



FEED MY SHEEP

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The Edenic Covenant: Putting the *kabash* on satan *Part 16—The Covenants of the Bible*

The covenants of the Bible are of singularly importance and are fundamental to the faith of anyone who claims to believe and follow the Bible, the Holy Word of God. In these FMS studies, we have written many issues just expounding and explaining covenants in general and how they were used and understood in history, primarily Bible history. We are now prepared to begin to expound the numerous specific covenants found in the Scriptures.

Thus, we come now to the Edenic Covenant. Some equate it with the Adamic Covenant *and* the Creation Covenant; and some modern theologians deny that it is a covenant at all. Regardless, let us view it on its own merits.

The Edenic Covenant is said to be the covenant God made with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden *before* the entrance of sin, in which He expressed His purpose in Creation.

This is also where we rejoin Reformed theology's concept of the Covenant of Works. It is synonymous with the Edenic Covenant. Charles Hodge was one of the pre-eminent Reformed theologians in the 1800's. He taught at Princeton and wrote many works including a Systematic Theology from which I shall be quoting and paraphrasing as we proceed. In volume 2 of his trilogy, published in 1871, he wrote this in the chapter on the Covenant of Works.

“God having created man after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death... This statement does not rest upon any express declara-

tion of the Scriptures.”

In other words, Hodge acknowledges that there is no Bible verse which *explicitly* states that God made a Covenant with Adam in Eden. But, he continues...

“It is, however, a concise and correct mode of asserting a plain Scriptural fact, namely, that God made Adam a promise suspended upon a condition, and attached to disobedience a certain penalty. This is what in Scriptural language is meant by a covenant, and this is all that is meant by the term here.”

Later, Hodge concludes a section with this:

“God then did enter into a covenant with Adam. That covenant is sometimes called a covenant of life, because life was promised as the reward of obedience. Sometimes it is called the Covenant of Works, because works were the condition on which that promise was suspended, and because it is thus distinguished from the new covenant which promises life on condition of faith.”

Let us now examine the features of the Edenic Covenant with reference to our outline sheet. (This was provided to readers as page 4 of the FMS, April 2019.) First, the parties to the covenant were of course, God and Adam. But now hearken back to our previous essay when we saw how Jonathan's covenant with David was to extend for untold generations.

It was the principle of federal or representative headship. Jonathan and David committed their descendants to the covenant as well as themselves. So in Eden, it is abundantly clear that Adam was committing his descendants as well as himself in the covenant. Now,

Adam didn't really have a lot to say about the terms or anything else about the Edenic Covenant, did he?

I mean, picture the scene: after God blows the spirit of the breath of life into his nostrils, this newly-fashioned male corpse suddenly begins to breathe. He opens his eyes; he sits up. He feels pretty good. Actually, he doesn't know what it means to feel good, because he has never experienced feeling bad.

So he gets up, "buck naked" as they say in some parts of America, and he has no shame for being naked. So God probably starts conversing with him. In modern high tech parlance, we could say that God might have downloaded into Adam a great deal about His plan for the earth, and how He had created it be inhabited (Isa. 45:18).

He probably pointed to all the animals and plants and told Adam that he had the privilege of naming them all. God probably would *not* have told Adam that none of the animals would hurt him, because again, Adam had no idea what the concept of pain or hurting or death even was. But we know the story, and how Adam, no doubt, enjoyed being with the animals, but there was not one of them which could be a helper suitable for Adam.

Let's stop and recapitulate: we were talking about the parties to the covenant: God and Adam. We were pointing out that Adam was acting not only for himself, but for all who would come after him. Everything said to Adam applied to his posterity as much as to Adam. Everything promised to Adam was promised to his descendants. And everything threatened against Adam for disobedience was also threatened upon his descendants. History is the witness to the truth of this.

