

## **APRIL TO JUNE 2021: THE PROMISE – THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**

A covenant is a **contract** or agreement between two or more parties; **between the 3 Persons of the Godhead and between God and humans in the context of Redemption.**

Before Time began, the 3 Persons of the Godhead not only planned the Creation of mankind, but also mankind's redemption. Redemption was not an afterthought; something that God put into place when Adam sinned. To say that is to contradict the Scripture. The Bible keeps on referring to this as something that was conceived before the world was made. Before man was ever created, this plan of redemption was clearly in the mind of God.

*God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Timothy 1:9, 10*

*In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Saviour. Titus 1:2, 3*

*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Ephesians 1:4*

*Christ indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for you. 1 Peter 1:20*

'The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" John 3:16. *Desire of Ages p. 22*

Before time began a covenant was made between the three Persons of the Godhead. Before time and creation, before God speaks the world into existence, the Father covenanted with the Son to redeem a people for their possession.

The Father is the Originator of salvation. The Son is the Executor i.e. He would accomplish this salvation. The Spirit would be the One who applies what the Son has achieved. He would be the Communicator to mankind of the gospel.

This Covenant between the Godhead made in eternity past is called the Eternal Covenant of Redemption.

Because of the eternal Covenant of Redemption, God was able to offer Mankind the Covenant of Grace when he sinned. The Covenant of grace offered to man throughout the history of Time is called the Everlasting (Eternal) Covenant, the New Covenant and in the New Testament it is called the Gospel.

**As Christians, we usually study redemption in terms of ourselves. How has God saved Me? Why did God save Me? How can I be sure I will be in heaven? Has God really forgiven my sin? Is God really making me righteous and sanctifying me? It's mainly about me!**

**But if we really want to have absolute confidence and no fear and uncertainty about our salvation we need to look at redemption from God's perspective. He is the initiator, guarantor and finisher of our salvation.**

**Because of this doctrine, we know that all of history moves climactically towards the end (the consummation) of salvation history as God works to redeem a people for Himself through the mediation of Jesus Christ.**

**'The Covenant of Redemption is the central ground of our salvation. Apart from this voluntary commitment of Christ to redeem a people for the glory of Himself and the Father, we would be utterly without hope. The whole history of**

mankind's redemption is simply the outworking of this commitment on the part of the Trinity in time. This precious truth should comfort us in pain, encourage us in fear, and strengthen us in weakness.

### **God mapped it out in eternity, and then put into operation in this world of Time.'**

The Bible is a Covenant document. Redemption is found in Christ Jesus alone. The Old Testament tells us of the promise and the prophecies; the New Testament tells us of its fulfilment in Christ Jesus.

'God's covenant is motivated by love, His love for the fallen race, a love that led Him to the Cross.

Thus, because of what Christ has done for us, we are able to love God. We surrender our sinful ways, our fears, our twisted notions of right and wrong. We do this not to gain something in return but because we already have been given the best that the Sovereign can give — Jesus Christ and the redemption found only in Him.

How does it all work? It is as simple as an exchange: Christ takes our sins and gives us His righteousness so that, through Him, we are accounted as righteous as God Himself. In this way, sin is no longer attributed to us; it no longer has to keep us separated from Him. Murderers, adulterers, bigots, liars, thieves, and even the incestuous can all be viewed as righteous as God Himself. And this wonderful gift, this accounting of righteousness, comes to them by faith, and faith alone. Hence the phrase, "righteousness by faith."

### **All 3 Persons of the Godhead are active in man's salvation:**

God the Father: *For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16, 17.*

God the Son: *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10*

God the Holy Spirit: *"When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...He will guide you into all truth." John 16:8, 13*

## **03.04.2021 WHAT HAPPENED?**

### ***In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Genesis 1:1***

The story of Creation as found in Genesis 1:1-2:3 is frequently referred to throughout the Bible. There are at least 75 references, either direct or indirect. An indirect reference is where certain words or ideas are taken from the Creation text – see 2 Corinthians 4:6 for an example. A direct reference is where a Bible quotes the creation text verbatim – see Hebrews 4:4 for an example.

One of the strongest arguments for Creation is the Bible itself. A Divinely inspired Book written by several authors who were moved by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:21), these authors wrote at various periods of history over a period ranging from about BC 1500 to AD 100 and all of them are true to the Creation story of Genesis 1. Above all, Christ Jesus who was Himself the Word of God, the *Logos* by Whom God has spoken to us today (John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:1-3) also affirmed the Creation story while on earth.

