

Fall, Judgment & Covenant

In Psalm 97, we find a number of things that are relevant to our discussion today. I will read verses 1-6:

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad;
 let the distant shores rejoice.
 Clouds and thick darkness surround him;
 righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
 Fire goes before him
 and consumes his foes on every side.
 His lightning lights up the world:
 the earth sees and trembles.
 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
 before the Lord of all the earth.
 The heavens proclaim His righteousness,
 and all the people see His glory.

This passage clearly speaks about God's sovereign lordship, the way He controls all aspects and elements in nature.

Many people have wondered and argued about the extent of the flood. There are those who say (and you can read this in the notes of the NIV Study Bible) that the flood's extent was limited to the then-known world. Peter, however, did not seem to think in this way. I will read from 2 Peter 3:3-7:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

As I said, Peter has no qualms about reminding us about the universal catastrophe that came by the word of God. He tells us that as God created, so He brought a flood, and so He will bring in final judgment. I think this New Testament commentary is a very important fact to keep in mind. Let us pray.

Lord, our God, You have performed awesome deeds in times past. You created this world. You set it in order. You have continued to maintain it, in spite of the judgments You sent because of disobedience. You have been a faithful God, righteous and just, gracious and merciful. Help us to appreciate this as we consider how You, the King of all creation, continue to be the Lord of it all, the One who guides and directs everything—including us—as part of this world that You have made. Bless us here together for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Before we begin our lecture on the fall of humanity, I want to finish the discussion we began in the last lecture on the covenant of creation. You may recall that there is some scholarly debate over whether it is appropriate to use the term "covenant of creation." Some biblical references—notably Hosea 6:7, Jeremiah 23, and Genesis 6:18—are used by scholars like Dumbrell and Robertson to argue for a covenant of creation. Other scholars, like John Murray or my good friend the late Anthony Hoekema, do not wish to use the phrase "covenant of creation." Hoekema and Murray, rather than speaking of a

covenant of creation, speak of an Adamic administration. This discussion continues, at least in part, because people do not fully understand what is meant by the term “covenant.” We might ask whether the term itself needs to be present in a text in order for the concept to be there.

We might take the Davidic covenant as an example. The term “covenant” does not appear in 2 Samuel 7, but later, in 2 Samuel 23, when David is reflecting on what God has said and done, he says that God made a covenant with him. Isaiah also speaks of the covenant God made with David in Isaiah 55:3, although the term is not used when Nathan, the prophet of God, speaks to David directly in 2 Samuel 7. By comparison, some people argue that we have a covenant in Genesis 1 and 2, even though the word “covenant” is not present in the text.

If indeed we can speak of a covenant of creation, there are a number of aspects of the covenant that we see in the acts and setting of creation. I want to stress that regardless of whether we use the word “covenant” or not, we must speak of God’s activity as being unilateral, without conditions. God counseled within the Godhead, saying “let us make man,” when He created man and woman. There is nothing bilateral about God’s creation activity. It is strictly unilateral and it is not in any way conditional. God didn’t place conditions on anyone when He created, when He set up the universe. This raised a question about the fact that God did give Adam and Eve a certain conditional framework when He pronounced the probation. We will deal with this in a moment.

I want to point out, as Robertson does at quite some length in his book *The Christ of the Covenants*, that in the covenant of creation there are three specific mandates, which I like to speak of as three specific relationships. The first, which is very commonly recognized, is the cultural mandate. After God created Adam and Eve in His own image to be mediators between God and creation, He came to them and commanded them to represent Him in the cosmos. The cultural mandate means that human beings ought to have dominion over the creation by guarding it, developing it, beautifying it, and ruling over it.

We read in Genesis 4 that the Canaanites did exactly that. After they built the city, Cain’s offspring got to work in the areas of metallurgy, music, industry, farming, raising livestock, and so forth. The cultural mandate extends to every area of life—politics, labor, commerce, the arts, recreation, technology, industry. There is to be no separation of any aspect of life from our relationship with God. We represent God in the totality of life.

The second mandate God gave was the social mandate. God made humanity male and female and He said, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth.” And how were they to do that? The man was to leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, so that the two would become one flesh. God’s design was that the man and the woman would come together as one flesh at the very heart of creation and that they would produce offspring. I have eight children of my own and 26 grandchildren so far—I trust that I’m doing my part in obeying the social mandate.

