

## **Chapter 2: The Covenants of Works and Grace: Do This and Live; Live and Do This**

### *Looking for the right destination*

We knew we had to get on the train, but my wife and I could not read Japanese and the Tokyo train station is... well, let's just say it is complex. We finally managed to flag down a man who looked at our tickets, took pity on us, and motioned with his hand to follow him quickly. We had no choice. He was holding our train tickets. We were in the wrong part of the station, and we had to run if we were going to catch our train. Winded and out of breath, we made it just in time. We sat down in our seats, and a few moments later the train began to move. We were on our way to see my cousin in Northern Japan, or so we thought. An American was walking through the train and seeing us she asked where we were going. After telling her, she informed us that the train disconnects and different sections of the train go in different directions. We were once again in the wrong place, soon to be headed in the wrong direction and to the wrong destination. We did finally make it, but it took a lot of work to get there.

Where are you going and how do you get there? If you don't know the answer to those questions, then you are bound to get lost. Genesis 1-3 actually hints at the answers to those questions. Genesis 1-3 is not only about our origin; it is also about our final destiny.

Where is Adam going and how does he get there? That question has to do with the covenant of works. The Westminster Assembly described the covenant of works this way:

The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>1</sup>

The Belgic Confession does something similar, calling the command that God gave to Adam, "the commandment of life."<sup>2</sup> The Westminster Confession has a footnote referencing Genesis 2:17. That verse is the point where God makes a covenant with Adam, "but of the Tree of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2.

<sup>2</sup> Belgic Confession Article 14.

Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Now then, when you compare Genesis 2:17 to the definition of the Westminster Confession there is something that might strike you as slightly odd. The Confession says that God was promising life to Adam, but in Genesis 2:17 it is a promise of death if he breaks this covenant.

How do you suppose that the Westminster Assembly arrived at this understanding? One way to reach this conclusion is to look at it from the opposite end of the spectrum. If breaking this covenant means death, then keeping this covenant means life. And if we go back to Genesis 2:9 we do have a reference to the Tree of Life. Did Adam know about the Tree of Life? Evidently he did because when he was expelled from the garden, God stationed the cherubim at the entrance of the garden to keep Adam from returning and eating from the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22).

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Belgic Confession are highlighting the positive reward that is implicit in Genesis 2. There is a reward for Adam if he will do what God commands. This shouldn't come as a surprise since it is a theme found in many places in the Bible:

<sup>1</sup>And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup>And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. (Deut. 28:1-2)

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord. (Lev. 18:5)

Speaking of the law, David writes, “Moreover, by them is your servant warned; *in keeping them there is great reward*” (Ps. 19:11; 58:11). The rich young ruler asked Jesus, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. *If you would enter life, keep the commandments*” (Matt. 19:16-17; emphasis mine). So also Paul, “For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that *the person who does the commandments shall live by them*” (Rom. 10:5).

When we consider the covenant made with Adam in Genesis 2:17, there is something greater in store for Adam if only he would remain faithful to God by keeping the commandment. Adam was a living being (Gen. 2:7), but there was a greater kind of life that he had yet to experience. Strictly speaking, the reward wasn't life, because Adam already had life and death was only introduced when he sinned. His

reward wasn't to receive a relationship with God, because he already had that too. His reward was not simply to have a great marriage and well behaved, sinless kids, to which parents say, "GLORY!" The life promised to Adam was something greater than the life he possessed before the fall. The older theologians called it eternal life. It would have been an eternal, unchangeable life.

We need to analyze some of the features and potential outcomes for Adam and the human race in the covenant of works. We will consider what the storyline would have looked like had Adam passed the test. Once we have done that, we will take up the fall and the covenant of grace.

I am going to lay out six points for the covenant of works, but before we get to them, I need to put my presupposition on the table. I am assuming that when Adam sinned, God did not scrap the destiny that he had offered to Adam in the covenant of works. Jesus takes believers to the very place that Adam could have gone. The reward that the Last Adam (Rom. 5:12ff., 1 Cor. 15:45) earns for his people is not something less than the wages the First Adam would have earned for himself and his descendants after him. *The destiny is the same; what changes is the way in which Adam and his elect offspring get there.* By reading the Bible this way, we can carefully use later scriptural passages as lenses to help us see more clearly the eschatology (the heavenly goal) of Genesis 1-3.

