

COVENANT RENEWAL

Genesis 1:26-28

Matthew 28:18-20

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THE COVENANTS IN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

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The temple and the covenant are the two most important organizing concepts of Scripture.¹ What one is structurally, the other is legally. What one is visually the other is personally. Both are equally important in terms of understanding the Bible. Our concern is the covenant and its fulfillment throughout Scripture.

Promise and Fulfillment

Christ begets the Church, cleanses it, sanctifies it, calls it, chooses it, redeems it by true authentic prefiguration through the whole course of this world's history: in the sleep of Adam, in the flood of Noah, in the blessing of Melchisedech and the justification of Abraham.²

This statement by the early Church father, Hilary, describes the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Consider what he is actually saying. Everything in the Old Testament prefigures Christ and the Church from Adam to the kings and prophets of Israel. But they are more than simply types.

The people and events of the Old Testament are part of a continuous outworking of the promise of God in the garden. The Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). According to Hilary and the majority of the early Church, this promise refers to Christ and His Church. The Seed of the woman is of course ultimately Christ. The woman's role has her destination in Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is not all. The Church is called the Body of Christ, making it part of the Seed. It too is involved in the original promise. It is the seed through Christ and it is the mother continuing to spawn believers, typified by Eve and Mary.

The important Biblical word to describe how Hilary interpreted the relationship between Old and New Testament is fulfill. Christ and the Church fulfill everything in the Older Covenant. The Old Testament promises and the New Testament fulfills. This promise/fulfillment language is **covenantal** language.

A covenant has five aspects. To some, this notion of a five-part covenant has caused reaction. Perhaps this is because I have developed these aspects in terms of a structure. But, if we back away from the structure and simply think in terms of creating a definition of the covenant, I think the elements of the covenant do not seem so arbitrary. This actually happened with a professor at a seminary. He wrote and suggested that I was imposing my understanding of covenant on the text. So, I suggested that he consider the five segments of the covenant as parts of a definition. Not only did he do this but he submitted my def-

inition to his class for consideration among approximately fifteen other definitions. The theological class voted unanimously that my definition best represented the Biblical concept of covenant. Nowhere is this more simply presented than in the promise/fulfillment concept.

Applying this covenantal promise/fulfillment pattern to the Old and New Testament as the early Church fathers suggested, we can see the application of the covenant on a larger scale. We can trace how each of the main Old Testament figures are fulfilled in Christ and the Church. In this newsletter and others to follow, we will begin this process with the Adamic covenant.

The Adamic Covenant

The Adamic covenant is a covenant even though the text does not explicitly say so. We know that God made a covenant with Adam because the Noahic covenant is the **re-establishment** of a previously existing covenant. God says to Noah, "But with thee will I establish [literally, re-establish] my covenant" (Genesis 6:18). The Hebrew word translated "establish" in the KJV is not the normal word for "cutting" or "establishing" a covenant. This Hebrew word means the renewal of one that already exists.³ It is unfortunate that many Bible translations do not reflect this point. Even so, the fact remains that on the basis of this information a covenant already existed with Adam. Jeremiah the prophet confirms this by calling the creation of the world a covenant (Jeremiah 33:19-26).⁴ Thus, since the creation of the world was a covenant, we can allow the Biblical definition of covenant to guide us through an overview of the distinctive of the Adamic covenant.

First, the Adamic covenant starts with a new creation that is universal. God initiates the covenant by creating the universe with His Word. He does so by the Word of His mouth. God creates, making Him distinct from His creation, transcendence. He is also present with His creation because He made it. He is immanent.

Second, the hierarchy of the Adamic covenant is in terms of Adam and Eve: regent and vice regent. Adam represented God, and Eve represented her husband, which would explain why the serpent approached her first. She was taken from Adam's side. This part of man symbolizes representation. Later in redemptive history, the Holy Spirit is called the **paraclete**, derived from a Greek word (**parakaleo**) that means, "To come alongside." Eve was Adam's queen and vice regent.

