

Good evening.

- We are continuing our study of the Baptist Catechism.
- Tonight we come to Question 16.
- And our question is, “What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the state wherein he was created?”

This evening’s question has to do with a portion of covenant theology.

- Particularly it has to do with the Covenant of Works that God made with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Understanding this doctrine, understanding the nature of the covenant God made with man in the Garden is crucial to our understanding of Scripture.

- And that’s because, as we will see, it colors how we understand the Gospel itself.
- Without a good understanding of the Covenant of Works, we’ll have a hard time understanding how Jesus is the Second Adam, how the NT compares and contrasts the work of Christ and the disobedience of Adam, and we’ll not understand why it is so important to be a member of the New Covenant that Christ mediates.
- Brothers and sisters, its important that we learn and think on these things. God did not record them for no reason.
- The covenant God made with man is directly related to the covenant God makes with all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This evening, we’ll consider the covenant that

condemned all men by the disobedience of our first father, Adam.

•But, praise God, by the end we will see how our Lord Jesus Christ, the true and better Adam, has redeemed and rescued us with a new and better covenant.

So, with that said, I will pray. And then we will dive in to our catechism question.

(PRAY)

*Heavenly Father,
We come to you now at the close of the Sabbath day.
I hope we have spent it well and honored you.
But we come now to ask you for help.
Please help us to benefit from the Word preached.
By your Spirit working alongside the Word, teach us in
the deepest parts of our heart.
Help us to understand your Word so that we would
rejoice in Christ all the more and further endeavor to
glorify you, the God of our salvation.
Have mercy on us and bless us as we humble
ourselves before your Word.
We ask these things in Jesus' Name and for His sake.
Amen.*

Our Question for this evening. I ask that you would read the Answer with me.

•Q. What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the state wherein he was created?

- A.** When God had created man, He entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

- (Let's do that again.)*

1.) First, what is the catechism asking?

- “What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the state wherein he was created?”

- An act of providence is an act of God. It's something that God does to govern His creatures and bring His holy will to pass.

- And, all that God does with regard to His creatures are acts of Providence. But here the catechism asks, “What **SPECIAL** act of providence did God exercise towards man?”

- So, we're being asked, “What special thing did God do with man after his creation?”

- What did God do with man that He did not do with anything else in all creation?

- And the answer is this: He entered into a covenant with man. He made a covenant with man.

2.) And that raises an important question: What is a Covenant?

- A covenant, particularly a covenant of works, is an agreement between two parties that involves conditions, blessings promised for covenant keeping, and sanctions threatened for covenant breaking.

- In a divine covenant, a covenant between God and man, the covenant is sovereignly imposed by God upon

the person or persons who enter the covenant with Him.

- That is, it is not a “take it or leave it” kind of thing when God makes a covenant. Those with whom He makes the covenant are simply in it because God imposes it upon them.

And in a covenant with God, there are conditions.

- God says, “You will do this, and I will do that.”
- So in a covenant God sets stipulations when it comes to covenants and the stipulations must be met by those with whom God covenants.
- And there are blessings involved for keeping the covenant with God. Blessings that otherwise could not be obtained unless God condescended to promise them.
- But there are also sanctions, penalties, for not keeping covenant with God. And God sets the penalty for breaking covenant as well as the blessings for keeping it.

And this is what God did with man/Adam after he was created.

- God entered into a covenant with Adam.
- God imposed an agreement between the two of them, set conditions that Adam must meet, promised blessing to Adam if he kept covenant, and threatened curses if Adam were to break the covenant.

3.) But what kind of covenant did God make with Adam?

- What were the specifics?
- Our catechism calls it a “covenant of life.”

- And it calls it that because eternal life was implicitly promised to Adam if he kept the covenant with God.

Let's turn now to Genesis 2:15-17 to see this:

[15] The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

[16] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

[17] 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."

There is the covenant that God made with Adam.

- I know the word "covenant" is not used in this text, but the concept is certainly there.

- God COMMANDED Adam. A relationship was imposed upon Adam.

- God came to Adam and set some terms before him.

- And the terms were these: "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..."

- So God sovereignly required something from Adam: Adam was to OBEY GOD and not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

- And God threatened Adam with death for disobedience: "...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

- And I think that the threat for disobedience implies the opposite blessing for obedience: If Adam perpetually and perfectly obeyed God and kept from the tree, then God he would never die.