Furthermore, as Charles Hodge put it in 1871: "What is thus clearly revealed in the word and providence of God, finds a response in the very constitution of our nature. All men are led as it were instinctively to recognize the validity of this principle of representative headship.

"Rulers represent their people; parents their children; guardians their wards...Men may dispute the grounds of the headship of Adam, but the fact itself can hardly be questioned by those who recognize the authority of the Scriptures."

That concludes our look at item #1 on our outline: the parties to the covenant. On your outline, you see that under the words of the covenant are the terms, the promises, the conditions, an oath and a book. We have no record that God swore any oath at this time; nor did Adam. What would be the need for an oath? Because up to this point, everything in creation was in

pristine perfection.

As for a book or record of this alleged Edenic or Creation Covenant, the only book we have is the one we are holding in our hands, the Pentateuch portion of it, compiled and written by Moses roughly 2,500 years after the formation of Adam. So let's see if there are any promises, terms or conditions to the Covenant of Works, the Creation Covenant, the Covenant of Life, as it is variously called.

Genesis 2:8 And the LORD [Yahweh] God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Would you agree with me that implicit in that last statement—verse 17—is the promise that if Adam did *not* eat of that tree, then he would live indefinitely? Is that not a logical assumption? It is not explicitly stated, but it is implicit.

It's as though you tell your little children: "If you eat that dessert before dinner, you will have to go to bed early!" There is a penalty for eating the dessert before dinner, but what is implicit in the statement? Isn't it implicit that if the child refrains from eating dessert before dinner, that he can stay up until the regular bedtime?

In similar manner, God was implicitly promising that Adam could live forever as long as he was obedient. You may wonder if that meant that Adam would have been continually on probation, as it were. In other words, he's obedient for a year. He does not eat of the forbidden tree.

Ten years go by, no problem; a hundred years go by; a thousand years go by and Adam is still obedient. Then one day, he partakes of the forbidden tree. Is that what would have happened? And how do we know

that is not what *did* happen? Does a careful reading of Genesis give us any clue as to how long it was from when Adam drew his first breath until the fall? If you find it, let me know.

In any event, my personal opinion is that it was not very long. I could be wrong, but it seems from the record of the rest of the Bible that God places a person or a nation under a limited period of testing, a specified time of probation. Israel in the wilderness 40 years; Jesus tempted for 40 days. And at the end of that testing period; well,... one has passed the test; and one is then ready for whatever responsibility one is given.

When I was in the construction business, I had to know what I was doing. In Florida, before I sat for the state's General Contractor's exam, I studied for 40 days and 40 nights—well, not really, but it sure seemed like it.

But once I passed the test, I was awarded a General Contractor's license and I could do business as such in the state of Florida. I did not have to take another exam each week, or month, etc. Now of course, someone is going to object by saying that real estate brokers and physicians and nurses all have to take continuing education courses to keep their licenses current.

So I recognize that the analogy has weaknesses, but you see the point. I do not believe that Adam would have been under pressure indefinitely to never, ever, ever fail or fall. I believe that once he had successfully passed the testing period, he would have been awarded an upgrade, as it were. God would have made him *incorruptible*, so that it would have been *impossible* for him to ever sin after that.

My dear brothers and sisters, when God's entire plan is finished, that is what you and I will have. We will not only have immortality. We will also have incorruptibility. In eternity, there will be zero chance for you or me to ever fall into sin and death again. Isn't that great news?! And that means, that when all is said and done, mankind will actually have it *better* than Adam and Eve had in Eden before they fell. What a plan! What a Father! What a God!

You may recall from my little James-and-Frank skit in a previous lecture that the promises were neatly divided into two categories: blessings and curses. We need to back up to Genesis, chapter 1 now to find some of the blessings inherent in the Edenic Covenant.

