



FEED MY SHEEP

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The Everlasting Covenant *Part 15—The Covenants of the Bible*

Out of the Reformation came what is called Reformed theology. However, not all sects and denominations which originated in the Reformation adhere to what is today called Reformed theology. The Lutherans, for example, have their Lutheran perspective on biblical doctrines. Reformed theology is that which has come down to us primarily through the Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches. In the seventeenth century, they developed a systematic theology which held that God's entire plan was wholly centered around a covenantal framework.

To non-Reformed scholars, this covenantal framework included several covenants for which they saw no explicit biblical basis. This includes the Edenic and the Adamic, as well as the Creation covenant. In other words, many Old Testament scholars outside of the Reformed school of thought hold to the idea that the events of Genesis through creation, Eden and Adam's fall were not covenants at all.

They assert there is no biblical support for it because they state that the Hebrew word *berith* or covenant is not found until we get to Noah in Genesis 6. That is a true statement. However, let us not be too quick to dismiss the idea that they were not covenants before that. Notice:

KJV Hosea 6:7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

“What about it?”—You might be thinking. Well, the Hebrew word for the phrase *like men* there is **כְּאָדָם** (ke-adawm), *awdawm* being the word which is translated Adam, but of course, it also means “man.”

This same phrase is translated differently though, in some other translations. I will get to that in a moment. First, by way of disclaimer: many of my readers and listeners know that I strongly favor the KJV, primarily because almost all of the modern translations, dating from Westcott and Hort's Revised Version in the 1880s, are based on a false chain of manuscripts, deriving much of their text from the *Vaticanus*, i.e., the Roman Catholic manuscript.

Many years ago, I did a 20-lecture series called *Which Bible? Which Version?*, in which I examined the issue in great detail. Despite the fact that I never claimed the King James Version was perfect, or that it was the only version true Christians should use, certain critics made it appear that I was a King-James-only person. But if you have listened to my Bible teaching for any length of time, then you know that is false. I have pointed out numerous errors in the KJV and I frequently compare it with other versions. But I am also very cautious whenever I use another translation in order to back up a point. And in this case, all the manuscripts that I am quoting have the same Hebrew phrase: *ke-adawm*. So even though I find many problems with the New International Version, on this particular phrase, they may be correct here.

NIV Hosea 6:7 Like Adam, they have broken the covenant—they were unfaithful to me there.

NAU Hosea 6:7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

Even the Young's Literal Translation says...

YLT Job 31:33 If I have covered as Adam ...

Okay, so which way is correct? Should it be “as Adam,” or “like men?” Note that *men* is plural. However, the Hebrew noun is singular, not plural. Hmm. Even more interesting is the fact that this same Hebrew phrase, *ke-awdawm* which the KJ translators rendered “like men” there in Hosea, the same phrase in Job 31:33, they render “as Adam.”

KJV Job 31:33 If I covered my transgressions as Adam, [same Hebrew phrase as Hosea 6:7] by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom:

So all this is to say, that even though one cannot find the word *covenant* anywhere in Genesis before Noah, that does not necessarily mean God did not make a covenant with Adam. Because according to the way many translators render Hosea 6:7, then God did make a covenant with Adam. Once again, it reads in the New American Standard:

NAU Hosea 6:7 But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;

Do you begin to see the level of complexity that one can get into while debating these matters? Believe me, on this particular question, I have not given you anywhere near what could be brought forth to support one side or the other. So, going back to my previous statement, we will let the scholars debate. Meanwhile, simply because some say they are not true covenants, that will not prevent us from looking into them anyhow as though they were. Surely, God will reward our seeking and searching.

If you recall from early in this series, I gave a list of some 23 covenants, as opposed to 7 or 8 or 9. And one of those was a so-called “covenant of works.” Of course, all Bible-believers know that we are not saved by works, but by faith, so I am sure some of you must have been puzzled by that. Well, here is what it means. The term originated in that 17th century Reformed theology and it was simply a synonym for the Edenic covenant and the Adamic covenant and what some today call the Creation covenant. To them, these were all synonymous terms. There were other names for it as well; such as the “covenant of nature” and the “covenant of life.”