Having stated this presupposition, here are the six points that take us from Adam's origin to Adam's destiny by way of the covenant of works.

1. God created a sanctuary called the garden of Eden. It was God's holy temple, and he put Adam in it.
2. God then entered into a covenant with Adam. Adam must not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
3. If Adam would have continued in obedience, he would have been sealed in his righteousness and holiness, and there would not have been any chance that he or any of his descendants would have fallen into sin.
4. Adam and Eve would have gone on to have children, and gradually the whole earth would have been filled with God's holy, righteous image.
5. Adam and Eve and their growing family would have mirrored God in their work by subduing and cultivating the earth until it became one giant Garden sanctuary.

6. At the end of this joyful work, God would consummate his creation, and the human race would experience glorification.

On this reading, there is a lot at stake, isn't there? One violation of the one command came with heavy consequences, but as we will see, God had a remedy that was ready and waiting. Let's go through the points.

*1. God created a sanctuary called the garden of Eden. It was God's holy temple, and he put Adam in it.*

Why call the garden of Eden a sanctuary or temple? You probably don't look at your garden as a sanctuary, and after gardening you probably don't look at the dirt under your fingernails as evidence of religious activities. Be that as it may, there are many good reasons for understanding the place of Adam's dwelling as an earthly shadow of a heavenly sanctuary.<sup>3</sup>

*Solomon's temple was garden-like.* In Genesis 2:8 we are told that God planted a garden. When Solomon built the temple, he used images that one would expect to find in a garden. The temple was adorned with gourds and open flowers (1 Ki. 6:18). The walls of the temple had engravings of palm trees and open flowers (6:29). The pillars of the temple had two rows of 200 pomegranates at the top of them (7:18-20). Solomon also set up ten lampstands before the inner sanctuary that resembled a small orchard of blossoming trees (7:49).<sup>4</sup>

*Life-giving river.* In Genesis 2:10-14 a river flows from Eden through the garden and spreads out in different directions to water the earth. Many years later, the prophet Ezekiel is given a vision of the future

---

<sup>3</sup> For a massive sweep of biblical and extra-biblical evidence readers should consult Greg Beale's informative book, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004). Other fine treatments are G. J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404. J.H. Walton in the *IVP Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 202-05. M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton, MA: self published, 1993), 28-39.

<sup>4</sup> Beale, *Temple*, 72.

temple of God. He sees a river of water gushing from under the temple, and from there it spreads out and waters the earth (Ezek. 47). When the temple's river reaches the sea, the water becomes fresh (47:9).

Everything lives where this river goes. In the last book of the Bible, the final temple descends out of heaven having a river of the water of life flowing from the throne, and on the sides of the river is the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:1-3).

*Cherubim.* In Genesis 3:24, God stationed the cherubim to keep Adam out of the garden of Eden. The entrance to the inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple is described as follows,

For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided. He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of *cherubim*, *palm trees*, and *open flowers*. He overlaid them with gold and spread gold on the *cherubim* and on the palm trees. (1 Ki. 6:31-32; emphasis mine).

It is hardly coincidental that the garden of Eden is blocked by cherubim and on the door to the inner sanctuary of Israel's temple, one was confronted with the cherubim amidst trees and open flowers. Solomon was making a connection between the garden of Eden and the Jerusalem temple. Fruit trees, flowers, life-giving rivers, and cherubim; these things are found in the temple of Solomon, the temples seen by the prophets, and the garden of Eden, causing a number of scholars to conclude that the garden of Eden is the first temple in the Bible. And, of course, when people built temples, they put the image of their god in that temple. What does God put in this first garden temple? He puts his image in it, Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27).

*Adam as priest.* Now if the garden of Eden has the feel of a temple, could it also be that Adam is the first priest? Look with me at Genesis 2:15. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."

It is thought by a number of Old Testament scholars that the words *to work*... and *keep*...<sup>5</sup> have a double meaning. On the one hand they describe the work of farming and agriculture. And that makes sense if Adam is going to be placed in a garden. Greg Beale has shown that there is a religious usage of these words. When these two Hebrew words are found in the Bible, they either refer to Israelites serving God and keeping his word, or they describe the function of the priest who keeps and guards the tabernacle.

