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WEEK ONE

THE ADAMIC COVENANT

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

OBSERVE THE TEXT

GOD CREATES THE WORLD

Read Genesis 1–3 each day this week before diving into the questions.

1. What is familiar to you in this text? What is new to you that you did not notice before?

2. Based on this text, what is a covenant? See the table below for the pieces of a covenant. This will help as we look at covenants throughout the following weeks.

The chart below was put together by two Bible scholars who were actually my first professors in seminary. Prior to taking their classes (Old Testament and Systematic Theology), I had never looked at the Old Testament through this lens. I did not look at it through any lens actually. But they both helped me situate myself within a cultural context in the ancient Near East during the time when the Bible was written.

Covenants and contracts were a normal part of the way of life in this time period. God comes to His creation in a way they can understand. He comes to His people in a way that is familiar to them, but then He makes it better. In the ancient Near East, the stronger party or gods could not be trusted. But God can. In His mercy, He gives them a language for understanding Him—a covenant. This helps us understand what God is doing in the covenants. He comes in the language of the ancient Near East to show them what He is like, and to bring them back to Him.

It's not necessarily easy to compare a contract with a covenant, largely because we don't typically deal in covenants today. But we do deal in contracts; think of buying a house, taking a job, and so on. A covenant has more skin in the game.³ For one thing, there is a moral aspect to a covenant in contrast to a contract, which is more of a legal agreement. Marriage in our contemporary Western culture, for example, is often considered a legal contract, but often people will call it a covenant to emphasize the permanence of the vows taken by the two people entering into it. The chart below helps contrast the two like this:⁴

| CATEGORY | CONTRACT | COVENANT |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| STRUCTURE: <i>How is it organized, and who are the parties involved?</i> | Transactional / list of witnesses | Speaker introduced first / blessings and curses |
| OCCASION: <i>What's the outcome of this? What's the driving force?</i> | Expected benefit | Desire for relationship |
| INITIATIVE: <i>Who acts first?</i> | Mutual agreement | Stronger party |
| ORIENTATION: <i>Who does this involve? People, or things/objects?</i> | Thing-oriented | Person-oriented |
| OBLIGATION: <i>What is the motivating factor?</i> | Performance | Loyalty |

As you can see by this chart, a covenant is more personal. It is rooted in relationship—and I think we could even go so far as to say it is rooted in love. With that in view, let's dive into the first covenant.

3. Based on these definitions, who takes the initiative in this covenant that we've just read? Who is the recipient?

4. There is a shift in Genesis 1:26 and following. What do you notice is different in these verses going forward?

5. What does God expect of humanity (vv. 28–30)?

6. What does God call His creation (v. 31)?

Scripture Memory, Genesis 1:26–28:

Then 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.”

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

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Let's Pray:

Lord, You are a good and gracious God who created us to bear Your image. You are the author of all creation. You fill the earth with every good thing. You spoke life into existence. Everything comes from Your good hand. We are Your creation. As we begin this study, help us to humble ourselves under Your authority over all things. In Christ's name, Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

OBSERVE THE TEXT

COVENANT EXPECTATIONS

Read Genesis 1–3.

1. God revisits His creation of humanity in Genesis 2. Look at verses 5–17.

How does this expand what you read in Genesis 1:26–27?

What is new here that wasn't in Genesis 1?

2. Covenants often have stipulations for obedience. What are the expectations here for Adam and Eve?

3. Sadly, the events of Genesis 3 come quickly in our Bibles after Genesis 1 and 2. Look at Genesis 3:1–7. Based on what you read in Genesis 2, what do Adam and Eve get wrong about God’s commands?

4. What happens to them immediately after they eat the fruit?

5. Read Genesis 1–3 in a different version. Do you notice anything different reading it now?

Scripture Memory, Genesis 1:26–28:

Hint: This time try listening to the verses on a Bible app or read the verses out loud. Another tip for memory is to write the verses each day, then try writing from memory.

Then 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.”

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

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Let’s Pray:

*Lord, You are a God who is holy and perfect. You created all things good, and You expect Your created beings to follow in Your goodness. We have sinned against You time and time again. Forgive us for the ways we doubt Your good purposes in our lives. Give us renewed resolve to obey today. In Christ’s name,
Amen.*

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

INTERPRET THE TEXT

COVENANT CONSEQUENCES

Read Genesis 1–3.

1. As God's covenant people, Adam and Eve had to obey God. To be God's representatives in the world, they had to listen to what He said. They failed to keep their end of the covenant agreement. Look at Genesis 3:14–19. What are the consequences for breaking the covenant?

What word is mentioned in verse 14 for the serpent that is not mentioned in the rest of the consequences?

2. We find two hopeful things mentioned even in the midst of the consequences.

Look at Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 3:20–21. What does God promise to do in verse 15?

In verse 20, what does Adam do?

What does God do in verse 21?

3. What do you think these promises mean?

Can you think of other places in Scripture where these promises come up again?

