



Lesson 3 / February 26, 2017

COVENANT WITH ADAM

Genesis 2:15-17

Key Verse

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 2:16-17

Discussion Questions

1. What is a covenant? What features of a covenant do you see in Genesis 2?
2. If you know about the future covenants God makes, what is different about Genesis 2?
3. How does God display his goodness toward humans in Genesis 2? What are his blessings?
4. Why is the tree of life significant?
5. What is the nature of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Why do you suppose God placed it in the garden?
6. What kind of freedom does God grant to the humans?
7. If *you* were the first human, would *you* be faithful to this covenant?

Question 5: What is a covenant?

Short Answer: *A covenant is the terms of the relationship between God and his people.*

Full Answer: *A covenant is the terms of the relationship between God and his people, established by God's grace, with blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.*

Question 6: What covenant does God make with Adam?

Short Answer: *God covenants with Adam to bless humans with life.*

Full Answer: *God covenants with Adam to bless humans with life for as long as they are faithful to obey, but if they disobey his commands, they will surely die.*

Summary

Have you heard of the DTR? It stands for Define The Relationship. When a single young man and a single young woman find themselves spending an increasing amount of time together, and chemistry exists and love is blossoming, then the time inevitably comes when they must have the terribly awkward “talk.” The DTR. They must determine together whether their feelings are mutual and they must define together the nature of their relationship. In Genesis 2:16-17, God has a DTR with the man he has created.

In Scripture, when God has a DTR with his people, he often establishes a “covenant” with his people. We do not actually find the word “covenant” in Genesis 2, but we do find several features of a covenant and later Scripture implies a covenant is present (Hosea 6:7). In simple terms, a covenant defines the terms of the relationship between God and his people. God will make several covenants in the Bible, and these covenants have several common features. God establishes covenants with his people unilaterally by his own authority, out of his grace, with promises of blessings so long as his people demonstrate faith toward him by honoring his commands, and with warnings of curses should they disobey.

We find all of these covenantal features in Genesis 2 and especially in the DTR of Genesis 2:16-17. This DTR is a one-sided conversation in which God has full authority to set forth the terms of the relationship. This Creator-creature DTR is less like the relationship established by a DTR between two peers and more like the hierarchical relationship between parent and child. Yet God is no tyrant. His grace abounds toward humans as he blesses them with one another and with everything they need to live and to flourish. “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,” God says in Genesis 2:16, including even the tree of life God himself placed in the middle of the garden (Gen 2:9). So long as humans ate from this tree, they would continue to enjoy full and everlasting life. God pours forth his grace and blessings toward his people in Genesis 2.

But God adds just one little prohibition. God has already instructed them in what they *ought* to do, including ruling over the earth, filling it with life (Gen 1:26-28), and caring for the Garden (Gen 2:15). Now God tells them what they ought *not* to do: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Gen 2:17). So far as we know, this tree was essentially like any other tree; there was nothing poisonous or magical about its fruit. It only became a tree “of the knowledge of good and evil” because of God’s command to not eat from it. With God’s prohibition in place, any human who ate from this tree would be usurping God’s authority to determine good and evil and they would come to know firsthand the profound evil of a creature rebelling against their good Creator. Thus, God places a curse upon the one who commits such evil: “you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17). The tree of knowledge is the opposite of the tree of life; it is a tree of death. And this death – we learn in Genesis 3 – will not be swift and painless annihilation; rather, it will be a living death as they are cursed to live and to slowly die under the tyranny of death.

This is the DTR. God has set forth the covenant terms for his people, yet God, in his unilateral authority, does not predetermine the outcome. Instead, he grants to the humans a certain freedom to decide for themselves how they will respond. What will happen the day after the DTR? Will God honor his own covenantal terms? Will the humans use their freedom to surrender themselves to his terms and to enjoy life and relationship with him, or will they rebel against their Creator, make their own path, and experiment with death? Genesis 2 ends with the man and the woman together with God in God’s perfect paradise, naked and without shame, and supplied with an endless supply of food to eat, including even the tree of life itself. They must simply honor one little prohibition: don’t eat from the tree of knowledge and good and evil or you shall surely die. What could possibly go wrong?