In Numbers 8:24-27, Moses outlines the duties of the priests:

---

<sup>5</sup> *'ābad* and *shāmar*.

<sup>24</sup> This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service <sup>25</sup> of the tent of meeting. And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more. They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, <sup>26</sup> but they shall do no service. <sup>27</sup> Thus shall you do to the Levites in assigning their duties.”<sup>6</sup>

The older priests are to *keep guard* while the younger priests *serve* in God’s tabernacle. The temple was to be kept holy to the Lord. We know that Adam’s life was to be lived in worship and service to God, but what would Adam need to be on his guard about? That is answered in Genesis 3. The unholy serpent comes in to God’s temple to tempt Adam and Eve.

*2. God then entered into a covenant with Adam. Adam must not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.*

In Genesis 2:17 the covenant of works is made with Adam. God commands Adam not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil lest he die. From Genesis 2:17 onward, Adam is in this solemn, binding relationship with God. This brings us to our third point .

*3. If Adam would have passed the test, he would have been sealed in his righteousness and holiness, and there would not have been any chance that he or any of his descendants would have fallen into sin.*

When God entered into this covenant with Adam, Adam had the ability to sin and not to sin. If he would have passed the test, he would have been sealed in his original righteousness and holiness and would not have been able to sin. This was not the first of a battery of tests for Adam. He was given one test, concerning one tree, and had he obeyed, life without the possibility of death would have been his.

If you think about it, this is really the comfort of eternal life in the new heavens and earth. There is absolutely no possibility of pain, sickness, suffering, and death in the eternal state. We do not receive a happy, sinless existence that can be lost. If that was the case, I would most certainly lose it! When Jesus passed the test for his people, we are guaranteed that in the life to come we will not be susceptible to sin and the curse. So also for Adam; he would have gone from being able to sin, to being unable to sin. And from this point onward, the blessings of the covenant would have been secured.

---

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Num. 3:7-8; 18:5-6; 2 Ki. 12:9; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14.

*4. Adam and Eve would have gone on to have children, and gradually the whole earth would have been filled with God's holy, righteous image.*

5. Adam and Eve and their growing family would have mirrored God in their work by subduing and cultivating the earth until it became one giant Garden sanctuary.

Points four through five really go together. Adam and Eve are not designed to live alone. They were not created to just stay in one little spot on planet earth. Genesis 1:28 makes that clear,

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.

We shouldn't assume that had Adam passed the test, he would have gone straight to heaven. There is a world that must first be filled with God's image and that glorious work was assigned to Adam and Eve. If Adam would have been immediately glorified, he would not have been able to populate the earth. When the Sadducees asked Jesus the question about the woman who had all of those husbands, "whose wife would she be in the age to come?" Jesus said to them that in that eternal age of glory, there will be no marrying for we will be like the angels (Matt. 22:30). This means that filling the earth must come first before final glorification. The Genesis 1 purpose of marrying serves a greater end and a greater joy than the union of husband and wife. The purpose of marriage is for the spread of the image of God. That is why it is given.

*6. At the end of this joyful work, God would consummate his creation, and the human race would experience glorification.*

As wonderful as life would have been on earth, there was something far better for Adam and his descendants than the lives they were living. Adam and all of his descendants would have enjoyed a greater life, a life that Paul describes as a glorified existence in a glorified body.<sup>7</sup>

Paul talks about these glorified bodies in 1 Corinthians 15. It is very important that we see the particular point of comparison that he is making between Adam and Christ. He is not comparing Adam the sinner with Jesus the righteous. He does make that contrast in Romans 5, but

---

<sup>7</sup> Here I am following Greg Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 43-45.

that is not the point of comparison in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul is comparing Adam before the fall with Jesus after the resurrection. The immortal, spiritual body is what we have to look forward to as sinners, and it was also what Adam had to look forward to had he remained sinless.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15:44)

Now you might think that the natural body is the sinful body. But God did not give Adam a natural body that was sinful. Death is unnatural. His natural body became sinful. Notice the citation in the next verse:

<sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. (1 Cor. 15:45-47)

Paul is citing Genesis 2:7, not Genesis 3:19. Adam receives a natural body first. The life promised to Adam in the covenant of works was the reward of a spiritual body. On this reading, it is difficult to conclude that the spiritual body promised to us is something entirely different than the life that was promised to Adam. In 1 Corinthians 15, the contrast between Adam and Christ is the contrast between two sinless people. “The first man Adam” would have received a spiritual body that could never perish.

