


END-TIMES ISSUES



#19 The Creation Mandate (often called a covenant).

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1

Last time: We looked at a "maybe/maybe-not" covenant.

- ✓ There are certain events that (according to some) appear to be **covenants** – even though the word "covenant" is not present in the text. Others disagree, and point out that certain features of a covenant are *not* present. So we are calling them "maybe/maybe-not" covenants.
- ✓ These possible covenants are:
 - (last time) **"The [Covenant of] Redemption,"** which focuses on what God planned for us *before creation even existed*. The facts we saw are *wonderful*, whether or not we call it a "covenant." [Viewing this as a covenant is less popular than it used to be.]
 - (today and next time) **God's instructions to Adam and Eve** during the creation week, and at the time they fell into sin. [Calling these "covenants" is quite common in the church today.]

2

God's instructions and judgments for Adam and Eve.

>> At creation (Genesis 1-2) & at the Fall (Genesis 3). <<

- ✓ **How many covenants?** (if viewed as being covenants)
 - Some view them as one covenant, or *one* covenant with two parts.
 - Most view them as two covenants.
- ✓ **The names often given to these possible covenants.** Different people will describe them in different ways. (You may have heard of one or more of these.)
 - As ONE covenant: Adamic Covenant.
 - As TWO covenants (or two parts of one covenant):
 - ① (instructions at creation): Edenic Covenant; Covenant of Works; Covenant with Creation.
 - ② (at the judgment, after they sinned): Adamic Covenant; Covenant of Grace.

3

- ✓ There is only one possible Scripture passage that *might* refer to these as a "covenant." *It is tenuous, having three possible interpretations – and being stated thousands of years after the events!* In the following verse, the Hebrew word אָדָם ('ā-dām) can be translated three ways:

- ❖ It can refer to the first human, who we call "Adam."

But they, like **Adam**, have transgressed the covenant; ...
Hosea 6:7a (BSB)

- ❖ The word can also refer to humans in general.

But they like **men** have transgressed the covenant; ...
Hosea 6:7a (KJV)

- ❖ It could refer to a city that had that name – see Joshua 3:16.

As at **Adam**, they have broken the covenant; ...
Hosea 6:7a (NIV)

- ❖ (It can also refer to the earth or soil. This doesn't fit the verse.)

4

- ✓ **We do NOT plan to debate the "covenant" idea.**

- Though the "covenant" idea is quite popular, we will take the view that, if the covenant concept was *needed*, for us to understand the Bible, God would have said it somewhere in (or near) the context of the passage.

- ✓ **We will describe these "maybe/maybe-not" covenants as two separate events, using the following terms:**

- **(today) The "Creation Mandate"** – God's instructions for how humans are to live.
 - ❖ Those who call this a "covenant" often say that this inaugurated an era of "innocence," when sin was not present in the world.
- **(next time) The "Fall"** – The consequences for choosing to sin.
 - ❖ Those who call this a "covenant" often say that this inaugurated an era of "grace" (which continues up to the present time), in which God takes away the penalty of sin for those who become his followers. They may also say that it inaugurated an era of "conscience," the time prior to God giving the law to Israel.

5

The "Creation Mandate."

- ✓ **What it is.**

- The initial instructions and activities between God and humans. These *define* the nature and right conduct of humans.
- This included information, commands, actions and prohibitions.
- This is the foundation for all that a human is to be and do – expanded further in the rest of Scripture, with some necessary adjustments (not contradictions) when sin entered the world.

- ✓ **Context.**

- Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 is an overview of creation, given by God. (For the most part, people were not there to witness it.) It includes the creation of the humans, emphasizing their *nature*, and some basic instructions regarding their purpose for existence.
- Genesis 2:4-25 is the first of 10 historical eyewitness accounts found in Genesis. It focuses on the creation of the humans (their *bodies*), and some of the details about their first activities.

6

Defining what it means to be "human."

✓ This is the focus of the Genesis 1 account of their creation.