- In other words, God would grant him eternal life.

Now, Adam was created upright, but he was not yet sealed in righteousness and life.

- There was a possibility that he could fall into sin and forfeit his life.
- But God here promises that if Adam obeys God, then he will never die.
- And I think this means that there would then be some kind of probation period for Adam.
- After a period of time, determined by God, that Adam had perfectly obeyed, God would've sealed him in righteousness and took away his ability to fall and, therefore, granted him eternal life that could never be forfeited.

Brothers and sisters, this is a covenant.

- There is an agreement between God and Adam that God imposed on him.
- There is the condition of Adam's perfect obedience for however long God was pleased to keep him in a state of probation.
- There was a promise of blessing for obeying.
- And there was a threat of curse, death, for disobeying.
- This is a covenant between God and Adam/man.

Furthermore, we read in Hosea 6:7 with reference to Israel, "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant..."

- Israel broke covenant with God. And they did this LIKE ADAM did.
- That means that Adam broke a covenant. That's the

similarity between Israel and Adam. They both broke covenants.

- So then, the Scriptures seem to indicate that God made a covenant with Adam, even though the word “covenant” is not used in Genesis 2.

- The concept is there. And that’s what matters.

And this was a Covenant of Life.

- Again, Adam would receive eternal life for obedience.

- And, as we’ll see later, this eternal life would’ve been won for Adam and all those under His headship. (Adam represented more than just himself in the covenant.)

- Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...”

- Death came into the world through sin and spread to all men because, in some sense, all men sinned when one man, the first man, Adam, sinned.

- So, if Adam would’ve perfectly obeyed, if Adam would’ve kept covenant with God, he and all his posterity, his descendants, would’ve lived forever in a world of paradise, sealed in righteousness and free from sin.

- So this was, in a very real sense a Covenant of Life because that’s what God promised Adam.

But God also threatened death for covenant breaking.

- Now what kind of death was this?

- Well, I think that, in light of all that we see in Scripture about the effects of Adam’s sin and what it has done to man and the world around us, I think we must

conclude that death in ALL ITS FORMS were threatened.

- Namely, three kinds of death: Physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death.

1. Physical Death.

- This is the most simple. Adam and his posterity would be subjected to literally dying in their bodies.

- Their flesh would give out at some point and their hearts would stop.

- It was not originally supposed to be this way. But this is the result of sin. “The wages of sin is death.”

2. Spiritual Death.

- This is alienation from God.

- If Adam broke the covenant, there would be a rending apart of the perfect relationship between God and man.

- There would be estrangement. Man would become an enemy of God and hostile to Him and unable to do anything that God would count as truly good.

- Man’s original sonship with God would be turned to hostility, enmity, guilt, and death of the soul.

3. And this is what leads to the most extreme form of death: Eternal Death.

- This is damnation. An eternal estrangement from God and all His blessings and kindness.

- The book of Revelation calls this the Second Death, where men are cast into a lake of fire for their sins and suffer eternal condemnation from God.

Brothers and sisters, DEATH and all it means for

mankind in body, relationship to God, and their eternal destiny was threatened in the Covenant.

- Massive things were on the line.
- Eternal realities were on the line for Adam and his posterity.
- And it all hinged upon whether or not Adam would keep covenant with God.

And this is also why theologians, in addition to calling this covenant the Covenant of Life also call it the Covenant of Works.

- It was by OBEDIENCE (works) that the covenant was to be kept.
- Continual, perfect, perpetual obedience from Adam was demanded. Perfect works during his time of probation was his end of the covenant.
- The reward of eternal life would be earned by works, by obedience to the command of God in the covenant. (Not eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.)

So again, to summarize:

- Adam was to keep the Covenant by not eating of the tree.
- He was to keep the Covenant by perfectly believing what God had promised and threatened. And from that believing, obeying God perfectly.
- And the breaking of the Covenant would come by unbelief in what God had promised and threatened. And that unbelief would result in disobedience.
- And eternal life and eternal death were on the line.

4.) Now, was Adam able to keep the Covenant?

- Was he theoretically able to do it? Did he have the ability to keep the Covenant of Works?
- The answer is YES.
- Adam was not created sinful. He was made upright.
- As we read in Ecclesiastes 7:29, "See, this alone I found, that GOD MADE MAN UPRIGHT, but they have sought out many schemes."
- God made man, God made Adam perfectly righteous, without a sinful nature. And so, Adam theoretically could have kept the Covenant with God and merited eternal life.