### *Summary*

To put it plainly, there was a progression to an even greater glory for Adam. For keeping the covenant of works, he would have been kept free from future sin, suffering, sorrow, and death. He would have gone about his mandate to have children and take dominion of the earth with joy. When that work was completed, his natural body would have been transformed into a spiritual body. All of this was ahead for Adam.

Would there be any changes for the earth? There is at least one thing that the earth would have enjoyed after Adam and his descendants had finished filling it. The crowning reward of Adam and his children’s work would be God himself descending to earth and dwelling among them. John describes this in Revelation 21:1-3.

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

<sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

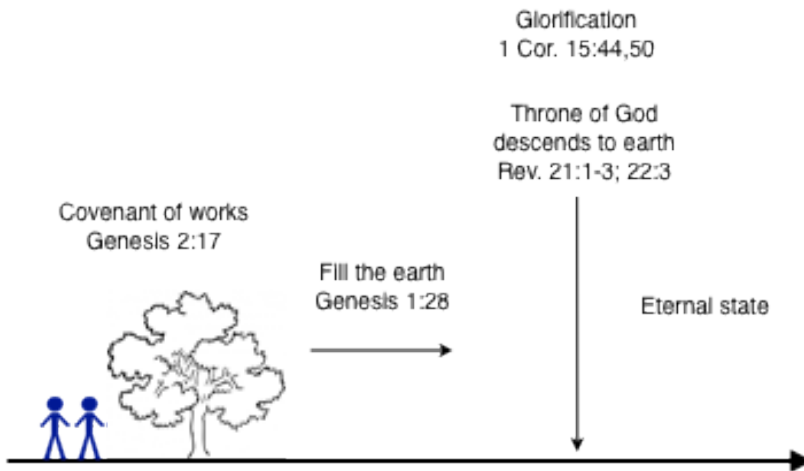


“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

The reward for Adam’s obedience was the Lord coming down to earth to take up his eternal residence in the midst of his people in an unfallen world. In Revelation 21, John sees what will happen after the curse has been removed. Because sin has been atoned for and righteousness has been secured, God will dwell among his people face to face. Now, when we look at chapter 22, we find the River of Life and the Tree of Life in the new heavens and earth. And in v. 3 there is something even more spectacular:

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the *throne of God* and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.” (emphasis mine)

Now a question, where is God’s throne right now? In heaven. Where was God’s throne when he created the earth? In heaven. The garden of Eden, the tabernacle, and the temples of Israel were earthly copies of the heavenly temple (Heb. 8:5). And John sees the temple of God coming down, and God’s throne will be upon the earth forever! That is the destiny and goal for Adam and his descendants in the covenant of works.



The Sovereign Lord sets the terms for the covenant of works, “do not eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or you will die.” The sovereign Lord offers the reward for obedience in the covenant of works. You will have great joy and pleasure filling the earth with

people and making the earth a dwelling place for you and your family. When you are finished, I will give you a glorified body, and my throne will descend from heaven and be placed among you in a world-encompassing paradise completely walled off from any possibility of sin and curse. God did not spell all these things out for Adam in so many words,<sup>8</sup> but the seed is here in Genesis 2. The signs of the Sabbath rest, the garden sanctuary, and the Tree of Life are all signs to Adam of God's pledge to bring him into a greater enjoyment of a greater glory.

Even though Adam failed to get us there, God had already appointed a second Adam who would not only atone for our sins, but this second Adam will bring his elect people to the place where Adam would have brought the human race. Christ Jesus took upon himself the obligations of the covenant of works on behalf of his people and his time of testing was far more difficult and painful as it culminated in the cross.<sup>9</sup> And I remind you that everything in this covenant that God made with Adam was calculated for Adam's success. Satan had the more difficult job because Adam was created completely holy and righteous. He had an unfallen mind that knew the will of God, and he had an unfallen nature that could do the will of God. Adam was created in the image of God; he loved God and had fellowship with God. Tragically, in just one moment, he threw it all away.