Genesis 1: 26 And 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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

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

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

From this passage we can list the promises of blessings intended for Adam and his descendants. First, man was created in God's image. That simple statement is pregnant with profound significance and meaning which theologians have discussed and debated *ad infinitum* for centuries. For our purposes, let us simplify it to just a few observations:

This image of God was spiritual, mental and volitional—volitional, of course, meaning will and choice. If you read my book, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*, then it will not surprise you to hear me assert that we must qualify the volitional portion. We do have a will; we certainly make choices; true enough, but we are not God and only He is truly sovereign.

Nonetheless, being created in the image of God meant sharing in the very character and nature of God. But alas, the Fall happened. Tragic, yes. But the plan of salvation and redemption—not the redemption of Israel here, but our redemption from the Fall—will ultimately bring all mankind to a restoration of that image of God.

We are born bearing a very poor image of God; a fuzzy image; a degraded image; a corrupted image; an imperfect image of God is what we now are. But that we will be restored to bearing the perfect image of

God is clearly attested to in the following verses:

Romans 8:29 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.

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

A second blessing of the Edenic Covenant was that mankind was to populate the earth as a race of beings which would *know* God, be *like* God (i.e., in His image) and who would *serve* God. The pre-Fall birthing process for women would undoubtedly have been completely without pain. But the charge to mankind was not to populate the earth merely for the sake of filling the planet with people. God’s purpose and charge went much further than that; namely...

Third, it would be a blessing for mankind to “subdue the earth.” What does it mean to “subdue the earth?” Have you ever heard someone say something like, “well, it’s time to put the old kabash on ’em!”? Did you know that supposed slang word is actually from the Hebrew language?

The word *subdue* in Genesis 1:28 is the Hebrew word H3533 **כָּבַשׁ** kabash {kaw-bash'} which means (Qal) 1a1) to bring into bondage, make subservient 1a2) to subdue, force, ... 1a3) to dominate, tread down. It is the same word used in numerous places with that meaning of conquering enemies. It is found in Numbers, in the book of Joshua, and here’s an example from 2 Samuel.

2 Samuel 8:11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he [“kabashed”] subdued;

Now think for a minute. Does not that word subdue-kabash in Genesis 1:28 imply that there **is** an enemy to be subdued, to be tread down, to be made subservient? Sure it does. Then who or what is the enemy? ...because this is before the Fall? Before you answer that, ...

Let us imagine that Adam and Eve did not fall, and that they began to populate the earth, and after a couple hundred years, there were tens of thousands of people. Now, this is still before the fall. Were those people in danger of being mauled and eaten by tigers, lions, bears, and leopards, etc.? When they walked around, did they have to worry about being scratched

by thorns and thistles? And bitten by mosquitoes and horseflies, and stung by hornets or scorpions? Did they have to worry about catching some kind of flu or cancer or other disease?

So my obvious question is: who is the enemy that needed subduing? Regardless of whether or not there was some chief angel named Lucifer who fell in the remotest antiquity, leave that aside. The fact is that there was an adversary, a satan, *sawtawn* in Hebrew. Furthermore, we know that God placed this adversary in the figurative or literal form of a serpent in the Garden to tempt Adam and Eve.

We will come to that scene in due time—not in this issue—but in any case, Adam’s primary occupation was to be to subdue the only enemy then in existence: the *sawtawn*, the satan, the adversary. Of course, Adam failed in that job and so Jesus Christ, the last Adam, came to do the job. As Paul wrote in...

Romans 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. ...

The word *bruise* there is from the Greek word G4937 **συντριβω** suntribo {soon-tree'-bo} which means to 1) break in pieces, 2) to tread down 2b) to break down, to crush.

Christ Jesus not only personally subdued satan, but His Holy Spirit enables us, His followers to also do what Adam could not do—to subdue the adversary. Hallelujah!

We shall continue to enumerate and expound the blessings of the Edenic Covenant next time.

(To be continued)

Resources Mentioned

Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God by Dr. James W. Bruggeman; 352 pages; seven appendices; index, bibliography: \$25 postpaid (and well worth it.)

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