Having just broken from Rome, these Reformed Protestants, of course, knew intimately that man’s salvation is not by works. That is not what they meant. They were referring to the time *before* the fall of Adam. They contrast that with the time *after* Adam’s fall as the *covenant of grace*. Thus, all of history can be divided into those two epochs, the time of the covenant of works, and the time of the covenant of grace.

They also make clear that this is not to suggest that grace was not in operation before the fall of Adam, because they say, *everything* that God does is in a gracious mode. For example, God was not forced or obligated to create man in the first place. It was a gracious act. Furthermore, either before or after the fall, God was not obliged to enter into covenant with man, but He did; and thus it was an act of graciousness on His part. So the covenant of grace meant by Reformed scholars is that activity of God in reference to *fallen* mankind.

We will come back to the covenant of works later, because if we are going to study the covenants from this point forward in somewhat chronological order, then we need to realize that some even go so far as to say that there is really only one overarching covenant. Again, it has a couple of different names, but the most common is the Everlasting Covenant. Others call it a pre-creation Covenant of Redemption or Covenant of Peace or the Eternal Covenant.

Conner and Malmin define the Everlasting Covenant as “being made in the counsels of the eternal Godhead, between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the all-comprehensive covenant, including in itself the covenants of creation and redemption and God’s eternal purpose for man. All other covenants are but fragments of the whole and are a progressive unfolding of this Everlasting Covenant.”

And later, they write: “Finally, the Everlasting Covenant, made in the heavens, in eternity past, between the Divine Persons, is revealed to be the all-inclusive covenant. It includes in itself the covenant of creation and all the covenants of redemption.

...All covenants made by God on the earth relative to mankind are but the progressive unfolding of this covenant of eternity. The New Covenant (the end) makes possible the Edenic Covenant (the beginning) and all other covenants between are but links in the covenantal chain of Divine revelation.”

Well, again, there are scholars in other camps that say this is going too far with covenant theology, but the concept appeals to me because what I have learned about our Father in these few short decades of my earthly sojourn is that He is a God of order and He has a perfect Plan.

The idea of an Everlasting Covenant from eternity past is to me, just another way of saying that God had a perfect Plan from eternity, and everything in history is subsidiary to it. It simply wraps up the whole package and puts a pretty ribbon and bow on the top of it.

But what if the Bible doesn't really teach there are all these covenants, someone might ask? Well, we are going to dive into the nitty-gritty shortly, but even if one side is in error by claiming these are all biblical covenants, that still does not take away one iota from the fact that God *does* have a perfect Plan and it has been and will continue to unfold perfectly—the problem of evil notwithstanding. Of course, I addressed the problem of evil at great length in my book, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*. I hope that by now all of you have read it. (\$25 postpaid.) Back to the eternal covenant. Conner and Malmin assert that “God declares no purpose apart from Covenant, and therefore the following Scriptures support the idea of an Everlasting Covenant.

KJV Ephesians 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Romans 8: 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

The implication there is, of course, that God's purpose or God's Plan, if you will, was completely scripted before time began.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Ephesians 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

There, with that phrase “he hath purposed in himself,” is the idea that the Triune God made Covenant with Himself before time began.

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even in him*:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the coun-

sel of his own will:

Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Now, as I said, I find the concept that God made Covenant with Himself before time began to be in line with my thinking on God's sovereignty. However, I do have a few problems with how Conner and Malmin try to support the Everlasting Covenant theory. Because you noted that in Ephesians 3:11, it said: According to the eternal purpose... And in Hebrews 13:20 it referred to “... the everlasting covenant.”

