

Theme: God's covenant of creation calls us to obey Him as our covenant Lord, embracing the limitations He built into us at creation, including receiving and celebrating the gift of Sabbath rest.

## I. Intro - I, Robot

- A. Sci-Fi movie (loosely based on Asimov book)
- B. AI robots malfunction; central AI has rebelled
- C. A familiar trope in sci-fi - we want AI like us, but what if they rebel?
- D. This is a key element in what it means to be human - how we relate to our Creator

## II. Our Covenant Responsibilities

- A. Our responsibilities to creation are ultimately obligations to God Himself

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...**"  
<sup>28</sup> 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 1:26, 28

- 1. God created humanity with the purpose of ruling over creation & we owe Him obedience to this call.
- 2. God blesses us and gives us the commands related to creation - these are not options but commands!

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

- 3. God created us with the purpose of working and caring for creation and we owe Him obedience to this call.
- 4. This is why our various types of labor are callings from God.

- B. Our responsibilities to humanity are ultimately obligations to God Himself

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth..." Genesis 1:28

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

- 1. God makes us male and female and commands us to be fruitful and increase in number until the earth is filled.
- 2. This responsibility to human sexuality and to family is not optional but is a covenant obligation to our Creator God.
- 3. All of our obligations are ultimately to God  
Question 54: How are the Ten Commandments divided?  
The Ten Commandments are divided into two parts; the first teaches what we owe directly to God, and the second teaches what we owe to God in the way we treat our fellow humans.
- 4. This is why the second great commandment is directly linked to the first.
- 5. There is no area of life that is not under covenant obligation to God as our Creator & Covenant Lord.

### III. Our Covenant Responsibilities To God

#### A. Our covenant responsibilities to God, our Covenant Lord

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> 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. v15 - the general call to obey God; v16 - a specific command as a test of obedience
2. We ought to obey God for He is our Creator and Sustainer and thus all we have is from Him.
3. We ought to obey God for this is what we were made to do - it is inherent to our humanity.
4. This is the first time “command” is used in Scripture. The idea was implicit in God’s words to us previously, but it is now made explicit.
5. This is part of the principle that God’s commands are not just the physical laws and norms of the physical created order, but include His Word to us.
6. As the image of God, humans have the freedom to choose to obey or disobey God that the rest of creation does not possess. This is inherent in our humanity.
7. This direct command is a test: will we obey or choose to go our own way?

#### B. Sabbath - the gift of freedom through limitations

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> 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 2:1–3

1. This is the first mention of Sabbath in Scripture. Sabbath is a massive principle in Scripture and it is all rooted in this text.
2. God rested - not to recover (for He can not tire) but because what He had done was sufficient so He stopped. The creation was ‘completed’ and ‘finished’ - God had done what needed to be done.
3. Sabbath means to cease or stop. For God, this meant stopping His process of active creation as it had reached the state He desired. For humans, it means to stop our daily labor and rest.
4. Sabbath is a gift of God given to creation and especially to humanity. It gives us the freedom to stop our labor, to rest, and to enjoy God’s good gifts. Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27
5. Sabbath will later be a special part of God’s covenant with Israel, but the original Sabbath applies to all humanity. It is God’s gift of rest, enjoyment and refreshing, and any human, institution, or civilization that ignores the principle of Sabbath is violating the covenant of creation and inviting disaster.
6. Sabbath is a sign that we recognize we belong to God and therefore are willing to rest. It is a recognition that God is the Creator and Sustainer, not us, and that our needs are met in Him, not in our labor nor what we possess.
7. Thus this rhythm of labor and rest, of developing creation but accepting God-given limits, is a cycle of worship to God.

8. For the people of God, Sabbath has other dimensions as well. Two key ones are:
  - a. In the Ten Commandments, Sabbath is related to both creation and redemption, rest and worship.
    1. Exodus 20 - creation and rest
 

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:11
    2. Deuteronomy 5 - redemption and worship
 

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. Deut 5:15
    3. Thus for us, Sabbath is not only a time to rest; it is also a time to gather with God's people for worship. It is not only a recognition that God is our Creator, but He is also our Redeemer.
  - b. The Sabbath points to our eternal rest
 

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:9–11

    1. The goal of all history is for us to enter God's rest, to fully enjoy God and all His blessings!
    2. Each week we get a foretaste of this as we rest from our labors, celebrate the Gospel that gives us rest from our works, worship God and look forward to the Eternal Sabbath.

9. Thus, for believers the Sabbath is a double blessing, providing rest from earthly labors and renewing God's Work in us as we look forward to our eternal Sabbath rest!
10. This Sabbath rest is given to us by Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath!

#### IV. Applying the Word

- A. Embracing the covenant of creation via limits
  1. We live in a culture that proclaims "No limits!"
  2. Since the fall humans have chafed against any limits, thinking true freedom is found in casting off any limits and doing as we please.
  3. Because humans are creatures, we have inherent limits given to us by God, and we only flourish when we recognize and embrace those limits.
  4. These limits are both physical and spiritual, natural and moral. If we reject them it leads to destruction, but if we embrace them it leads to peace and flourishing.
  5. The covenant of creation is full of such limits, defining a proper relationship to creation, ourselves, and God.
  6. Do I recognize that the path to flourishing is NOT "No limits!" but rather recognizing and submitting to our God-given limits?
  7. Do I recognize that freedom is found not in rejecting these God-given limits but embracing them?
  8. Do I embrace the limits of the covenant of creation, knowing they define humanity and are for my good?

## B. Embracing the covenant of creation via Sabbath

1. Sabbath is key in this passage - and our story!
2. Our first full day was Sabbath, we are called to imitate God in practicing Sabbath, and we are heading to an eternal Sabbath.
3. But our modern world has crowded out Sabbath!
4. NY Times articles - Japanese convenience stores not allowed to close; Puerto Rico trying to pass law limiting youth sports because they are out of control
5. But Sabbath is essential for us to embrace the covenant of creation
6. Do I regularly practice Sabbath?
7. Do I gather with God's people each week for worship?
8. Do I set aside regular time for rest and renewal?
9. Do I accept limits or do I let my restless quests crowd Sabbath out of my life?
10. Do we practice Sabbath as a family?
11. Sabbath is essential in embracing the covenant of creation, and it is central in what it means to be human - and it is a great gift from God!

## C. Closing prayer

### The Covenant of Creation - Part 3

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

January 26, 2020

Prayer

Blessing for Sabbath rest

Teaching keywords: Covenant; humanity; obedience; sabbath and rest

May you be blessed by the LORD your God, Who has chosen You as His people and given You His Word. May you be filled with Sabbath rest and all the blessings of creation and redemption, through Jesus Christ our Covenant Lord.

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."<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> 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."

<sup>29</sup> 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."<sup>30</sup> 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.

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

<sup>2:1</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> 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