

Theme: In creation, God entered into a covenant with humanity as the image of God, calling us to worshipful obedience through proper relationships with creation, other humans, and God Himself.

I. Intro - From Seed To Tree

- A. Acorns grow to oaks and embryos already have all genetic information in them
- B. Here we see the seed, the embryo, of God's covenants and God's story
- C. We will take three weeks to unpack this; need more!
- D. After Hours - why this is a covenant

II. The Covenant Of Creation

- A. Humanity is the image of God and is in a special relationship with Him
Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
²⁷ 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
 - 1. Only humanity is in God's image, and this image is given to us in our very creation
 - 2. Repeated for emphasis - this is central to humanity
 - 3. It is set in poetry and repeated for emphasis - this is central to what God is doing in the cosmos
- B. But we are under covenant obligations to God
 - 1. God is the Creator of everything - including us!
 - 2. God speaks commands to us that must be obeyed

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

- a. God not only commands us to be fruitful like the rest of creation, but we are told to rule over creation
- b. The covenant Lord is issuing commands to His covenant servant

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15–17

- 1. Once again our covenant responsibility to exercise dominion over creation is brought to the fore.
- 2. We are given limits - we are not free to do all we please, but must obey our Covenant Lord.

C. Our place in creation - what it means to be human!

- 1. We occupy a special place in God's creation as His image-bearers given authority over creation
- 2. We are under God's authority and have covenant obligations we owe to Him

III. Our Covenant Responsibilities To Creation

- A. Our covenant responsibility to rule creation
God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

1. Subdue (כבש) - a word of power

- a. 2 Samuel 8:11 - David subdued surrounding nations
King David dedicated these articles to the Lord, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had **subdued**: 2 Samuel 8:11
- b. Jeremiah 34:11,16 - freed slaves enslaved again
But afterward they changed their minds and took back the slaves they had freed and **enslaved** them again... ¹⁶ But now you have turned around and profaned my name; each of you has taken back the male and female slaves you had set free to go where they wished. You have **forced** them to become your slaves again. Jeremiah 34:11, 16
- c. This word has a strong flavor to it; this speaks of strength to make something comply

2. Rule (רָדָה) - a word of kingship

- a. The King/Messiah will rule over the nations
He will **rule** from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. Psalm 72:8
- b. The King/Messiah will rule - even over His enemies
The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will **rule** in the midst of your enemies. Ps 110:2
- c. This word also has a strong flavor to it; this speaks of rulership that can even make something comply
- d. This word means that humanity is to be kings over creation, subduing and ruling it to serve God

3. Work (עבד) - a word of labor and worship

- a. Most common Hebrew word for work or labor
Six days you shall **labor** and do all your work, Exodus 20:9

- b. The first 5 times it is used it refers to working the ground - tilling the soil so it produces crops
- c. Noun form means servant or slave - so there is again a strong note to this word.
- d. This word is also used to mean “worship”, especially in the work of priests
I told you, “Let my son go, so he may **worship** me.” Exodus 4:23
They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by **doing** the **work** of the tabernacle. Numbers 3:7
 1. ‘Doing’ is a verb; ‘work’ is the noun form of this word
 2. Used to refer to priestly work 82 times in Numbers!
- e. Humans are to do the priestly work of worship as they labor in creation, leading it in worship to God.

B. Our covenant responsibility to care for creation

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and **take care of it**. Genesis 2:15

1. Take care of (שמר) - Guard, watch, keep, protect
If a man gives his neighbor silver or goods for **safekeeping** ... ¹⁰ If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to his neighbor for **safekeeping**... Exodus 22:7, 10

The Lord bless you and **keep** you; Numbers 6:24

He will not let your foot slip — he who **watches** over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who **watches** over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The Lord **watches** over you — the Lord is your shade at your right hand; Psalm 121:3–5

2. We are to care for and protect creation, as God cares for us, or as we would take care of a friend’s precious possessions.

3. This word is thus a strong balance to the idea of subduing, ruling, and working.
4. The word “take care of” (שמר) also means to guard. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and **take care** of it. Genesis 2:15

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to **guard** the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24
 - a. As the priest-king in the Garden, Adam was also to guard and protect it from dangers/invaders.
 - b. When Adam failed, a flaming sword is placed to “guard” the tree of life from us!
5. As priest-kings, humanity has a call to guard and protect what God has given us from anything that would try to harm or seduce it away from God.

C. The balance of ruling and caring for creation

1. We have been given authority over creation to have it serve us, and creation will thrive best when we are not letting it lie fallow or in its pristine state, but rather when we work and develop it to bring out its God-given potential.
2. But we must never brutalize or mistreat creation, for it ultimately belongs to God and we will be held accountable for how we treat it.
3. This is why the Sabbath laws include both land and animals - they must be given rest. We are given authority to own and use their labor, but there are limits for they ultimately belong to God, not us.

4. This guards against the two great errors in our relationship to creation
 - a. Some human worship the creation (idolatry) and believe that human authority over the creation is a blight and curse rather than a blessing
 - b. Some humans treat the creation as raw material that we may treat however we like, refusing to recognize the limits placed by God and the inherent beauty and worth of all creation.
 - c. Beware both extremes for they are equally unbiblical and wicked!

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I understand that creation matters?

1. God said creation was very good - He likes it!
2. God commanded us to develop & care for creation
3. His law contains commands for how we must treat animals & the land - so to not care for them is sin
4. Part of our rebellion against God is to destroy the gift of creation
The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great — and for destroying **those who destroy the earth.**” Revelation 11:18
5. The climax of the story is the new heavens and earth, which shows great continuity with the present creation (garden, tree of life, same name)
6. The idea ‘it is all gonna burn’ is profoundly unbiblical

7. Jesus fulfills this call, showing it has eternal validity
It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸ and put everything under his feet.” In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:5–9

- a. Ruling creation is part of God’s eternal call for humanity
- b. We are presently at war with creation - but Jesus is fulfilling this call as the 2nd Adam!
- c. This is part of His redemptive work (v9)

B. Do I see my work is part of God’s covenant?

1. The call for us to labor and work precedes the fall!
2. Work is part of the image of God in us
3. The call to be a pastor or missionary is no more sacred and part of God’s covenant than the call to be a scientist, doctor, lawyer, farmer, secretary, or police officer - God’s covenant call covers all of life!
4. Work is even part of our worship to God!
5. Do I think God is as interested in my work and other callings as He is in my “church” life?

6. Do I approach work and my other callings in life as worship and service to God - or just a burden?
7. Do I regularly and consciously commit my work to God in prayer?

C. Closing prayer

The Covenant of Creation - Part 1

Genesis 1:26-2:3; 2:15-17

January 12, 2020

Prayer

Psalms 90:16-17

Teaching keywords: Covenant; creation; humanity; calling and work

May God reveal Himself to you and your children. ¹⁷ May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon you; may He establish the work of your hands, blessing you to be a blessing! Psalm 90:16–17

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground —

everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And 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 1:26–2:3

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” Genesis 2:15–17