In my lectures entitled *How Long Is “Forever?” —The Doctrine of the Ages, Parts 1, 2; CD #s 263 & 264*—I show that the words in Hebrew and Greek, which are usually translated *everlasting* and *eternal* do not, in most cases, mean what we mean by them in modern English, i.e., meaning infinite time. The literal Bible translations confirm that those words, *olam* in Hebrew and *aion* in Greek, usually have reference to an age or an eon. A long, perhaps indefinite time, but not unending or infinite time.

Therefore, while I certainly agree that God had scripted His plan in its totality before time began, that is not the same thing as saying that He had a covenant with Himself from before time began. So to use those verses which have the phrase “eternal” or “everlasting covenant” to support the Everlasting Covenant theory is fallacious, in my opinion. Probably not intentional, but mistaken, nonetheless. And perhaps some will say I am being nit-picky, but sometimes it is important to “pick out the nits.” We can, however, state with certainty that God had a Plan from before time began, and that all other covenants are revealed *in* time.

Let us now continue with subsequent covenants, whether or not everyone agrees that they are truly covenants. First, the Creation Covenant. This time we will separate it from the Edenic and Adamic Covenants, and see if there is any support for it just by itself. We have already noted that the word “covenant” does not appear until the time of Noah in Genesis 6. However, just the absence of the word “covenant” does not mean that there is not a covenant in view. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

All Bible students and scholars alike agree that God made a covenant with King David in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. We covered that in great detail in our 54-part lecture series entitled *The Character of Saul and David*, so we won't turn there now. [The

entire series is available for free listening on my web-site.] But you can look up those passages later, and you will find that nowhere in either passage is the word *covenant* found, except once when it is referring to the Ark of the Covenant. Therefore, a covenant *can* be in view in a particular passage without the word being used. Now in reference to the alleged Creation Covenant, we actually do find the word *covenant* in reference to creation.

Jeremiah 33:20 Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

21 Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

So just to follow up on the previous point about a covenant being made with David, here is just one of many proofs.

25 Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

26 Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Now the question arises: What is Jeremiah referring to? *When* did God make a covenant with day and night? There are two places that have similar language to this: one is in the ordinances of creation in Genesis, chapter 1; and the second is in the covenant with Noah in Genesis 8:22. Let us deal with the latter first.

After the flood waters subsided and Noah and his family exited the ark, they offered sacrifices to the Lord. We will come back to perform due diligence on the Noahic Covenant in due time. For now, all we are interested in is to show that God referred to the cycles of day and night in his promises to Noah.

Genesis 8:22 While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

So it is conceivable that Jeremiah may have been referring to God's covenant with Noah here. On the other hand, go back to Genesis 1:14, which is the third day of creation.

Genesis 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the

day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

So which event was Jeremiah referring to? Let us look at Jeremiah 31:35...this might shed more light (pun intended) on the answer.

Jeremiah 31:35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

We observe that the word *covenant* is not used here, but instead the word *ordinances*. However, I can assure you that they are equivalent terms in the context we are addressing here because they are found in several parallelisms elsewhere in Scripture [1 Kgs 11:11, 2 Kgs. 17:15; Psa. 50:16; 105:10]. We will not take the time to prove that now.

So the bottom line, in my view, is that there is some evidence to indicate that God did indeed make a covenant with creation, at least in the metaphorical sense. It would only be appropriate then that similar language about the continuing cycles of day and night be part of the covenant with Noah, because that could be seen as a Re-Creation Covenant. Do you see that?

In the next issue, we shall explore the Edenic Covenant. (*To be continued.*)

Resources Mentioned

CD #263, 264 *How Long Is "Forever?"—The Doctrine of the Ages, Parts 1 & 2*. Part of album A-101. (\$10 + \$5 s & h = \$15.), or obtain the 6-CD album, A-101, which also includes: CD #271, 272 *Jubilee: Level One—The Moral Law, Parts 1 & 2*; and CD #275 & 276 *Jubilee: Level Two — The Prophetic Law, 1 & 2*; Album A-101: \$24 + \$5 s & h = \$29.
A-100 *Which Bible? Which Version?* A 20-CD lecture set with numerous charts and other visual aids. \$50 + \$5 s & h = \$55.

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