Adam, however, was Eve's husband, the authority over her. He was like a father to her. He gives her a name, which is normally a parental function. Adam was like a

1. Jean Danielou

2. St. Hilary, *Tractatus Mysteriorum*, (1, 1).

3. W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson, 1984), pp. 16-20.

4. Ray R. Sultan, *That You May Prosper* (Tyler, Texas: I.C.E., 1987).

parent in the sense that Eve came from him. He was not like a parent in that she came from his side. This explains the role of husband. He takes the place of the father in the woman's life, even though there is not a one to one comparison. Nevertheless, because he names the woman, he is Eve's head.

What about the priestly aspect of the Adamic covenant? Since this was exclusively a dominion covenant of cultivating the ground and subduing the earth, there was probably not a priestly aspect prior to the fall of man. After man sins, however, a priestly feature enters and only the male offers sacrifices. Cain was instructed to offer grain offerings and Abel was told to offer blood offerings (Genesis 4).

Third, the ethical stipulations of the Adamic covenant pertain to the dominion mandate of extending the garden to the four corners of the earth. The first commands given to Adam and Eve also concerned a tree in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree symbolized all of man's sin, for to eat made all men sinful. Thus the original commandments concerned dominion and eating in a general sense: "Of all the trees you may freely eat." A sacramental (special) sense is implied with regard to the other tree because death was attached to it.

Fourth, specific sanctions were promised to the first people. Death was promised as a curse if the tree were eaten. Blessing came through the first sabbath, even though this rest was interrupted by the first sin.

Fifth, the Adamic covenant was transferred to the next generation by the covering of the sacrificed animal skins and expulsion from the garden.

These are the distinctive covenantal features of the Adamic covenant. Turning to the gospels, we immediately see Adamic imagery. Christ was a new Adam.

Christ, the New Adam

Jesus fulfills the Adamic Covenant by becoming a new Adam. He is called the Son of **Adam** literally a New Adam. He is a second Adam, or, as the Apostle Paul says, "The Last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15).

Transcendence

First, the transcendence feature of the Adamic covenant appears in that Jesus is the New Creation. As Adam had been created and the breath of God had been breathed into him, Jesus became Incarnate by the conception of the true breath, the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation is the ultimate new creation, explaining the many creation miracles in the Gospels: feedings, calming of storms, and resurrections.

The New Creation involves important parallels with Jesus' birth and death. Christ became a New Adam in that He was born in a garden setting, a stable with animals all around. And, He died in a garden; He went to the Garden of Gethsemane for prayer before His death, and He died on the Mount of Olives, also a garden. But perhaps the most obvious reference to Christ's fulfilling the Adamic Covenant is the opening verse of John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Christ is the New Creation in that He established a new heaven and new earth. Whereas the first Adam failed to extend the garden to the ends of earth, failing to establish a new heaven and earth, Christ overcame this failure. He revealed that He would make a new creation many times when He performed miracles on and with the created world: feeding thousands from a few loaves and fishes, and calming the seas. Then, He actually created the new heavens and earth through His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. "The old things have passed away. All things

became new" (II Corinthians 5:17). The literal heavens and earth were changed when a man, Jesus Christ, ruled heaven at the right hand of God the Father. Men had entered before, Enoch and Elijah, but they had never been allowed to rule. This change brought even greater governmental changes. The saints of God are allowed to sit in positions of leadership in heaven with Christ (Ephesians 2:6), being called "stars" (Philippians 2:15). The Church is portrayed as seven lampstands and elders as seven stars (Revelation 1:20).

The Apostle Paul describes the New Creation order through the transformation of the physical universe as a "shaking of the world by that which cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:27). But in case we might be tempted to think that this has not happened, he adds, "Where we receiving a kingdom which cannot be removed" (Hebrews 12:28), meaning the shaking of the previous verse has already started. A new heavens and new earth have begun to be formed by the work of Christ and the work of the New Covenant over the ages. How? They follow the pattern of personal sanctification: definitive, progressive, and culminate. They have begun and are being worked out on earth. Thus, Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new **old** things have passed away; behold **●** **II** things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). Thus, Christ is the true New Adam, extending the new creation in a way that the first Adam failed.