Jesus acknowledges the social mandate in Matthew 19, when He says that from the very beginning of creation, God intended man and woman to be one flesh and that they were to be bound for life, never to be separated. The social mandate comes to expression particularly in the family—father, mother, children—and in the greater family, the extended family of the community. Because of this, anyone who recognizes that the Bible places emphasis on covenant living will devote attention to family life and community life. This is why we often speak of the church as a covenant community, because we are all related to one another not just in a spiritual sense, but by the common bond we share as persons made in the image of God. We are all to reflect Him, but at the heart of it all, to carry out the social mandate is to obey God and if we carry out that mandate, God’s blessing is assured us. Poor David, when he started

exceeding the bounds of what God had established and became involved in polygamous marriages, certainly had a number of problems in his family, didn't he? His first three or four sons killed each other.

Now, I also want to point out that if there is something wrong in this area of life, it is very difficult to maintain a good cosmic relationship and obey and to live fruitfully. One of my uncles, who was a church elder for years, when he heard I was going to study for the ministry, said to me, "Gerard, get ready to deal with two major areas that cause a great deal of trouble: money and sex. Few things cause as much strife between members of families—husband and wife, parents and children—as money. The one-flesh concept, too, causes any number of problems. Get ready to deal with those two areas." I received this advice from my uncle, and I pass it on to you men and women who are preparing to enter the ministry, whether as pastors or teachers or in some other area. At the present time, I have been asked to be involved in a tragic situation where these two things, sex and money, are breaking up a marriage of 40 years. It began as a problem with money and developed into a problem with the one-flesh union. That has a tremendous effect on the third relationship, the fellowship relationship. It is not possible to be at peace with God if you are not at peace with your mate or if you are a criminal out in the world. These three relationships are so intricately related to each other.

We have begun to touch on the third mandate or relationship, the relationship of the person to God. Unlike the cultural mandate and the social mandate, this one is not stated explicitly. However, we know that life at its richest and fullest is this relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, family and the universe, and at the heart of it all is a living relationship with the triune God. This is only possible when the Holy Spirit has entered our lives and we are renewed, reborn creatures.

Vos has pointed out that there are four aspects of the covenant in the relationship God establishes with humanity. On page 27 and following of *Biblical Theology*, Vos refers particularly to what some people might call the covenant of works. First, God came to Adam and Eve and spoke of life. We might ask how this living between God and man was to continue. Next, God makes reference to the two trees. God commanded them not to touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God did not give Adam and Eve an option or a choice, but rather He commanded wholehearted obedience. The tree of life, however, was available to them, which meant a continuation of life. As Vos beautifully explains, that tree is sacramental. Third, Vos points out there is the possibility of temptation and sin. Temptation is part of the fellowshiping mandate; temptations to depart from a right relationship with God come from both the social area and the cosmic cultural area.

Finally, Vos speaks also of the possibility of death and dissolution. Some evangelical scholars are suggesting that there was death before the fall. I do not believe that there was death in the sense of bloodshed before the fall, but we ought to be careful of becoming too absolutist in saying that there was no death before the fall. For example, when Adam and Eve ate plants, the plants did not remain alive as they chewed them and digested them. Trees went through cycles. The blossoms had to die and disappear in order for the fruit to develop. The fruit had to ripen in order to have seed. We often use the language of death to describe the end of a season. This process existed from the beginning of creation, but I do not believe that death in the sense of bloodshed was part of the original order of nature.

Not only were there stipulations, but there were promises as well. Promises are always part of a covenant. There was the promise of life, and implicit in this promise was the promise of all kinds of blessings. There was no explicit reference to a curse in Genesis 2, but the passage does speak of death. It also refers to the possibility of a curse: death coming as a result of eating. We might ask if there were any witnesses to the covenant. Interestingly, the covenantal passages of Deuteronomy 30:18 and Micah

1:2, call heaven and earth to be witnesses of the covenant. Finally, continuity is implied in Genesis 2, but not explicitly stated. To conclude our discussion of whether there is a covenant of creation, I will say that the basic elements of the covenant are present in germinal form.

