

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

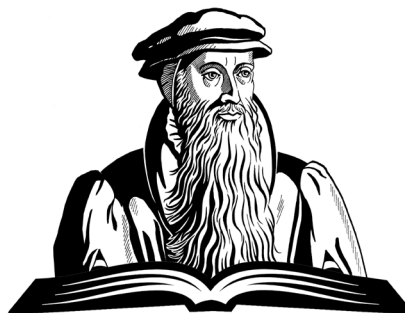
STUDY GUIDE

Module 3:

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Lecture 8:

THE DOCTRINE OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS



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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Module 3

The Nature of Sin

1. Introduction
2. The Nature of Man
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Module 3:

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Lecture 8:

The Doctrine of the Covenant of Works

Introduction

God created mankind after his own image, to have a personal relationship with himself. The Lord determined to manifest his presence to man, to have fellowship and communion with him from the very beginning, even in the garden of Eden. God was not obligated, but voluntarily condescended to do it for his own glory. So how did God determine to relate to man? The Bible teaches that God chose to relate to man by way of covenant. In the last few lectures, we have been considering man as a sinner, and the consequences of sin. We looked at the Freedom of Man's Will, the Nature of Sin, Original Sin, and Total Depravity. But now we need to add to that by establishing from Scripture the covenantal context in which sin came into the world.

Theme: *The doctrine of the Covenant of Works.*

I. Scriptural Basis

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16–17)

1. God condescends to relate to man in a way that is distinct from all other creatures.
2. Man's relationship with God was governed by a covenant.
3. We see God's goodness to provide abundantly.
4. God warns of the curse for disobedience.
5. Wilhelms á Brakel's address on the covenant of works.
 - a. Knowing this covenant is of the greatest importance.

Questions:

1. What was God’s purpose in making a covenant with Adam? What are the parts of this first covenant?

2. What did theologian Wilhelmus á Brakel say about the importance of this covenant of works?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 7, paragraph 1:

“The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.”

1. Definition of a covenant.
2. The covenant was made with Adam, as a representative of his posterity.
3. God provided stipulations and conditions.
 - a. God commanded Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit.
 - b. The curse of death for disobedience.
 - 1) Threefold death: spiritual death, physical death, eternal death.
4. God promised blessings of eternal life to Adam and his posterity upon condition of his perfect obedience.
 - a. The tree of life in the Scriptures.
5. Adam’s significance in this covenant of works.
 - a. The first Adam and the last Adam.

Questions:

1. What is the definition of a covenant? What are the parts?

2. Why do we describe this transaction in Genesis 2:16–17 as a covenant? How does the Bible prove this is the first covenant?

3. What were God’s stipulations or requirements in this covenant? Are God’s stipulations reasonable?

4. What were the consequences of the conditions? How was God’s goodness manifested in these conditions and consequences?

5. Before the fall, did Adam have perfect liberty to choose what is good? How do we know that?

6. What does the tree of life signify throughout the whole Bible?

7. What is Adam's significance in the Covenant of Works?

III. Polemical Exposition

Objection 1: *The word "covenant" is not there in Genesis 2, therefore there isn't a covenant of works.*

Objection 2: *This teaches salvation by works, not grace.*

Objection 3: *Yes, we believe in it, and what's more, we believe that all men are under the same covenantal arrangement as Adam was, that all men who are born into this world since Adam have the same opportunity to earn life through obedience to God.*

Questions:

1. From what we've learned thus far in this lecture, how would you answer Objection #1?

2. Why is the idea of merit important for the Covenant of Works? How does it help us to understand the work of the last Adam—Jesus Christ?

3. Is there any possibility for the posterity of Adam to earn their salvation through the Covenant of Works? Why? What is the only way to eternal life?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. We ought to have a profound amazement that God would relate to man by covenant at all.
2. We ought to face the catastrophic consequences of Adam breaking the Covenant of Works.
3. This prepares us for the wonder of wonders in the provision of the Covenant of Grace.
4. The Covenant of Works magnifies the glory of Jesus Christ, the last Adam.

Questions:

1. What privileges did Adam enjoy in his covenant relationship with God? Did God withdraw those privileges after Adam's fall in sin?

2. What is it that separates us from God? Where do we see this in the Scripture?

3. What did God do for Adam after he fell in sin?

4. How does the Covenant of Works magnify the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ?

V. Self-Reflection

Read and meditate on the third chapter of Genesis. What were the immediate consequences of Adam's and Eve's breaking of the Covenant of Works? How can this sad consequence be reversed? Did mankind seek God after the fall? How does this make you turn your eyes away from man and turn to God? "*Salvation belongeth to the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people*" (Psalm 3:8). Does this drive you to seek Christ?
