He—the woman's singular offspring—would be bit by the serpent in his heel thus dying. Amazing. The very offspring that would save God's people would die in order to save them. Jesus Christ Himself took on the curse in the Covenant of Grace. There was no other way for God's people to be redeemed. Had God required Adam and His posterity to endure the curse, no one would be saved. **Psalms 49:7** "Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life."

#### The sacrament God gave

You see? All four requirements of a covenant are right here in Genesis 3:15. There were parties, a promise given, conditions laid out, and a curse threatened. But before we look at our final point, we need to ask: was there a sacrament—a sign and seal—of this covenant? Yes. Look with me at **v.21** "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." The clothing Adam and Eve made for themselves would not suffice.

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. 538

<sup>18</sup> WCF 7.3

God Himself as a pledge of the Covenant of Grace clothed them, by shedding the blood of an animal, and clothing them with it's skin. It cannot be doubted that this is a sign of the blood of Jesus's shed blood and His robe of righteousness. And it was a gracious seal that God would perform what He promised.<sup>19</sup>

### III. The Last Adam

#### **Oh the works He has done!**

I want to close here by simply marveling at the parallel between the first Adam and the last Adam Jesus Christ. It is wonderful thing the Lord has done in designing all the details of redemption in such a way that Jesus undoes all the curses in the garden. Listen to how one author puts it:

“In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve struggled with obeying about a tree. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus struggled with obeying about a tree – called a cross. Adam and Eve were in a sinless, painless, bright, and glorious garden. The promise was “if you obey you’ll live.” And they took the fruit and ate it, and death and decay entered our lives. Jesus was in a dark and

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Edwards says here: “Soon after this, the custom of sacrificing was appointed, to be a standing type of the sacrifice of Christ, till he should come, and offer up himself a sacrifice to God. Sacrificing was not a custom first established by the Levitical law, for it had been a part of God’s instituted worship from the beginning. We read of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, offering sacrifice, and before them Noah, and Abel. And this was by divine appointment; for it was part of God’s worship in his church, which was offered up in faith, and which he accepted. This proves that it was by his institution; for sacrificing is no part of natural worship. The light of nature doth not teach men to offer up beasts in sacrifice to God; and seeing it was not enjoined by the law of nature, to be acceptable to God, it must be by some positive command or institution; for God has declared his abhorrence of such worship as is taught by the precept of men without his institution (Isa. 29:13)...and therefore it follows, that the custom of offering sacrifices to God was instituted soon after the fall; for the Scripture teaches us, that Abel offered “the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof,” Gen. 4:4. and that he was accepted of God in this offering, Heb. 11:4. And there is nothing in the story intimating that the institution was first given when Abel offered up that sacrifice to God; but rather that Abel only complied with a custom already established.” Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 1*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. 537

ominous garden. The promise was “if you obey you’ll be killed...but they’ll live.” And he climbed that tree of death for him, and it became a tree of life for us.”<sup>20</sup>

This is essentially how all of Genesis 3 reads! In the Covenant of Grace, Jesus redeems everything Adam ruined in the Covenant of Works.

In **Genesis 3:12-13** Adam blamed his guilt on Eve, and then Eve blamed it on the serpent,<sup>21</sup> Jesus took the blame and *became* the serpent!! **John 3:14-15** says “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

In **Genesis 3:14** God cursed the serpent above all other creatures. But nobody was cursed more than Jesus. **Galatians 3:13** says He became “a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

**Genesis 3:16** says that God would multiply the woman’s pain in bringing forth children, but Jesus bore the curse of the woman and He suffered the greatest pain in bringing forth children for God.<sup>22</sup>

**Genesis 3:17-18** says that creation was cursed and that man would have to labor under the pain of thorns and thistles. But Jesus in His great work of redemption wore these “thorns” on His own head<sup>23</sup> thus taking on the curse of all creation.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: <http://everysquareinch.net/tim-keller-on-the-fall-in-genesis-3/> accessed April 13, 2018

<sup>21</sup> “...but, after the example of her husband, transfers the charge to another.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Baker Books, 2009), pg. 165

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 53:10

<sup>23</sup> John 19:2

**Genesis 3:19** says that man would now have to eat bread by the “sweat” of his face but Jesus became the bread of life<sup>24</sup> by sweating His own blood.<sup>25</sup> It says that man would die and return to the dust, and it was Jesus who took our place, being buried Himself in the dust.

**Genesis 3:24** says that man was driven out of the presence of God, but it was Jesus who was ultimately driven from God’s presence crying out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**)

But Jesus also reclaimed all the creational ordinances!

He redeemed the ordinance of labor, for “...in the Lord your *labor* is not in vain” (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).

He redeemed the ordinance of marriage, for the two becoming one flesh is the profound mystery of Christ and the Church (**Ephesians 5:32**).

He redeemed the ordinance of Sabbath, “for whoever has entered God's rest [the Lord Jesus Christ] has also rested from his works as God did from his” (**Hebrews 4:10**).

All this in the Covenant of Grace.

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<sup>24</sup> John 6:35

<sup>25</sup> Luke 22:44