

Covenant of Works

By Nick Bibile

The meaning of covenant of works is that eternal life was promised to Adam by works of obedience.

God gave a law to Adam; this law came in the form of a covenant. It was a law and a covenant, just like the law that was given to the Israelites in Mt Sinai was also called a covenant.

Ex 24:7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

De 5:1 And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3 The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

The basic meaning of the covenant is a mutual agreement of two or more persons. It is to bind one self by contract, it is an agreement. Two people getting married enters into a covenant before God, it is an agreement that they will comply for one another.

Here the contracting parties were God and Adam. God is the governor of the earth and universe and Adam was the free moral agent who represented all humanity.

When God created man in his own image, man was made in the righteousness and holiness. He was without sin, he was perfect before God.

Ge 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Jesus said, God is spirit. Man has a soul and spirit. Man is different than all the other creatures as man was made in the image of God. We can worship God in truth and spirit. When God made man in his own image, man was capable of communion with his maker. As God made man in his own image, man bears and reflects the divine likeness. Man was also made in the moral image of God and there was original righteousness, holiness and knowledge in man.

Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

God gave a law to Adam; this law came in the form of a covenant. Then God entered into a covenant with Adam. In this covenant there was a promise, there was a condition and there was a penalty for breaking that promise.

Ge 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Man did not have any option that he should agree to this covenant or not since there was no alternative but obedience that was due to God. So this is not like a covenant that man makes among men but a covenant of God with man rather than a covenant of man with God.

Promise.

The promise was based upon Adam's obedience. If Adam obeyed there was eternal life for him if he disobeyed there was a penalty of death. In this probation period, he was perfect without sin. God gave a law to Adam, eternal life was promised upon his works of obedience.

Ga 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

The promise was life.

Mt 19:16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Ga 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

The day you eat, you shall surely die. If there is no transgression there is no punishment. "This do and thou shall live." This is the uniform way that God speaks to all the people who are under the law.

Also the law that was given to Adam is also called a covenant.

Hos 6:7 "but they, like men", (or like Adam) "have transgressed the covenant". Adam transgressed the covenant God made with him, so the Israelites had transgressed the covenant God made with them.

Condition.

God gave a law to Adam and God required perfect obedience.

De 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This was a legal covenant, as it demanded perfect obedience to the law. The word transgress comes from the Latin word transgredior and this is made up with two words, trans means across/over and gradior means to pass. The word transgress means to overpass, to trespass the law, to break, violate and to offend. Transgression of the divine law will bring destruction of fellowship between man and his Creator and divine displeasure.

Here we see Adam was in a probationary period, during this probationary period, he was going to be tested to see if he was willing to obey God in all things.

Penalty.

The penalty of breaking the covenant is death.

“For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The result of transgression is an evil act against God and it requires punishment, why? God is a holy righteous judge, he will not compromise disobedience.

The sanction of the law and covenant made with Adam, was death; "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die", #Ge 2:17 which includes death corporal, spiritual, or moral, and eternal.

1. Physical death, means separation of soul and body.

Ge 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

As soon as Adam sinned against God he became a mortal man, he was immediately subject to diseases, miseries and eventually death.

2. Spiritual death. This is the moral death, the communion, fellowship of God was broken, and the soul was separated from God. Image was broken.
3. Eternal death. An eternal separation from God. This is the loss of divine presence.

Mt 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death.

Eze 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Adam had a happy fellowship with God, this fellowship was holy and was an immortal existence of his soul and body but death is a separation of this fellowship, miseries of life, spiritual and eternal death. Man was made in the image of God, disobedience will ruin this image. Once the image is lost there will be no favor of God but all evil will flow from man's heart.

Adam Represented All Humanity.

Adam was the best as he was perfect without sin; he represented the whole human race. Just like a governor represents the people of California and the president represents the people of the United States. If the governor does good it affects all Californians and if the governor does bad we all suffer as he is our representative.

He was the head of the entire human race. All that was said to him and promised to him referred to all humanity. All that was threatened to him was not for him alone but for all humanity. (If you eat of it you shall surely die.)

When Adam sinned against God he did not sin as a private individual, but as a public person. Adam was the Father of the human race we all sinned in Adam. He represented all of us in the covenant of works.

The penalty was for all humanity as there was pain, trials, hardship and death.

Ge 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Ro 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Adam acted as the head of the entire human race, all men stood their probation in him and when Adam fell we all fell with him.

Now we are born to this world the infants looks very innocent and perfect but as soon they can talk, walk and act we see the sinful nature in us. We come into the world under condemnation. We by nature the children of wrath.

Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

The doctrine of Pelagian, which teaches that each man is born to this world free from sin and condemnation. Arminian doctrine believe when God told Adam when he eats of the fruit he shall surely die, Adam's heart was not totally corrupted, man still has some goodness in them that they can search for God and find God for salvation. But the Bible contradicts with their theology.

Men are still under the covenant of works, Adam represented all humanity, and although all fell from Adam the covenant still exists for all. Jesus told the man who wants to have eternal life, obey all the commandments; God looks at works of obedience.

Re 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Re 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

We know that the Bible says our works are like a filthy rag before God.

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteous-
nesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our
iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Jesus Represented His People and fulfilled the Covenant of Works.

Mt 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name
JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Adam being called the first man, and the first Adam, and described as
natural and earthly, in distinction from Christ is called the second
man, and the last Adam. Both were heads as both were
representatives. Adam represented all humanity and Christ
represented his people the elect of God, the true believers.

Ro 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,
so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Ro 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much
more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of
righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men
to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift
came upon all men unto justification of life.

Christ has fulfilled the conditions of covenant of works in behalf of his
people, and now offers salvation on the condition of faith.

If eternal life can be obtained by works of then there is no grace.
Then it would not be the gift of God but works of man.

Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of
yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

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