<sup>1</sup> Now 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'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but 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.'" <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be

---

<sup>8</sup> "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency..." (Belgic Confession Article 14)

<sup>9</sup> What do you understand by the word "suffered"? That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race. This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, he might set us free, body and soul, from eternal condemnation, and gain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life. (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 15, Q/A 37)

like God, knowing good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> 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. (Gen. 3:1-6)

### *The serpent’s subtlety*

The earth had been formed (Gen. 1), the garden of Eden prepared (Gen. 2), and upon creating man the Lord places him in his garden sanctuary and establishes his covenant with him (Gen. 2:15-17). It wouldn’t take long for Adam’s loyalty to the covenant to be tested. Moses tells us that the serpent is “more crafty.” In what ways? Well there are several signs of his skill.

1. He goes to Eve not Adam, subtly usurping Adam’s authority.
2. He comes twisting God’s command with a question. “Did God say you can’t eat from any trees?” As if he really cared. Oh Eve, word has just reached my ear. Is it true Eve? Is it true that God won’t allow you to eat any of the fruit in this garden? What a pity to be under such a tyrant.
3. The serpent doesn’t actually ever say, “Eat the fruit.” He gets her to do what he wants without telling her to do it.<sup>10</sup>
4. Satan engages the woman by choosing his words carefully. In Genesis 2 there was a specific repetition of words:

V. 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground...  
 V. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden... V. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree... V. 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden... 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, V. 18 Then the Lord God said... V. 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field... V. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, V. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man...<sup>11</sup>

When God revealed himself to Moses, he declared that he will be known by his covenant name, THE LORD (Ex. 6:2-4). When God enters into the covenant with Adam his covenant name is used; he is LORD. Now consider the dialogue between the woman and serpent in chapter 3.

<sup>1</sup> ...“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat

---

<sup>10</sup> I owe this observation to Dr. Iain Duguid who made this observation in a course on Biblical Hebrew at Westminster Seminary in California.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 1: Genesis 1-15* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 73.

of the fruit of the trees in the garden,<sup>3</sup> but 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.’<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ (Gen. 3:1b-5)

The covenant name of God drops out and once they eat the fruit, it resumes, ‘And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...’ (3:8). The covenant Lord is coming to pronounce judgment.

### *Adam’s dying*

The Lord said, ‘for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). Though the dying process began slowly, the spiritual death happened immediately. Looking at Genesis 3 do you see any signs of spiritual death?

1. Adam and Eve can’t stand the sight of each other. They try to cover up the image of God. (3:7)
2. They hide from God. (3:8)
3. Adam blames God and ‘the woman.’ ‘*The woman that you gave to me...*’ Translation, ‘If you would not have given me this woman, we wouldn’t be in this mess.’ (3:12)
4. Eve blames the serpent—she doesn’t say, ‘I wanted to be like you, I wanted your authority and power.’ She does own that she was deceived but nothing is mentioned of her adding to God’s commandment (3:3) or her desire to be in the place of God.
5. Gen. 3:24 suggests that given the opportunity, Adam would have attempted to steal from God.

One violation of one covenant obligation and Adam and the world are ruined. What’s wrong with the world? Fortunately the answer was given in 2008.

A psychologist found he could predict children’s prospects by testing whether they could resist eating a marshmallow... The psychologist will be scanning their brains to find neurological roots of temptation. The ‘marshmallow test’ one of the world’s simplest and most successful behaviors experiments...

proved conclusively that the longer a 4 year old child was able to wait before taking the marshmallow, the better were his or her chances of a happy and successful life.<sup>12</sup>

The article goes on to argue that children who grabbed the marshmallow turned into teenagers who lacked self-esteem and experienced difficult relationships with peers. Those who waited turned out to be more socially competent, self-assertive, and academically successful.

