

“What is the Gospel: Part 4”

Review: God, the true God, who is one in number and three in person, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, created man, therefore God has the right to tell man what He wants him to do. The rule that God gave man to keep was the Ten Commandments, and when Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he broke all ten of them.

II. And this brings us to the second main point: The Fall brought man into a condition of condemnation.

A. Let's back up for a moment to look more closely at the situation in the garden of Eden and the covenant which God made with Adam.

1. When God put Adam in the garden, He entered into a covenant with him.

a. Adam's job was to cultivate the garden and to guard it.

(i) Gen. 2:15 “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

(ii) Adam was to take care of the plants that needed a man to take care of them, otherwise they would die. Work was already a part of the world that God had placed the man in.

(iii) But he had another job, and that was to guard the garden, for it was the sanctuary of God.

(a) We are told that God dwelt on a mountain which was in Eden.

(b) We read in Ezekiel 28:11-19, ““Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more.’”””

(c) Since God's presence dwelt in the garden on the mountain, that made

the garden holy, the sanctuary of God. Adam's job was to guard that sanctuary against intruders. That is the meaning of the word "keep," which in Hebrew means to "guard," and is the same word used of the those who guard the Temple of God.

- b. God also entered into a covenant with Adam.
 - (i) We read about it last week in Genesis 2. After the Lord placed the man in the garden, He said to him, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (vv. 16-17).
 - (ii) A covenant is an agreement between two parties. In this case, an agreement between God and man. There were different kinds of covenants known to the Jews in those days: a Parity Treaty, in which two who are equal make an agreement, and a Suzerainty Treaty, in which an agreement is imposed upon a vassal by a conquering king. This covenant was in the form of a Suzerainty Treaty.
 - (iii) God declares Himself to be the God of Creation and the One who created Adam, as we saw last week. He shows who He is and why it is that Adam should obey Him.
 - (iv) He then tells Adam what He wants him to do. He may eat of any tree of the garden, but not from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - (v) What would happen if he did? "In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (v. 17).
 - (vi) What would have happened if he hadn't? He would not have died, but presumably would have gained access to the tree of life (2:9; 3:22), which represented the eternal life Adam would have gained.
 - (vii) We are even told that this was a covenant agreement in Hosea 6:7, which reads, "But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me."
 - (viii) This is what we call the Covenant of Works, because Adam's happiness depended upon what he did in the garden.
- c. We also learn that in this covenant Adam represented the whole human race.
 - (i) This explains the situation that all mankind came into as a result of the Fall.
 - (ii) Paul tells us that when Adam sinned, all sinned and therefore death spread to all men, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (v. 19). "For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21-22).
 - (iii) Adam represented all his posterity in this covenant. This is why his sin, and only this one sin, was imputed to all of his children. If he had succeeded, all of his posterity would have been confirmed in righteousness. If he failed, all of them would perish.
 - (iv) Some have even speculated that Adam knew that the well-being of his

posterity was dependent upon his success. If so, this would have given him an additional motivation to remain true to God.

2. But Adam broke that covenant, and as we have seen, plunged all of his children who were born by ordinary generation into everlasting ruin.
 - a. We have seen this in the passages just quoted.
 - b. The devil entered into the garden in the form of a serpent, or by possessing a serpent. We have seen how he got into the garden from the passage in Ezekiel. This was the test that would allow the probation of Adam to come to a climax. Would he repel this intruder, this counselor of rebellion against God's Law, or would he obey God?
 - c. The devil didn't go straight to Adam, but to the weakest link first, to Eve. He tempted her, and she fell by eating the forbidden fruit. Then Eve gave some to Adam, and he ate.
 - d. God then appears and pronounces the curse of the broken covenant on them. They will die and return to the dust. They are under God's judicial wrath.
 - e. Through Adam's sin, all mankind also falls under that same judgment of the broken covenant of works. Paul writes, "Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men" (Rom. 5:18).

3. Now why is it important to be able to explain this to an unbeliever?
 - a. All men need to know that they have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.
 - b. All men need to know that they are justly condemned for Adam's sin and for their own.
 - c. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
 - d. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

4. What should you do if someone objects to being held accountable for Adam's sin?
 - a. Point out to them the idea of representation is a valid one: Ex. Elected official, a hit man.
 - b. If they object that they didn't choose the man to represent them in the garden, tell them that God gave them a perfect representative. If any of us had been in the garden, we would have done the same thing.
 - c. If they object on this ground, then they must also object to Christ's taking the place of His people in the Covenant of Grace.

- B. But there's more that they need to know. They need to know what their present condition is. Apart from God's grace they are completely unable to do anything to save themselves. And if they are not saved, then they will be severely punished throughout all eternity.
 1. First, the Fall has left man in a state that he is unable to do anything to save himself.
 - a. Man is totally depraved. What does this mean?
 - (i) Every part of his being is affected by sin.

- (ii) Everything he does is tainted by sin.
- b. Because of this, man is also totally unable to do anything to commend himself to God.
- (i) “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8).
 - (ii) “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).
 - (iii) “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (6:65).
 - (iv) “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Rom. 3:10-12).
- c. Why is it important that an unbeliever know that this is true?
- (i) He needs to know that there is nothing he can do save himself.
 - (ii) He needs to know that he cannot even of himself receive the gift of eternal life that God offers him, but is absolutely dependent upon God from first to last for his salvation.
2. But he also needs to know what the penalty is for his crimes.
- a. What is that penalty? “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).
 - b. What if he says, “So what! All men die”? The severity of it needs to be emphasized.
 - c. What is the severity of that penalty? Eternity in hell.
 - d. What is hell? Is it the absence of God? No. It is the presence of God in all His fury.
 - e. How bad is it?
 - (i) It is a place of agony. “Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:22-23).
 - (ii) It is a place where there is no comfort. “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:24-26).
 - (iii) It is a place where this goes on forever. Jesus said, “And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:47-48). And

John writes of those who are cast into the lake of fire, “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night” (Rev. 14:11).

- (iv) It is a place of torment, because it is a place of punishment. It goes on forever, because the punishment is for offending the infinitely holy God.
 - (v) There are also degrees of punishment, based on the sins we commit in this life.
 - (a) “And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more” (Luke 12:47-48).
 - (b) “But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you” (Luke 10:10-14).
 - (c) “The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecc. 12:13-14). God will bring everything in to judgment and will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. 2:6).
 - (vi) There are also those who believe that the sins that men commit in hell will increase their judgment.
- f. Why is it important for an unbeliever to understand the severity of hell?
- (i) To awaken him to his danger.
 - (ii) To motivate him to begin to look for the Redeemer.
 - (iii) Next week, we will look at what God did to save sinners from their dilemma.