Let us move on to our topic for today, the story of the fall. We find this in Genesis 3, 4 and 5. The setting of this story is that Adam and Eve are in a place of nobility. Meredith Kline has called paradise the palace of Adam and Eve. God had made Adam and Eve vice-regents of His world and placed them right at the heart of His cosmic creation. In this palatial garden they had access to everything they needed—an abundance of gold and other minerals, water, and every other resource. Into this setting Satan entered, having incarnated himself in the serpent in order to deceive Adam and Eve. Because of this, the serpent and Satan are very difficult to distinguish. God did not have a problem with that, but Adam and Eve did.

Who was Satan? Books have been written on that in Dutch, in German, maybe in Asian languages also. The Western world often scoffs at the idea of the presence of Satan and his demons in the world, but the Eastern world takes this idea more seriously. Having spent some time in the East, I can testify to the fact that demons are still as active today as they were in Jesus' time, although in a different way. They know how to choose their settings and they still know how to work their diabolical schemes.

I believe that Satan was one of the three great archangels: Gabriel was the great messenger, Michael was the great commander of God's armies, and Lucifer, the light-bearer, was the great administrator. I believe—and this is speculation, but I truly believe this—that Satan was envious that God had made Adam and Eve his vice-regents. He wanted that position at the head of the creation as the mediator between God and the whole cosmos. Envy and pride tore at Satan, although I cannot even speculate about how that was possible in the angelic world. Satan came to Adam and Eve, the vice-regents, and sought to establish a relationship with them that would break their relationship with God. I believe that Satan's thinking went something like this: Adam and Eve have been given the position of vice-regent by God and God does not change, so I can get the control of the universe by getting Adam and Eve under me. They will become my vice-regents, my representatives, and my reflectors. Today we see many people reflecting the devil in every area of life, even to the point that we are confronted with Satanic worship—a gross distortion of the three mandates or relationships. People fellowship with the devil, obey him in the social setting, and carry out his diabolical schemes in the world. Satan did not just want to have a little party with Adam and Eve. He wanted the entire cosmos. He wanted his own empire, and he was able through the disobedience of Adam and Eve to set up a parasitic kingdom within the cosmos God had created. If God did not maintain the universe, Satan could do nothing. Satan depends on God. Satan needs God, because God is the only one who can sovereignly uphold the cosmic kingdom.

The tactic that Satan used was a clever little conversation where he tried to cast doubt simply by asking a few questions. When I was at the University of Melbourne, I knew a man who claimed to be a Quaker, but who could no longer accept the basic evangelical tenants of the Quaker faith. He tried to undermine my own faith just by asking little questions. "Can you imagine anybody being so stupid as to believe that you can be saved by blood? Isn't that gory? Think about it." This took place in a public university classroom—doubts, suggestions, diabolical schemes. The devil is still at work.

After Satan had asked his questions, then the great deviation took place. Some theologians and scholars and commentators don't like the word "fall." When a child falls, that is not necessarily a sin, although it may be an evidence of weakness. When the child becomes devious, that is evil. The fall of humanity was not so much a fall but rather a deviation. Adam and Eve were disobedient. They departed from God. And after Satan carried out his tactic, Adam and Eve deviated tragically from God's will for them. God

created them in His image and gave them freedom and responsibility. He had not given them an outright choice, but the possibility of deviating and becoming rebellious was there. By their disobedience they abdicated their God-given position as royal servants of God. They abdicated their cosmic throne, their family throne, and their direct access to the throne of God.

And then comes the *proto-evangelion*. The term is spelled three different ways in different commentaries and theologies, but it means the first gospel message. It is important that God is the one who announces it. God takes the initiative. God comes seeking man and woman. God calls, “Adam, where are you?” God comes and He brings Satan into the setting also as He addresses Adam and Eve and Satan. He maintains His sovereign control. God gives the *proto-evangelion* in the setting of His sovereign exercise of authority over the abdicated vice-regents and over the rebellious angelic administrator. God calls them all to account in the palatial garden. He pronounces curses. He pronounces an absolute curse upon Satan. In Hebrew the verb is *arar*, and in the passive when it says “you be cursed,” it is *arur*, long “u,” *arur*. To be cursed is to be placed in a bondage, to be placed under restraints, to be tied down. When God covenants, He binds His people in love. When He curses, He binds them under His wrath. The Hebrew word *arar* means “to bind.” That is what magicians try to do; they try to put a spell on people and bind them. Magicians are tools of the devil, because the devil tries to copy what God only can do. Satan tries to bind people under the power of darkness and evil, but only God can bind someone under death, and that is the absolute curse that God pronounced upon Satan.