I think a better answer to the problem of the world was given in another newspaper article many years ago. A newspaper invited several eminent authors to write essays on the theme, “What is Wrong with the World?” Here’s how one author responded.

Dear Sirs,

I am.

Sincerely yours,

G. K. Chesterton

I have become the problem because Adam represented me when God made a covenant with him. I am guilty of Adam’s offense. In Adam I sinned, and in Adam I died (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15:22). This is the reason why things go wrong in the world.

Adam and Eve have died spiritually. What have they lost? They have doomed themselves to death. They have doomed their children to the same fate. (They will learn how fragile their sad lives are going to be when Cain decides to kill his brother.) They cannot dwell in God’s presence. The land is under a curse, and the goal of a glorified existence is shattered. That is a lot of damage! But here in Genesis 3, we are introduced to another covenant, the covenant of grace.<sup>13</sup>

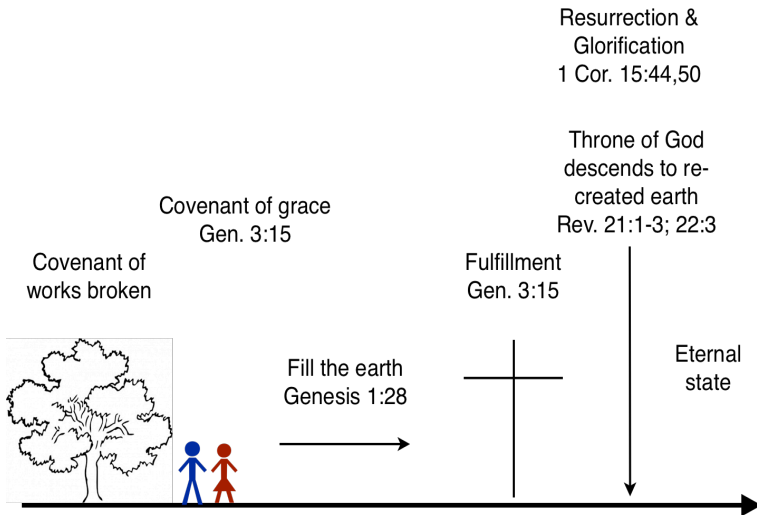
The Lord said, “Because you have done this (speaking to the serpent), cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life” (Gen. 3:14). This concept of licking the dust is just a way of saying that

<sup>12</sup> Sunday Times, November 2, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? God doth not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the covenant of works; but of his mere love and mercy delivereth his elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace. (Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 30)

someone has been defeated. It means that they have been put down; that the foot has been placed upon the neck. But that is not quite what God says here. He does not say that the serpent will lick the dust. What does He say? He will eat it! The dust is the remains of Adam's decayed body, "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (3:19). Even before the gospel is announced, Satan learned that though Adam and Eve have fallen into death, God was going to make him eat defeat. God would send the seed of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Adam would return to the dust, and the Lord would force the dust down Satan's throat. Satan was forced to ground on his belly; Adam would be raised from the dead on the last day.

Genesis 3:15 is the mother promise of the entire Bible. This is where we see the relationship between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works so clearly. In order for there to be a covenant of grace, Christ must undertake the covenant of works and perfectly obey his Father. He must come and bruise the head of the serpent and in turn experience the painful bruising of his heel. Both take place at the cross and the empty tomb.



The initiative is entirely God's doing. Adam and Eve have sided with the devil. Here is why we believe in sovereign grace and election.<sup>14</sup> Note

<sup>14</sup> We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: merciful, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He in His eternal and

those words carefully, “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” Classic Arminianism teaches that God regenerates people once they exercise their free will to believe. This passage paints a very different picture, showing that regeneration *precedes* faith. When the first need of salvation is revealed, a sovereign, irresistible grace is given. Regeneration and faith are not things that Adam, Eve, or anyone of us can produce. Salvation, right from the very beginning and all the way to the end, is entirely the work of God.

God tells the serpent that he will be judged and God will turn his peoples’ hearts back to himself. Even though they have died spiritually and will die physically, he is guaranteeing the deliverer will come and defeat the prince of death. The question is, did Adam and Eve believe this promise? Did God regenerate them and give them faith to believe?