### **In the Image of the Maker**

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:26, 27*

Man was created in God's image. The 'Godlikeness' of man is seen in the Creation story itself: he is a rational being, able to understand and respond to God's commands; he is a responsible being, able to exercise dominion of service and

protection over nature; a social being with the capacity to love and be loved; and a spiritual being, able to know, communicate and worship the Creator.

*Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food." Genesis 1:28, 29*

Man walked and talked with God; he lived by every word of God. It was his pleasure to do God's will. One could say his morality in Eden was a perfect morality. His conduct was right because he lived in harmony with God, the God who is the Truth. He recognised the authority of God over him because he had been created in the image of God. He was holy, healthy and happy. He was a good steward of the earth.

### **The Test/Breaking the Relationship**

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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*

When God created Adam and Eve, they (and subsequently, all humanity) were created with free-will. They were given the power to choose whether they would live in accordance with God's character, which meant that they would do His will, or whether they would choose to disobey God's will and live autonomous lives independent of God.

It is important to understand that the omnipotent God has chosen to limit Himself in the area of the human will (and the will of any creature created with personhood and personality e.g. the angels). He will never force anyone to do His will. To live in harmony with His character must be a choice made freely.

*"Endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts, Adam and Eve were made but "little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations" E.G.W: Education, pg. 20*

When Adam and Eve listened to the lies of Satan and chose to live independent of God, following their own desires – the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) – they became self-centred. Instead of living by the will of God which is manifested in the life as unconditional, unending, self-giving love, they chose to live without acknowledging God. Their nature was now self-centred and sinful, and they would pass this nature to their progeny.

This was the Fall of man. From being a creature who lived in accordance with the character of God, he has now become a creature who lives apart from God, hostile to God and resentful of the claims of his Creator. He has lost the truth, he has lost the way to the tree of life and he has lost eternal life; all of which are the rewards of living a life in harmony with the character of God.

There was no need for man to choose to know evil. He was a creature made in the image of God who fellowshiped with God daily and knew the goodness of God personally. The day man disobeyed God, he would know what evil was, and what its consequences were. The most terrible consequence was death – 3 deaths. Adam and Eve would be spiritually dead in the day they ate thereof. Later there would be physical death, another consequence of sin. Finally, would be the penalty of sin, eternal death. These consequences they would pass on to their progeny, for their children would be born under the curse.

**Many ask 'what does obedience have to do with love?'** Let us look at the 2 great commandments: Love God with all your heart and mind and soul; love your neighbour as yourself. When we love someone who is dependent on us, who needs our help, we respond by planning what is best and doing what is best for that person e.g. the parent's relationship to his child.

But, when we are called to love someone who is superior to us, upon whom we are dependent, we can only manifest that love by obedience to that person's desires for us. We cannot plan good things for him nor do what is best for him. So it is with the child's relationship to the parent.

*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and*

said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." Genesis 3:8-10

God comes to meet Adam and Eve after they have disobeyed Him. Here is a wonderful thing that we must not forget. The infinite-personal God still communicates with us, even though we are fallen. It is we who hide ourselves from Him. He pursues us for He still loves us.

### The Gospel of Grace in Eden

*"And 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*

God promises mankind a Person – the Seed. Paul makes it clear in Galatians 3:16 that this is Christ Jesus. He will destroy the works of the Devil (Heb 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8). He will be the Second Adam, the father of a new race of the redeemed (Isaiah 53:10, Heb 2:13). There will always be enmity between the seed of Satan and the seed of Christ. And the victory of Christ over Satan is also promised to Christ's seed (Romans 16:20).

Messiah will be the 'Seed of the woman' – Christ was born of Mary with no human father.

### God's ultimate intervention in the person of His Son, Christ Jesus

The God who was in the beginning, has stepped into human history to restore to man the true image of God. Even if he wishes to, fallen man can no longer of himself live in harmony with God's law, because he has a self-centred nature which is the very opposite of God's self-giving love. So man cannot of himself, find the truth and the way to eternal life.

So God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. He is the Way, He is the Truth and He is the Life. By His life, death and resurrection, He has destroyed the works of the Devil (sin and death). By His blood He has paid the ransom for all. By His inclusive death, He has taken man's sinful nature to the Cross (Romans 6:6, Galatians 6:14). His perfect righteousness He gives us as a gift. And by ascending to the right hand of the Father, He has given to us the Holy Spirit who writes God's laws in our hearts, the Law of unconditional, self-giving love. Not only does the Spirit write the laws in our hearts, He enables us once again to live in harmony with the character of God.

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8*