We should ask whether God also pronounced an absolute curse on Eve. When He spoke to Eve, God did not say “Eve, you are cursed,” using either of the two Hebrew terms for “curse”—*arar*, or *kelalah*, a term that isn’t quite as laden with bondage as *arur*. Rather, God speaks of the woman’s pain and grief that is to come. He lets her know that there will be some sad consequences to her actions, including the pain she will suffer in childbearing. Similarly, God did not say, “Adam, you are cursed,” but He did curse the ground over which Adam was to exercise his headship role in the cultural area. God uses the word *arar* to speak of the curse on the earth. Adam will still carry out the cultural mandate, but now he must do it in the sweat of his brow and in laborious activity. These curses are often referred to as mitigated, because they are not absolute. The ground will still bear fruit which the man and woman can eat. The earth is bound, but the possibility for life still remains, and therefore, we speak of this as a mitigated curse.

When Cain killed his brother Abel, and God cursed Cain, was that an absolute or a mitigated curse? It was not absolute. Cain was banished, but God protected him so that he could go out and build the city and become the forefather of the first great cultural mandate servants. Cain himself was banished, and there is no evidence at all that Cain ever became an enlightened, converted, regenerated man who followed in the line of Seth and the servants of God.

God pronounced curses, the absolute and the mitigated, but He also gave assurances. There are at least four assurances. The first is the assurance of the continuity of what God had established. His kingdom will continue in spite of the curse. The relationships God had established will also continue. God did not tell Adam and Eve that from that point on they would no longer be one flesh. What did happen was that Satan was permitted to set up his parasite kingdom. As I said before, this parasite kingdom is totally dependent on the cosmic kingdom. The cosmic kingdom continues and therefore the Satanic empire can continue to function. God provides assurance of continuity, because He does not say, “I’m finished,” but carries on.

The second assurance is the assurance of God’s continued love, shown in grace, mercy, righteousness, and justice. Grace is revealed. Grace is always God’s love to the undeserving. There was no guilt and

no evil when God created, but grace is God in love coming to the undeserving and to the guilty. Mercy is revealed. God had compassion and showed His love to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were in misery, hiding from God, knowing that they were naked. Righteousness is revealed. Dumbrell points out in his writing on Noah that righteousness is a term with a twofold meaning. Righteousness has a legal dimension and a relational dimension; sometimes it is necessary to understand it in the relational sense and other times in the legal sense. Justice is revealed. According to some of our standards, God would have been fully just if He had wiped out everything. However, He reveals His justice in that He pronounces a judgment which is according to His will.

If the first assurance was the continuity of the covenant of creation, and the second was the assurance of His love continuing, shown in grace, mercy, righteousness and justice, then the third assurance is God's assuring Adam and Eve of victory through the mediatorial seed. The mediatorial office will continue. God tells Adam and Eve that even though they have abdicated that role, He will restore them by giving them children who will carry on the seed. This is the concept in Genesis 3:14-15. "The seed of the woman," is a singular term, but it has a plural connotation, a collective connotation. Incipient there is the promise of the mediator, Christ Jesus to come.

The fourth assurance is that within the covenant of creation or the cosmic administration, a second relationship is set up. This is the relationship referred to as the covenant of grace. Within the greater setting of creation, God sets up a new relationship—the redemptive relationship. It is this relationship that is unfolded as we move through Scripture.

After Adam and Eve's deviation and God speaking His curses and His assurances, we have to look at some of the recorded events which followed. There are four that I want to mention here briefly. First, there are Adam's and Eve's responses. After Adam listened to what God said to Adam and Eve, Adam named his wife *Chawah*, which means life. He called her "life." God had spoken of death, but Adam looked at his wife and said "life." Think of that, ladies, you who are wives, through conception, gestation, and birth, you become the great bearers of life. Adam called his wife, "life." He accepted the promise of victory. He accepted the basic outline of the covenant of grace. Then when Eve had her first child, in Genesis 4, she said, "I have a man from the LORD."

Second, Adam and Eve were banished from their palatial garden. They could not eat from the tree of life because that was the sacrament for continued life. It is not that God would withhold life from them, but they could no longer achieve it sacramentally. Vos discusses that well in *Biblical Theology*.