The new heaven and new earth through Christ's Incarnation explains the miracle principle, which is that the **spiritual** transforms the physical. This is what happens when a physical miracle occurs. The spiritual alters the physical world in some way. Better, the spiritual **restores** the physical. Christ and the Apostles therefore demonstrated that the transformation of the physical world began through Christ's Incarnation which was continued in the Church. They proved how the world would be changed by the presence of Christ through His people. Christ demonstrated that through Him and the Church the world would physically be restored and transformed. Indeed, a time would come when the lion would lay down with the lamb, garden language (Isaiah 11). How the Church is involved in this we shall consider in a moment. For now, however, we should not fail to miss how the miracles of the Gospels are simply the outworking of the beginning of the new heavens and earth.

Hierarchy

Second, the Adamic hierarchy appears at the wedding at Cana (John 2). When the wine runs out, Christ is approached by Mary concerning the problem. Notice the implicit hierarchy. The mother of Jesus comes to Him. She does not attempt to resolve the problem herself. Unlike the first woman, she depends on the New Adam. The Blessed Mary does not handle the problem alone.

Jesus responds to her with Adamic language. He says, "O woman what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). Christ calls his mother, "Woman," the same title given to the first bride. Given the use of this Adamic language, clearly Jesus' response is not derisive. Rather, He recognizes his mother as analogous to the first woman. In so doing, He renames His mother. And, He acknowledges the redefinition of Mary's role, recognizing that she saw herself as a servant **doing** Christ's bidding. In this regard, Mary is unlike the fallen woman and acts as woman was supposed to have acted prior to the fall.

But, Christ asks the question, "What have I to do with you?" answering with, "My hour has not yet come." What does this mean? Christ is simply telling Mary that He cannot assume the role of Lord, her redemptive Groom, until

His hour comes, a clear reference to His death. At that time, the new covenant is consummated. It is then that Christ says to her, "Woman, behold your son" (John 19:26), referring to John. He says to John, "Behold your mother." The Cross transformed completely Mary's role from mother of Jesus to mother of the Church. It made Mary not only mother, therefore, but it made her the arch symbol of the Bride, the new Eve. The name Eve means, "Mother of all living."

Thus, Christ shows respect to His mother but He teaches her that His mediatorial role cannot fully begin until a later time. He goes ahead with her request to manifest **Himself** as the Christ. Yet, He wants His mother to understand that He must die before the complete transformation in her takes place, the change from woman to symbolic Eve. Yes, she can ask Him in a prayerful way to complete the wedding. But the final wedding between Christ and His bride cannot take place until the Cross. Only the death of her son can make this possible. When this loss occurs, He will not be able to answer her request. When He hangs on the Cross, He will only be able to do the bidding of His Father. Afterwards, He will answer the prayers of the church.

The parallels between Eve and Mary are numerous. Eve's name means, "mother of all living"; Mary became the mother of all living by giving birth to Christ who is called the "life" (John 14:6). Eve's second born son was killed by the hands of the first born, his brother; Mary's Son was a second Adam who was killed by His brothers, the Jews. Eve is driven from her home; Mary is forced to flee from Bethlehem. Eve was married to a man who tried to cover her after both had sinned; Mary was married to a man who also attempted to protect her even though she had not technically done anything wrong. As the first Eve started out as woman (Genesis 2), Mary started out being addressed as woman. As the first Eve did not become Eve until after the spiritual death of the first couple, Mary did not become Eve until after the death of Christ.

The observation of this parallel between Eve and Mary is not original with me. The early Church fathers drew similar conclusions. Irenaeus (Second Century), the first great recorded defender of the Biblical covenant among the early fathers of the Church, speaks of Mary's obedience in the singing of the Magnificat. He compares and contrasts how Eve as a virgin was disobedient, keeping in mind that Irenaeus believed that Adam and Eve fell on the sixth day of creation into sin before the sexual consummation of their marriage, but Mary as a virgin was obedient.⁵ Irenaeus believed that a topological view of Scripture was the best way to show the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. By maintaining this covenantal unity in the Bible, he refuted the infamous Gnostic, Marcion, who argued for a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. The heretic was famous for averring that the Gospel was something totally new. To be consistent, he even did away with the Old Testament, proposing that it was no longer part of the canon of Scripture. He did consistently what modern Dispensationalists will not do, which is why they are not necessarily heretics and in the same category as Marcion.