- Though sin has had a negative impact on these things, these characteristics still remain.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind **in our image**, in our likeness, so that they may rule ..."

So God created mankind **in his own image, in the image of God** he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26a, 27 (NIV)

✓ What does this mean?

- God created humans to be as much *like* God as is possible for a *created being* to be. This makes us different from all the animals, even though, *physically*, we may share various characteristics with them.

7

✓ Being "like" God, or "in his image."

- This does not mean we *are* gods. We remain *created* beings.
- There are some characteristics that *God* has, which we *cannot* have: For instance, God is "omnipresent" (present in all places at all times). We aren't, and never will be.
- It *does* mean that we are to be God's representatives on earth. We have *authority* over the rest of creation. This is mentioned in Genesis 1:26, immediately after the reference to being made in "God's image/likeness."

Then God said, "Let us make mankind **in our image**, in our likeness, **so that they may rule ...**"

Genesis 1:26a (NIV)

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✓ Being "like" God – other issues/characteristics ...

- There are certain abilities and characteristics that we have, which far exceed the abilities of animals. We have them, because they are characteristics of *God*. (The difference: God has them *infinitely*, we only *finitely*.)
 - ❖ Examples: The ability to communicate with complex language (God is the author of communication); the ability to grow in knowledge (God is *all-knowing*); the ability to rule over creation (God is the *sovereign* ruler over all).
- The *moral* aspect of being "in God's image" is very significant. In the New Testament, salvation involves becoming *like* God – and the focus is on moral issues!

... created to be like God **in true righteousness and holiness.**

Ephesians 4:24b (BSB)

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✓ The relationship between male and female.

So God created mankind **in his own image, in the image of God** he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

- Both male and female are *created* by God to reflect God's image. God did not create them to *compete* with each other, but to *complement* each other, each having some characteristics and abilities that the other does not have.
- One special application of this involves marriage, which God defines at the end of Genesis 2. "The two shall be one" (as described in chapter 2:24) is a *limited reflection (or picture) of the very nature of God* – who is described as "one" [O.T. name "Yahweh"], yet is also revealed as "three" [N.T. description as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."]

10

The "Creation Mandate": What are its features?

✓ Introduction: The Mandate's obligations have not gone away.

- The obligations still exist. Sin has made it more difficult to do them rightly; but it has not cancelled them.
- Because of the presence of sin, some obligations have been modified to a degree.

✓ God provided what was needed, so that we could do these things.

- Genesis 1 and 2 describe God's provisions – food for sustenance, and a world filled with natural resources. The "garden" of Eden was more like a nature preserve – not rows of carrots, beans, flowers, etc., like many people imagine.
- Originally, all living creatures ate *plants* (Genesis 1:30). But after the ecological devastation caused by the Flood (Genesis 7), God permitted the eating of *meat* (Genesis 9:3).

11

✓ Ruling over the earth (under God's ultimate rule).

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, **so that they may rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; **fill the earth and subdue it. Rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:26, 28 (NIV)

- This obligation to rule does *not* mean to "trash and destroy it"; but to take care of it and use it for God's glory. The first example of this is in chapter 2, where the man learns the significance of various animals and names them accordingly.
- Sin has complicated matters. We have brought the earth under a curse, and cannot perfectly fulfill this obligation.

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- This obligation is the basis for just about every aspect of human endeavor – science and technology, culture and society, art and aesthetics, and more. We are to use (and improve) creation for the good of humanity and the glory of God.
- Today, work is often burdensome, rather than a joyful activity. This is *not* God's fault, but is the result of sin (Genesis 3). Even so, we still have an obligation to work... and not doing so (i.e., laziness) is *sin!* (Consider: Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; and 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.)
- When Jesus returns and restores creation, the burdensome aspect of work (caused by sin) will be removed.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but because of the One who subjected it, in hope that **the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay** and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:19-21 (BSB)

13

✓ Marriage and procreation, so the mandate can be accomplished worldwide.