Third, as soon as the nuclear family begins to develop, there is a murder and banishment. Cain murders Abel; you know the story well enough. In that murder, the principle of death and envy that so characterizes Satan came to its full expression in the second generation, in Cain. Then God pronounces a mitigated curse—"depart." At the heart of the concept of death is separation. Cain died in the sense that he was separated. He recognized this, and he recognized that he was vulnerable to death at the hands of anyone who looked at him.

The fourth thing I want to mention here is God's demonstration of common grace. This is another great event. God demonstrated a grace—an undeserving love—to the totality of the cosmos. God continued everything, and in a sense, one can even speak of God showing grace to the devil because He didn't destroy Satan at that moment or limit his activities completely, although He could have. God gave the devil a certain latitude. This is common grace, not saving grace, but a favor and a general goodness, in that God revealed to everything within His creation that there was continuity and there would be a

continuation of life for a time, and within that time there was always the possibility of living before the LORD and coming to repentance.

What happened with the three mandates after the fall? Genesis 4 tells us that the social mandate was not kept. Canaan married (in pre-deluvian times, there was no problem with men marrying sisters or close relatives) but Cain's descendant Lamech took two wives, Adah and Zillah, and he bragged about it. In this context we see murder as well, because he brags to his wives about the man he has killed. The social mandate has gone awry. What about the cultural mandate? This one is being obeyed, but now out of undoubtedly selfish interests and motives. The people develop music, which is one of the great gifts of God. The people also develop animal husbandry. The point is that God continued to show His common grace in a way that the Canaanites were able to carry out the cultural mandate. Adam and Eve's believing descendants had tremendous benefit and profit from that, so common grace obviously functioned on behalf of the believing ones. Noah would not have been able to build an ark if there had been no wood craftsmanship or architecture or building skills.

Turning to the spiritual mandate, we read that Enoch walked with God. The last part of chapter 4 tells us that after Seth's son Enosh was born, "in those days people began to call on the name of the LORD." Spiritual fellowship continued. The verb that is used, *huchal likro*, indicates a daily interaction. Wherever Enoch went, when he rose, when he lay down, when he sat at the table (as it says in Deuteronomy 6), he walked with God. He knew that he was in God's presence. A pattern is set up here. We read later that Noah walked with God and that God demanded this walk with God of Abram in Genesis 17.

In conclusion, the kingdom, covenant, and mediator continue. God's cosmic kingdom continues, but now it has a parasite within it. The relationship between God and man continues. In fact, if we speak of a covenant of creation, we might say that it is more firmly established by that second strand of redemption, which cannot be separated from the first strand. The mediatorial concept clearly continues in the idea of the seed. Enoch, in his walking with God, represents the mediatorial line.

As we move on to the Noahic covenant, Genesis 6-9, I am very thankful for the discussion Robertson has given us in *The Christ of the Covenants*. Dumbrell also gives us quite a discussion in *Covenant and Creation*. I wish I had more time to deal with the six points that Robertson lays out, but I will offer a few observations here.

We see evil with respect to the three mandates, but we also see Noah's character and life. We see God's grief and the pain of His heart. When He pronounces judgment, the flood comes and destroys everything, but after the flood, we see a reconfirmation. Here especially Robertson is very helpful. In his chapter on the Noahic covenant, he shows that the cosmic setting of creation and the covenant of grace are inseparable. Next we see that the covenant of creation is repeated, or some might say established for the first time, in Genesis 9:1-17. There the interrelationships are re-established, and in that context, we also have the death penalty. Robertson has a good discussion of this topic which I would urge you to attend to carefully. We also see the covenant of grace in the setting of Noah's shame. He gets drunk and lies naked, but when he awakens from that, God gives him the gift of prophesy so that he is able to say that Shem is to build the tent, and the descendants of Canaan can get into the tent through service (and the Book of Joshua gives us a clear example later on of how the descendants of Canaan can get into the tent of Shem) and finally, Japheth will take it over. So in the Noahic covenant, we see the outline of God's covenant of grace program within the creation setting, where humanity is preserved through the death penalty and God says, "Shem, you will be central. Canaan, son of Ham, you will participate in that tent, but Japheth, you will really make it large." Here is a prophecy that the Gentiles will come in and

take over, but it never says that the Gentiles will expel the sons of Shem. Thus we see that Noah lays out for us God's great program. We will pick up that program in the next lecture, when we look at Abraham.