Irenaeus countered with numerous types from the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the new. He maintained that the Gospel could not have been something totally new; it had been foretold and anticipated through all of the people and events of the Old Testament. One type to which he often returned as proof that not only Christ was in the Old Testament, but the Church as well, was the image of Eve. Thus, the interpretation of the wedding at Cana

as an occasion where Adamic imagery appears is not inconsistent with Biblical and historical interpretation of Scripture. Christ and Mary fulfill the Adamic covenant.

Ethical Stipulations

The Adamic stipulations concerned in a positive sense the cultivation of the world, work and productivity even to the point of having children and taking dominion over the world. Christ demonstrated this by declaring that He did the work of His Father. He also utilized the Sabbath to glean for His disciples, thereby reminding them that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:23-28). The obvious point is that man can take dominion of the world in the New Covenant on the Old Covenant Sabbath Day. The transformation of the Old Covenant Sabbath day into a work day is perhaps the clearest example of the continuation of the dominion mandate into the New Covenant!

In a negative sense, abstinence from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was also a stipulation. Adam and Eve were literally to **fast** from this food. They didn't and they fell. Thus, fasting is part of the original stipulation of the Adamic covenant.

Christ keeps the stipulation of the Adamic covenant by fasting. He kept the fast that Adam broke. When Christ went into the wilderness, on the other hand, He kept the fast and withstood the temptations of the Devil. He did not succumb but said, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4). He did not allow food to have more control than the Word of God. For this reason, conflict with Satan is associated with fasting. Some demons cannot be cast out without fasting. This act is a means of allowing the Word of God to possess man instead of the things of this world. Christ is the chief example. In so doing, however, He demonstrated that the Adamic covenant carried forward in Him. Hence, fasting is still an abiding and valid aspect of the Christian walk. It is part of the Church's fulfillment of the command given to Adam and Eve through Christ's example and strength.

Sanctions

The sanction on Adam and Eve was death. Christ fulfilled this sanction by dying on a tree. There is good reason to believe Christ was literally hung in a tree. All of the language of the New Testament that describes the instrument of Christ's death uses the word tree. The parallel with Genesis screams at us. As Adam and Eve turned their blessings into cursings through death by means of a tree, so Christ transformed life into death by dying on a tree.

Succession

The means of succession in the Adamic covenant was in terms of clothing and expulsion. The first couple's nakedness was a symbol of the loss of inheritance and succession. Their clothing represented a return of continuance in the family of God. In similar manner, Christ is hanged in nakedness. He is clothed, however, before being placed in the tomb. By receiving new clothing, He symbolizes that He will provide the ultimate covering for man, salvation. After He is raised, moreover, He sends out the disciples away from the "garden," which had become the place of His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. This is called the Great Commission, the ultimate redemptive expulsion.

In conclusion, Christ is the New Adam. He fulfills the Adamic covenant. By so doing, He extends the Adamic covenant, for if He keeps it, all who enter covenant with Him will do what He did. Here is where the Church comes into the picture. The Adamic imagery does not stop with Christ but it extends to the Church. Thus, the Church also fulfills what is promised in the Old Testament. In precisely what way we shall now see.

The New Eve: The Church

The Book of Acts and the remainder of the New Testament are filled with Edenic language. Is this simply a literary phenomenon? Or, does the use of this kind of language indicate important theological relationships? I think the continuity of language means the Church fulfills or continues the fulfillment that Christ began. By applying the Biblical covenant the continuity becomes apparent.

Transcendence

Just as God initiated the Adamic covenant with the original creation and Christ's Incarnation as the New Creation, so the Church is the New Creation. God forms the Church in much the same way as the creation and the Incarnation. He sends forth His Spirit to make the new creation. (John 3).

