Seven Covenants:  
The Temptation of Man

I. Introduction

A. A Biblical Theme

1. **Covenant**: "An agreement between two or more parties outlining mutual rights and responsibilities."\(^1\)

2. **Dispensation**: Much like an act in a play, a dispensation is a period of history in which God administers His rule and authority over humanity through a specific revelation. Each dispensation brings humanity under an obligation to a new revelation and tests man in regards to that revelation. Each dispensation ends with a judgment for man’s failure.

B. Review

1. The creation of Man.

   - God creates the first man, Adam.

   - He is a living soul, distinct from the animal creation.

   - God’s provision for Adam is abundant and glorious and included relationship with someone of his own kind.

   - Adam is addressed as a person and granted the gift of freedom.

2. The Responsibility of Man

   - In the Garden, God plants two Trees, Life and Knowledge.

   - Man is given a single, simple command – do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

   - To enforce God’s commandment He introduces the threat of capital punishment.

---

Genesis 3:1–6

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

II. The Serpent of Paradise

A. The Serpent in the Garden

1. Introduction of the Serpent

   a. We see an abrupt transition in the text from an observation of man’s state of innocence to a description of a particular animal in the garden – the serpent.

   - Matthews says, “The serpent is unforeseen in the narrative and appears suddenly. The reader is caught off guard, but not as unsuspecting as Eve.”

   - Ancient readers would have a strong sense of foreboding at this point but the text in some sense seeks to minimize this.

   - The New American Commentary says, “‘Crafty’ (ʿārûm) can be spoken of approvingly or negatively, thereby introducing ambiguity at this stage in the story.”

   - The serpent is, after all, a creature of God. Furthermore, the whole of creation has been declared by God to be “very good.”

   - However, there is a word play between the couple’s nakedness (ārummîm) and the serpent’s craftiness (arum). They are naïve and oblivious to moral danger, but the serpent has understanding.


3 Ibid.,
- This is high drama at its best.

2. The Nature of the Serpent

a. A serpent that speaks? “And he said to the woman” (v. 1b)

- We now see something of the serpent’s craftiness – he speaks. Apparently this is what distinguished him from all of God’s other creations. This is important when we consider that the angels are the only other intelligent creations of God.

b. But is it a real serpent?

- Is the serpent being personified? Is this a mere literary device?

- It is certainly the case that Genesis is written to demonstrate God’s superiority over the forces of chaos and opposition. This is seen in the use of the term ‘tannîn’, a monster in the ancient myths, but in Genesis a mere sea creature that was created by God.

- Some would argue that the serpent then is a symbol of evil and opposition and not a real creature.

c. A real event

- nāchāsh, naw-khawsh; a snake (from its hiss):— serpent.4

- We must take the text of Genesis as relating history or we lose the whole significance of man’s creation.

- So who, or what, is this serpent that suddenly appears in the midst of the Garden to entice Adam and Eve into sin?

B. The identity of the Serpent

1. In the ancient world

a. From the Hopi Indians of North America to the Buddhists of Tibet the serpent prevails as a symbol of spiritual realities. In almost every culture known to man the snake has made an appearance in the religious expression of its people.

- The serpent appears in various roles in Egyptian mythology. “[Apophis was] the great serpent of the underworld, enemy of Horus, Ra, and Osiris, as well as of the dead, and the personification of evil. Set was the snake which endured forever and punished wicked souls in hell.”

2. In the modern world

- Some of the Indian fascination with serpents has been exported to the west in the form of Kundalini yoga and other elements of Hinduism. Ankerberg describes the concept of Kundalini saying, “In Hindu mythology and occult anatomy, the goddess Kundalini is thought of as a female serpent lying dormant at the base of the spine.” Practicing yoga awakens the divine power of Kundalini and leads to enlightenment.

3. According to Scripture

- Revelation 20:2. “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

- John 8:44. “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

- Martin Luther said, “The devil was permitted to enter beasts, as he here entered the serpent. For there is no doubt that it was a real serpent in which Satan was and in which he conversed with Eve.”

4. The character of the serpent

- The serpent was identified in ancient mythology with several near universal characteristics. While variations, and even contradictions, are present in serpent symbolism, there are still numerous points of similarity. These similarities include such notions as serpents being the symbol of wisdom, chaos, death, immortality, goddess divinity, power, healing, and fertility. In many cultures serpents are quite often viewed as the agents behind

---


the creation of the world, the Flood, eclipses, and the origin of sin. They are also described as fiery or luminous.

- This parallels Scripture at several points where serpents are characterized as: fiery (Num. 21:6), wise (Matt. 10:16), the source of chaos (Gen. 49:17), related to water or a flood (Isaiah 27:1, Rev. 12:15), associated with rejuvenation/healing (Num. 21:6-9), and appearing as the divine opponent (Gen. 3:4-5, Isaiah 27:1).

C. The Origin of Evil

1. The Creation of Lucifer

   a. The anointed cherub.


   - Exodus 25:19. “Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat.”

   b. One of three named angels

   - Michael: servant of the Father as war prince of Israel

   - Gabriel: servant of the Holy Spirit as messenger of revelation

   - Lucifer: servant (turned adversary) of the Son.

2. The Fall of Lucifer

   a. From perfection

   - Ezekiel 28:12–15. "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God: "You were 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 sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you."
b. By his pride

- **1 Timothy 3:6.** An elder should not be “a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

- **Isaiah 14:12–15.** “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.”

III. Conclusion: We Are At War

A. Satan is at war with God

1. He opposes God through the world system.

   - **Luke 4:5–7.** “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

   - **Daniel 10:12–13.** “Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."

2. God will be victorious

   - **Isaiah 26:20–27:1.** “Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain. In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, Will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; And He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.
B. Satan is at war with humanity

1. He opposes salvation

   - 2 Corinthians 4:3–4. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

2. He opposes the saints

   - Revelation 12:12b–13. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’

   - 1 Peter 5:8. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

C. But we can be victorious.

1. By the Word and the Spirit

   - 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

2. By faith in Christ.

   - Revelation 12:10-11. “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ’Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

   - John 16:33. “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”