The biblical data points in this direction. “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20). You would have thought that Adam, being ornery and cantankerous like he was just a few verses ago, would have named his wife “Death.” He names her “Eve,” which means “Life-giving.” Now where did he get that idea? He got it by the promise of the gospel in verse 15. He understood that Eve was going to bring forth someone who would undo the mess that he had made. So he calls her “Life-giving.” He heard the promise, and so he makes his declaration of faith.

### *The Gospel*

Adam hears the condemnation of God, he has broken the law. He hears the judgment of God against his sin; he hears about the offspring of the woman who will defeat the serpent; he hears that God will turn his heart away from the serpent and to God, so he names his wife “Life” rather than “Death.” And what does v. 21 go on to say? “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” That sounds like the earliest form of the gospel to me. We hear God’s law; we are convicted that we have broken it; we hear that God has sent Christ to defeat Satan; and God regenerates us. In turn we believe and cling to our Lord’s gracious promises and are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

The seeds of the Gospel of grace are sown in Genesis 3:1. Everything that we see unfolding in the Bible is subservient to this sovereign decree.

---

unchangeable counsel of mere goodness has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works; just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves. (Belgic Confession, Article 16)

That is why “offspring” is so important to the book of Genesis. In Genesis, Moses traces out where this offspring is coming from and to whom this offspring will be given. The New Testament shows us that this offspring is Jesus (Matt. 1:1)!

How does Jesus conquer? By living a holy and righteous life and resisting the temptations of the devil. No sooner is Jesus identified as the Messiah, then he is driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Satan comes to him after his forty-day fast and tempts him to swerve from the path of obedience by turning a stone into bread. The wicked tempter comes to Jesus as he did to Eve, pretending to be a friend. Jesus must have looked hungry. The serpent hissed, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (Matt 4:2). This is no way for a father to treat his beloved son. Why not turn the stone into bread? You gave Israel manna in the wilderness, you need to care for yourself now and stop thinking about others. Jesus resists. and Satan comes at him again:

“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down.  
For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” (Matt.  
4:6)

They say that you are the Messiah. The Anointed One, thought to be more powerful than all the prophets of old. Since the angels are charged with your care, why not jump off of the temple and let everyone know that the wait is over?

Once more the devil comes at him with a frontal attack. After showing him all the kingdoms of the world, he offers a proposal, “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me” (v. 9). Let’s not beat around the bush any longer. We both know that God has called you to a very difficult task. You are king. Kings have kingdoms, so I’ll make you a deal. You can avoid all the pain and toil that your father, the king has for you. You need only bow down and worship me. You don’t need to settle for being king of the Jews, I will give you all the nations of the world. All those nations promised to Abraham, I offer to you. Just one easy little act of worship, and all that sacrificial obedience can be avoided.

Jesus looks the worthless serpent in the face and said, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve”” (Matt. 4:10). “Him only shall you serve.” It



was a service that Jesus willingly underwent, living faithfully in covenant with God. There was a righteousness to perform and a payment to be made for the violation of the covenant. All was laid upon Jesus as he went to the cross to open the way to the Tree of Life.

There are two trees, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. In 1 Peter 2:24 we find these words, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree,…” Why the tree? Why “tree” instead of cross? Peter reminds us that Christ overturned what Adam did. God forbids Adam and Eve to eat of a tree. God requires that Christ takes their place upon a tree. If I can paraphrase the words of A. W. Pink:<sup>15</sup> God commands Adam and Eve not to eat, but because of Christ we are commanded to eat of the fruits of Christ’s labor upon the tree. Satan tries to get Adam to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and now he tries to prevent people from eating and drinking of the fruit of Christ’s suffering upon the tree which is the way to eternal life in a glorified body, on a consummated new heavens and earth, with God’s throne in his people’s midst, forever.

### Study Questions:

1. What was promised to Adam?
2. What reasons are given for viewing the garden of Eden as an earthly temple?
3. What would have happened if Adam passed the test?
4. What is the relationship between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace?
5. Describe the gospel of Genesis 3.
6. How do these two covenants show us Christ?

---

<sup>15</sup> A. W. Pink, *Genesis* (Chicago: Moody; 1922), 27-32.