The Church is also involved in the re-creation of the world. In Acts, it performs not only the same kinds of miracles as Christ but even greater ones. Each of these miracles is a new creation. This is particularly apparent when a dead person is raised from the dead.

As 'part of the formation of the new creation, the Apostle Paul wrestles with wild beasts at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32). Perhaps this is symbolic but even so the symbolism goes back to Genesis imagery. It represents dominion over animals and the world. On the isle of Malta, the Apostle is even bitten by a viper, a serpent (Acts 28:3). He is not hurt, which provides double reference to Edenic language. He overcomes the animal world and he is able to resist the Serpent's attempt to block the spread of the gospel. Thus, the Church is clearly involved in the New Testament in fulfilling the Adamic covenant by bringing it to the fullest possible expression.

Hierarchy

The hierarchy of Eden was a vice-regency structure. The bride was taken from the side of the male. Her derivation pointed to joint rule. The New Testament speaks of the Church as having come from the side of Christ when water and blood flowed from His pierced side on the cross. This shed blood and water represent the cleansing work of Christ that created the Church. The Apostle Paul suggests this imagery when he says that a man is to love his wife as Christ love the Church, "cleansing her with the water of the word" (Ephesians 5:26). The "word" has two senses of course, the Incarnation which is the Word become flesh and the Word verbal which is the Word of God. Thus, we must agree with St. Augustine who said, "AS a wife was made for Adam from his side while he slept, the Church becomes the property of her dying Savior, by the sacrament of the blood which flowed from His side after His death."⁶

This imagery points to the same vice-regency between Christ and the Church. The Apostle Paul describes this type of rule in the same epistle when he says, "He [God the Father] raised Him [Jesus] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). The Genesis dominion language in the Apostle Paul is to the point. The Church rules with Christ as Eve ruled with Adam. The difference is that the Church is the fullness of Christ, fulfilling Him as He fulfilled the Old Testament precisely because He did fulfill the old. As the last verse of the first chapter of Ephesians literally says, "Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Thus the Church will have greater dominion in the world than Eve could have ever expected!

Ethics

The Adamic stipulations concerned dominion and eating. Regarding the Church's involvement in the dominion of the world, the passage in Ephesians (above) specifically says that the Church is to have dominion because Christ does. In addition, the New Testament emphasizes the need to work. It even says that a person shall not eat if he does not work, thereby connecting dominion and food.

With reference to the Edenic command to eat of the Tree of life, the New Testament command to eat the Lord's Supper is a clear image back to the garden (1 Corinthians 11). By eating in unbelief and rebellion man dies, and by eating the sacrament of Holy Communion in faith man lives. Thus, the Church fulfills the stipulations of the Adamic covenant.

Sanctions

A specific sanction of death was tied to the eating stipulation of the Adamic covenant. In the New Testament, a death sanction is tied to the eating stipulation of the New Covenant. The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that some are sick and dying because the Lord's Supper has been taken unworthily (1 Corinthians 11:30). Keep in mind that the symbolism of bread and wine refers back to Christ's work done on a tree. Thus, as in the Adamic covenant so in the New Covenant.

Succession

The means of succession in the Adamic covenant was the clothing of animal skins and expulsion from the garden. The expulsion principle we have already seen in the Great Commission. In the Acts and the epistles we see the same language. But we have not considered the clothing of Genesis with respect to the Church. The clothing is specifically Christ. The Apostle Paul has his famous "put on" and "put off" passages (Ephesians 4:22ff.). But the most interesting clothing reference tied to Genesis is the sacrament of Baptism. The Apostle says, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Notice the creation connection. The water of baptism officially (legally and personally) establishes us as a new creation analogous to the water of original creation and the baptismal water of Christ's baptism.

Therefore, the Church is the fulfillment of the Adamic covenant. Having studied this covenant in Christ and the Church, St. Augustine's words ring true: "The whole narrative Of Genesis. in the minutest details, is a prophecy of Christ and of the Church."⁷

7. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, XII, 8.

6. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, XII, 8.