

The Covenants

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Deut 4:9-14; Lk 22:14-23; 2 Cor 3:6, 14; Heb 7-10)

Mike Hagan

FBC George, January 10, 2021

Introduction

1. If we could interview Adam *after* his marriage to Eve in the garden and after their failure to obey God's one prohibition, what would he say? Let's ask him – Adam, we wish to ask you how you're feeling now that you've been expelled from the garden?

Adam: Oh, man, what a bummer! I can't believe we chose to eat that forbidden fruit.

Pastor Mike (PM): You mean the apple?

Adam: Is that what it was called? I didn't name it; just . . . delicious.

PM: You had a lot going for you, didn't you?

Adam: Yes, I was "it" – Man, Adam. Privileged, first, top of the heap. And with my woman, Eve, Life. We were just getting around to exploring what that meant. Beautiful trees and animals, lots of veggies and fruit. I really liked that passion fruit. Nice sunrises and sunsets. And God would come and talk with us. He shared his hopes for us – take care of the garden, he said, produce lots of children, enjoy our walks with him and with each other. I'm still trying to figure out what he meant by "children."

PM: What happened?

Adam: Eve, my Life, ate the fruit God told us not to eat. She said her eyes were opened to good and evil. Good she understood, but evil was new and it was terrible. She gave me the fruit and I too chose to eat it. Somehow, she looked different and she said somehow, I was different, too. We knew, all right; we knew we were naked, and it bothered both of us. Then we heard the Lord coming and we were ashamed and hid. He knew where we were and we blamed everyone else, forgetting that we were the only ones around.

PM: What happened then?

Adam: God told us that everything had changed. We would have struggles with creation and with each other. We would have to leave the garden. In fact, things had changed between him and us. But he did a kind thing – he gave us some cool leathers to wear. I'd have to say he was gracious to us even with the changes.

PM: Thanks for speaking with us. I think he still comes our direction in love and kindness. By the way, it's a little cold today; get some more clothes on yourself, Adam.

2. In the next few weeks we are thinking about the doctrine of humanity, the biblical teachings on mankind. The Bible reveals God's big plan from beginning to end, starting with a perfect, balanced creation in Genesis 1 with man and woman as the focal point, standing at the pinnacle of God's creation and living in a perfect, idyllic place in communion with God, with his world, and with each other and someday in the future returning to the condition of a new heavens and a new earth with the bride, the Church, like Eve, coming with God the Father to meet the bridegroom, Jesus, like Adam, for an eternity together.

3. The story from Genesis 3 to Revelation 21 is all about God's grace. As he did with Adam and Eve, he kept finding ways to come to us and make it possible to have a relationship with him.

What ways did he find to have relationship with us?

1. At first, open interaction with God continued, just more distant than before (Gen 4-11).

- They found out what "children" meant. Little images of them even as they were images of God. They found out how hard it was to work the ground that was now working against them.
- They offered worship to God. They called on his name, his authority, to walk with them in daily life. One of their children murdered his brother over worship. In fact, things got so bad as population expanded, God came and flooded the world and wiped out everyone except one faithful family, Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their spouses. Still, things got messier and languages came into existence. Things finally improved when God focused his pathway through one person and his family.

2. God established agreements between Abraham and his descendants and himself.

- The Bible calls these things, covenants. Even though the relationship with God was broken by sin, God continued to reveal his commitment to his world.
- Abraham received five promises from God (Gen 12:1-3). These were ratified with God obligating himself to their fulfillment (ch. 15). He established his "covenant" with Abraham and his offspring (17:7). Covenant refers to an obligation to see something through with one or both parties responsible to the commitment. In the Abrahamic covenant, God alone promised to meet its obligations. Abraham

trusted God in faith (Gen 15:6). Isaac and Jacob would both receive the same assurances.

- In fact, Paul affirms that the Abrahamic covenant remains ratified, especially the last promise that all nations would be blessed through his seed, prophesying the impact of Jesus (Gal 3:15-18).
- The Sinaitic or Mosaic covenant came 430 years later to affirm the promises to Abraham about his people (now called Israel) and the promised land (Gal 3:17). The Sinaitic covenant gave more clarity on how to live as God's people by the teachings of the Torah, the Law (Exodus – Deuteronomy). To live lives that flourish meant following preferred pathways with continual renewed commitment and rededication (Deut 4:9-14). God is faithful to his promises, but he expected careful obedience to the right pathways (Deut 7:7-11).
- The Davidic covenant added perspectives of what God was doing with his people in building his kingdom and a king to sit on the throne (2 Sam 7). Still connected with Abraham's promises (3 of 5 promises repeated), further clarity emerges for Israel and her leadership.
- Even with these covenants the chosen people failed. At each stage, God kept coming with help. The prophets pointed to a faithful God whose relationship with his people was proving difficult because of their faithlessness. As promised in the Sinaitic covenant, persistent failure led to punishment, fulfilled in exile and in a lack of independence under the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans over 500 years. Had the promises of an unchanging God failed? Was there no hope for the future? The Jewish people were a discouraged and angry people when finally, God determined the "fullness of time" had come and sent his son (Gal 4:4).
- The prophet Jeremiah had prophesied a New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34). In the FT all the covenants from Abraham on were connected, each providing more details that would assure God's faithfulness and would give direction of life, both individually and corporately.
- As the prophets predicted, the Anointed One, the Christ, came, born to Mary, named Jesus, heralded by John, and announced the Kingdom of God. Hebrews tells us that the life and sacrifice of Jesus became the guarantee of a better covenant (7:22). What the first covenant, meaning the Mosaic Law, could not accomplish, the new covenant did (8:6, 8-10; 9:4, 15-17, 20; cf. Jer 31:31-34). As Paul says, "through him (Christ) *came* to reconcile to himself all things,

whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).

- God sent his son – i.e., he kept coming to us, finding a way to have a relationship with us. Thus we say, this cup is the new covenant in his blood.

Concluding reflections

If we believe in what God has done through his son, we have an eternal relationship with him. We are part of his new creation. He has done a great thing. That leaves the question of the meanwhile. As Jeremiah said, our insides will be different (new), we have relationship with him (he is our God and we are his people), and we will know him perfectly. My new creation has started, but it not everything that it will be.

Paul discloses what is happening in the meanwhile – lots of groanings (Romans 8:18-30).

- The material creation groans, longing for freedom from corruption (8:21). → a new heavens and a new earth.
- The believers groan as we wait for redemption to be completed, our hope (8:23-25). → resurrected bodies, raised in glory.
- The Spirit groans in his intercessions for us as we, in our weakness, pray imperfectly (8:26-27). → we will have no more needs, no more tears, no misdirected prayers. We will glorify the God who has exhibited such love and care to always come in our direction.
- By the way, Paul highlights what our ministry now should include – prayer.