- Fulfilling these obligations *over the whole earth* is going to require more "image-bearers." This is part of the mandate that makes it possible.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth..."

Genesis 1:28a (NIV)

- Chapter 2 goes into more details about this. Adam was given a task that would require a *helper*, in order to accomplish it.
- Today, in this present world situation, marriage is *not* the calling for *some* people. Even so, moral purity *is* the calling for *all*. (See 1 Corinthians 7.)

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- Sin has complicated matters. People have distorted and perverted every aspect of this issue.
- *Even so, what God has said remains unchanged.* God has defined the nature of male, female, and marriage; and this is not open for redefinition by *rebellious humans* – who, by nature, *suppress truth* (Romans 1:18+).

Jesus answered, "Have you not read that from the beginning **the Creator 'made them male and female,'** and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **the two will become one flesh'?**

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 19:4-6 (BSB)

15

✓ Taking time to focus on God.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy**, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV)

- This is not a *command*, but a *pattern* to follow. It pertains to our moral obligation to take time *away from* our daily activities, and to redirect our focus to God and *his* works. *Those who love God will choose to do this.* *It's a reflection of the desires of their hearts.*
- Israel was told to set aside the *Sabbath* (Saturday) for this purpose; but in the New Testament, a specific day was not specified. In the early church, saved Jews tended to do this on Saturday, and saved Gentiles on *Sunday* (in memory of Jesus' resurrection). But some – especially slaves – had to take the opportunity *whenever* they could, regardless of what day it was.

16

✓ Loyalty to God – trusting God and the pursuit of moral purity.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are **free to eat** from any tree in the garden; but you **must not eat** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Genesis 2:16-17 (NIV)

- God had provided them with everything they needed for *physical* sustenance. They had no needs that would require them to eat from this tree.
- There was nothing magical with this tree. It was a *moral* test; and was *needed*, in order for them to grow *morally*. The prohibition was also easy to obey, and would demonstrate that their love for God was greater than their love for themselves. Had they responded properly, this tree would have been a *blessing* for them.
- [We will focus on their choice next time.]

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What does all this mean for us today?

✓ There is a connection between these obligations and those given us in later in Scripture.

- The instructions in the Creation Mandate are directly or indirectly related to all the moral obligations given later in Scripture. (See the chart on the next page.)

✓ The presence of sin has complicated matters, making it more difficult for us to obey these commands.

- Because of this, there is a greater need for the "negative" commands ("Don't do this"), for the purpose of *restraining* sin. Yet even so, the "negative" commands *imply* "positive" obligations.
- We also need *changed hearts*, in order to obey the commands *willingly*. Otherwise, they are merely *external* restraints, and people will tend to rebel against them.

18

Creation Mandate	As an expression of love	The 10 Commandments
Marriage and procreation	Love for neighbor.	All of the "people-focused" commands.
Ruling over creation (in behalf of God)	Love for God <i>and</i> love for neighbor.	Related to the Sabbath command ("work 6 days"); also to some of the "people-focused" commands.
A God-focus and loyalty to God	Love for God.	All of the "God-focused" commands.

The prohibitions in the 10 Commandments imply *obligations*. For instance, since we have an obligation to *work* as an expression of love for neighbor, *not* doing so (laziness) is the same as *stealing* from others an expression of love that we *owe* them. It is also stealing, if we expect others to provide for our needs, when we are unwilling to do so.

OUR MISSION...

These instructions provide the most basic description of how we are to live.

The rest of the Bible provides the details!

Ultimately, everything that is a legitimate part of life and human culture is implied here (though not directly stated). Though sin has complicated matters (as described in the rest of the Bible), *these basic obligations remain*. They show us that God is concerned with *all aspects of our lives*.

God created us for a purpose! Life has meaning! So... *live it!*

So whether you eat or drink or **whatever you do**,
do it all to the glory of God.

1Corinthians 10:31 (BSB)

Credits

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