

Introduction to Covenant Theology- Part 1

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Thursday, 18 September 2008 14:30 -

Millions of people do millions of things, live and die, every day. There are two, only two people, and what they did, in all of human history that are truly pivotal. (We know this and what we are going to write next, only because God, in the Scripture has revealed it.)

Before the beginning of time, God had a vision of a world and of people in that world. He created the earth and put the first person on it. This person was the first of billions- the prototype, if you will. He was created to be the image of God on earth- like God in a number of key ways and as such he was intended to represent God as His caretaker of the earth. Most of all this man, and all human beings like him, were meant to live in a perfect relationship with his Creator. That perfect relationship required perfect obedience. Failing this would require God to scrub the entire mission.

The one man did fail. He could not live up to his Maker's (his father's) expectation of him. His Maker had devised a test case: if Adam (the man's name) were to obey his "Father" perfectly in this matter (he was commanded not to eat a particularly desirable piece of fruit) all would be well and his Maker would grant him Real (Eternal) Life. Obviously, Adam already had physical life and up to this point had been a good person. This deal between God and Adam has been called, by Theologians, a "Covenant", specifically **the "Covenant of Works."** Adam's work of obedience in this case was required of him if he were to be given Life. His obedience would not earn or merit life- it was not a quid pro quo (Obedience for Life) as though they were of equal value or importance, nor did Adam's obedience force or compel God to give him Life. The latter would remain a gift- God owed that Man nothing and certainly the creature had no coercive power over his Creator. The whole "covenant" was His idea in the first place. If Adam lived up to His expectation, it was God's gracious will to freely give him this gift of Life- conditioned, yes, but not required or deserved. But Adam failed. He was denied Life.

What makes this one act so devastating for the rest of Humanity, is that Adam represented all of us. He was our "federal" head. Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 teach that Humanity is represented by Adam. He is our federal head, as it were. "Federal" comes from a Latin word for a "Compact" or League and that word, in turn, comes from another word, meaning trust. "Federal" refers to a compact or agreement in which separate states, in trust, surrender much of their authority to a central government over them all. In Theology, it is said that all individuals, all humanity, is united under the authority of Adam. As our representative, he acts on our behalf. What he does involves us all. We all are accountable for his actions. We all disobeyed "in Adam" and we all died "in Adam". His actions are our actions. The big difference- we never voted on this arrangement. It is not voluntary. It is a God-idea.

Likewise, Christ is the Second Adam. He is the federal Head, the representative of those who have chosen out of Humanity to be God's Elect. He represents us and acts on our behalf. What he does involves us all. We all are accountable for his actions. His actions are our actions. We never voted on this arrangement, either. It, too, is not voluntary. It is also a God-idea. And we are eternally grateful for it!