BUT, there is something important to note here:

- Adam was upright. But he was not yet sealed in righteousness.
- So there was the possibility of his disobedience just as there was the possibility of his obedience.
- He could obey or he could disobey.
- He was not handicapped into disobedience. He really could've kept the Covenant.
- That's why theologians often call this the time of Adam's probation. He could merit life or descend into sin and misery.
- But, in what I must confess to be a mystery, he chose not to. He chose to disobey God and break the covenant. But he was not compelled to do so by any defect in his nature.
- God made man upright.

5.) Now, what I'm about to say I've already said. But I want to highlight it and make it more explicit.

•With whom was this Covenant made? With Adam only? Or with more people than Adam?

Well, in one sense, the Covenant was made with Adam alone.

- Everything hinged on Adam's obedience, not Eve's.
- The promise of eternal life for obedience was made to Adam and no one else. And that promise was never reestablished with fallen mankind after Adam sinned.
- The curse of the broken covenant, physical, spiritual, and eternal death, remains for those who descend from Adam, but the covenantal promise of life for obedience was not renewed.
- So, in a real sense, the Covenant was made only with Adam.

But, in another sense, the Covenant was made with Adam and all those who would descend from him by natural generation.

•That is, all of the natural offspring of Adam. And that's everyone except the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born miraculously, being placed in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

•As Paul said in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because ALL SINNED..."

•So, in some sense, when Adam sinned, we all sinned in him. When he broke the covenant, so did we.

And this brings up the concept of Federal Headship.

- A Federal Head is a covenant representative.
- The covenant is formally made with the Head/representative of the covenant. But that representative stands in the covenant for ALL THOSE under him.
- And, according to Romans 5:12, all of Adam's descendants are under him, for they all come from him.
- So, though the covenant was formally made with Adam, the covenant was also made with us IN ADAM.
- Adam stood for each one of us as our Federal Head in the Covenant of Works.
- And so, what he did, we did in him.
- His obedience would've been our obedience. And his disobedience is our disobedience.

The Covenant God made with Adam was formally with Adam alone, but it was also with all of us.

•Now, to this biblical truth, some will object. They will say, "That is unfair! I didn't ask for Adam to represent me! I should get to represent myself and not have Adam's disobedience imputed to me."

•To that objection, let me say two things:

1. Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

•God didn't ask for your permission. He doesn't need your permission.

•God is God. And so, as the sovereign Lord of all creation, He has the right to impose covenants on whomever He wills, however He wills.

•So, if you object to Federal Headship, you need to humble yourself and sit down and be silent before your Maker.

•God didn't ask you for your opinion. He simply reveals

in Scripture what He was pleased to do.

- As the Psalmist says, “Our God is the heavens; He does all that He pleases.” (Psalm 115:3)

2. If you reject the idea of Adam representing you in this covenant, then you have to reject the Gospel itself.

- You’ll see this more clearly in a moment.
- But know this: YOU WANT FEDERAL HEADSHIP!
- You want someone to represent you before God.
- That is your only hope to be saved from your sins and the imputed guilt of your father, Adam.

6.) Now, as I’ve said throughout, and as you all know, Adam broke the Covenant of Works.

- We read about this in Genesis 3.
- The Serpent, Satan, deceived Eve and she ate of the fruit of the tree.
- And then she took the fruit to Adam, gave it to him, and he ate as well.

Adam gladly and willfully broke the Covenant that God had made with him.

- He knew the promise of eternal life. But he despised it and did not believe God.
- Instead, he believed the lie of the Devil: That eating the fruit was better than what God had promised.
- And, by his unbelief, Adam disobeyed, ate, sinned, and brought the curse of the Covenant down upon himself and all those who would come from him.
- He brought the covenant curses down upon every one of us.

**And this is why the world is the way that it is:
Because of the disobedience of one man.**

•This is why we die. As 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, “For as in Adam all die...”

•In Adam, we die. We die physically, spiritually, and eternally, unless God has mercy and sets us free from the body of sin and death.

•It is by the disobedience of the one man that we see all the misery and sin in this world. Because sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so sin spread to all men.

•This is why the world is a mess. This is why there is suffering. This is why there is sin. This is why men are born with hearts that hate God.

•This is why men hate one another and harm one another.