4. In your own words, how would you explain the consequences and promise?

Scripture Memory, Genesis 1:26–28:

Try writing Genesis 1:26–28 out from memory today.

Let's Pray:

Dear heavenly Father, You have not left us to ourselves. Thank You for giving us the hope of the promised seed. Thank You that sin was not the final word in our lives. Thank You that the penalty for our sins is not the final word in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

APPLY THE TEXT

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

Read Genesis 1–3.

1. All of us are descended from one man and one woman—Adam and Eve. What does Genesis 1:26–28 say about what it means to be created by God?

2. Look up Romans 3:23 and 5:12–14. What do these verses say about the impact of Adam’s sin on us?

3. Adam and Eve were created in God's image, but how did Satan distort this fact when he spoke to Eve in Genesis 3:5? How do we respond in this way too?

4. In your own words, write out where you find yourself in this story. How are you connected to Adam and Eve? How are you like them, and how have they affected you?

Scripture Memory, Genesis 1:26–28:

Fill in the blanks from memory.

Then God said, "Let _____, after our likeness. And _____ 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."

So _____, in _____; _____ he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "_____ and _____, and have _____ over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Prayer:

Write a prayer based on how you saw yourself in this story. Maybe it is a prayer of confession, a prayer of thanksgiving for how God has saved you, or any combination of those prayers.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

THE BETTER ADAM

WHERE IS CHRIST IN THE STORY?

Read Genesis 1–3.

One of my favorite modern hymns is “Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery” by Matt Boswell. In the song, Boswell writes about the first Adam and how his sin led to death. But he does not leave us there. He then points us to the One Paul calls the “second Adam.” He does what the first Adam could not do. He succeeds where the first Adam failed. He is the better Adam.

We end Week 1 with bad news. Adam and Eve were created by God, placed in a perfect garden home, lived in daily fellowship with God, and had no sin. Then it all changed. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, paradise was lost.

God’s original intent was to dwell among His people (Gen. 3:8). But God is also holy, so He cannot dwell in the presence of sinful people. Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden clouded by grief and shame. But the Bible keeps going. The story continues. Bad news is not the final news.

Within this sad ending lives a promise. Genesis 3:15 is what many scholars call the first gospel proclamation.

“I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

The New International Version packs an even more potent punch: “He [Eve’s offspring] will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

At first glance, Satan has won. He convinced Adam and Eve that following their own path was preferable to following God’s. Their sinful choices led to tragic consequences for themselves and all who came after them. The world was never to be the same.

But God is rich in mercy.

Three hopeful things emerge from this encounter.

First, God promises to deal with sin through the offspring of the woman. Adam responds in faith that God will do what He says. Satan might grasp at the heel of the offspring of the woman—and he will inflict damage. But ultimately the offspring of the woman will prevail. He will crush the enemy’s head once and for all.

Next, Adam responds in faith in Genesis 3:20 when he names his wife Eve, “the mother of all living.” God said her offspring would crush the head of the serpent, and Adam gives her a name that signifies he believes God.

Then, God clothes them with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). You see, they suddenly realized they were naked (a symbol of their shame over their sin), and God takes decisive action to cover their nakedness by the death of another living thing.

In all this, God the Creator acts on their behalf. He will not leave His created be-

ings to their own destructive devices. He cares too much. He loves too much. He's invested so much.

**We respond in faith,
believing that what
God says He will
accomplish, He will do.**

This “offspring” will come. But He's not just any offspring. He's the very Son of God (John 20:31). You see, it takes more than just a human to deal with the problem of sin. The Redeemer had to be human, but He also had to be perfect. Adam was our representative as the first human. But he also was our representative as a sinner. Just look at what Paul says about Adam and Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:21–28:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

The covering that God provided for Adam and Eve as they fled the garden was a foretaste of the covering all who trust in Jesus Christ receive by His perfect record in our place. The work Christ accomplished on the cross is the “head-crushing” work needed to bring us back into fellowship with God. Like Adam, we respond in faith, believing that what God says He will accomplish, He will do.

Christ is the perfect and better Adam. He is the Man who followed God's Word without fail. He is the God-man who can deal with our sin once and for all. The story ends with tragedy, but hope breaks through. Redemption is on the horizon.

Reflection:

How is Christ the better Adam? What does He do that Adam failed to do, and where in Scripture do you see this play out?

Scripture Memory, Genesis 1:26–28:

If possible, write out the entire passage for this week: Genesis 1:26–28.

Let's Pray:

*Dear Lord, what hope we have in Christ! You have not left us alone in our sin but sent Christ to do what Adam failed to do. You have not condemned us to die, but redeemed us by the second Adam's perfect obedience, sacrifice, and resurrection to new life. Give us continued faith to trust in Your good purposes that You have come to redeem what was lost. You will not leave Your creation in their sin. You have come to us and will come again. In Christ's name we pray, **Amen.***