•This is why men go to Hell when they die.

•It all goes back to our father Adam and the Covenant that he broke.

•God was faithful to His word. God promised death for unfaithfulness to the Covenant. And God gave what Adam merited.

•Adam earned this for all of us. Again, I say, “In Adam, all die...”

7.) Now, why is this so important for us to understand?

•Why do we need to understand the Covenant that God made with Adam?

•Answer: Because it sets the stage and points to the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Allow me to now read Romans 5:12-19:

[12] Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

[13] for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

[14] Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

[15] But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

[16] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

[17] For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

[18] Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

[19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

What's the Apostle getting at here?

- Adam was our Federal Head and he damned us all by his disobedience.

- His one trespass led to condemnation for all men. His one violation of the Covenant killed all of us and made us sinners and damnable.

- BUT another man has come. Another man has come of which Adam was a type, a foreshadowing, a lesser version of. And His name is Jesus Christ.

- And Jesus Christ, by His obedience, makes many to be righteous in God's sight.

- And this is a FREE GIFT. It is not by our works that we receive it, but by coming out of Adam and being put under Jesus Christ.

- Not by works, but by faith. Not by the merit of man, for we've forfeited that already, but by God's abundant grace we can receive life through the other man, Jesus Christ.

- Though many die in Adam, many will be justified in God's sight and receive eternal life through Jesus Christ.

- As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

And this must mean that Jesus brings a different covenant.

- He brings a NEW COVENANT.

- He brings a Covenant of Grace, that depends on faith to enter it and receive it's blessings and not our works.

- This means that Jesus is the Federal Head of a gracious covenant.

- Jesus is the Covenant Representative of the New Covenant that saves sinners.

- Adam is the Federal Head of a broken Covenant. But Jesus Christ is the Federal Head of a kept Covenant.

And in His Covenant, Jesus Christ did all the work necessary to redeem sinners from Adam's covenant.

- He, unlike Adam, perfectly obeyed God for His whole life. He perfectly kept Covenant with God through perfect and perpetual obedience, just as God demanded.

- And He did this in order to give all under His Headship right standing with God.

- Just as Adam's disobedience was credited to those under Him, so also Christ's obedience will be credited to all those who are under Him.

And He made atonement for His Covenant People by His blood.

- He suffered the covenant curses from God at the Cross. And He died in the place of all those who would come under His Federal Headship.

- He did this to satisfy the divine justice that Adam had incurred by his disobedience.

- And then He was raised from the dead as proof that God accepts His work in the place of all who were ever or would ever come under His Covenant.

Jesus Christ mediates a better covenant that saves sinners from the Adam's covenant.

- For Christ, the true and better Adam, has done all that God requires. And His work of obedience and atonement is credited to all those who are in Him.

And how do fallen sinners in Adam come under

Christ's Headship?

- How do we come into Christ's Covenant?
- BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE.
- Again, this is not a covenant of works. It is the Covenant of Grace!
- God graciously promises to justify the ungodly.
- God promises, with no threat of cursing, that He will save all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ!
- There are no sanctions in Christ's Covenant, for Christ has already bore the wrath of God in place of all who will trust in Him.
- There is only gracious blessing for those who are in Christ, for Christ has merited their salvation for them.

Death came into the world through Adam's sin.

- But salvation has come to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- For Christ has worked righteousness and died for all who will believe on Him.
- The Covenant made with Adam was broken. But the Covenant made in Christ was kept by Him.

8.) Brothers and sisters, do you see why you must know these things?

- How rich and glorious it is to know that we are in the New Covenant and not under Adam anymore!
- How good it is to know that Christ has redeemed us from the broken covenant!

So know this: Those who do not believe on Christ are still under the curse of the Covenant of Works.

- They are dead in their sins. They will die physically.

And then they will die eternally in Hell.

- BUT, those who believe on Christ are in a better covenant with the true and better Adam.

- You who believe, rejoice! You are saved!

We needed a new representative before God.

- Adam is not good enough. Adam condemns us all.

- But Jesus Christ represents all who trust in Him alone.

- And He is good enough. He can and will save all who come to Him by faith alone.

So trust in Christ.

- And rejoice that you are no longer in Adam, but have been graciously put into Christ.

- And in Him, you are safe and saved.

- And all this by God's grace alone.

May we all rejoice more deeply in the God of our salvation.

- Amen.