



Come get away with us this Lent as we journey through the Old Testament Covenants. We will experience a deeper understanding of our faith, discover key patterns that inform our relationship with God and others, and arrive at the New Covenant, Jesus Christ!

THE EDENIC COVENANT – Session One



Leader's Opening Remarks

As your journey begins, comprehending the covenant is the key to accepting the truths of the Bible and becoming willing to respond to those truths in obedience and love. In Scripture we see different types of covenants that God makes with humanity. Some are *conditional*, and require that humans obey the terms of the covenant in order to receive the promises that God makes. Others are *unconditional* covenants, which God will keep regardless of human actions.

What is a conditional covenant?



A conditional covenant is an agreement between two or more parties that requires certain terms to be met. If the terms are met, there will be a positive outcome. If the terms are not met, there will be a negative outcome. The conditional covenant is designed so that all parties can move in the same direction towards a shared goal. For instance, you purchase an airline ticket with the expectation that the pilot of the carrier takes you to a specific destination by a certain time. You are expected to pay for the ticket and fees, and arrive on time for the flight.



Quick discussion:

Have the group name some other kinds of conditional agreements from everyday life. If you need more examples, discuss these:

- Your company wants to build an office building so they give their plans to a contractor and pay a deposit. If the contractor delivers the finished project's scope on time, the final payment is released. If not, then the balance due is held until the terms of the agreement are fulfilled.
- You agree to be married. If your vows are kept, you live together until death. If you or your spouse files for a divorce for any reason, and the divorce is granted, the marriage agreement is annulled.



What is an unconditional covenant?

An *unconditional covenant* is an agreement between two or more parties that involves no stipulations of any kind for the fulfillment of the agreement. For instance, you promise to check your neighbor's mail while you are gone

Quick discussion:

Have the group name some other kinds of unconditional agreements from everyday life. If you need to examples, discuss these:

- Parents promise to unconditionally to pay for a child's college expenses. Their grades and general behavior cannot affect the

keeping of the promise. Even if the child is a poor student, disrespectful to teachers, or involved with drugs and alcohol, the parents must follow through on their commitment.

- A person leaves property to a friend in a will/testament, with no conditions to be fulfilled by the recipient to get the property.

Quick discussion:

- What purpose do covenants serve in our everyday lives?
- What are the benefits/cons of covenants?
- What do you know about the story of Adam and Eve? (If your group is unfamiliar with the story, read Genesis 3)



COVENANT OF WORKS

The Edenic Covenant is the covenant that God made with Adam in the Garden of Eden. Conditional covenants like this are also sometimes called a “Covenant of Works.” The Edenic Covenant was the first covenant that God made directly with a human being. While we often focus on sin as it begins to play out in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, this covenant is actually how God’s REDEMPTION of all of creation begins to unfold.

The Edenic Covenant is an example of a *conditional covenant* because Adam was required to obey the terms of the covenant in order to not suffer the consequences of breaking it.

The Edenic Covenant is found in the opening chapters of Genesis where God makes some conditional promises to Adam. It was not explicitly called a covenant in Genesis; however, it was later referred to as a covenant in **Hosea 6:7, “But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.”**

At the heart of Edenic Covenant was God’s command to Adam to not eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Genesis 2:16–17, NRSV

And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

The command sets forth God’s promise as well as the penalty if Adam disobeys.

In the Edenic Covenant, God promised Adam life and blessing; but, that promise was *conditional* upon Adam’s obedience to God’s command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Adam's penalty for disobedience was physical and spiritual death as well as a curse on the ground so that Adam had to work harder to grow crops. One of the results of Adam's sin was that he had to toil all of his days until his death.

Genesis 3:17–19, NRSV

And to the man God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Quick discussion:

- If God is all-knowing (omniscient), and knew that Adam and Eve would cave in to Satan’s temptation, why would God make a covenant that God knew Adam and Eve would not keep?
- Are the answers to this question in keeping with the attributes of God’s character, motivated by goodness, righteousness, and love?



The Edenic covenant plays an important part in the unfolding of God’s plan of redemption, as it shows humanity’s inability to maintain a right relationship with God even when humans are in the earthly paradise that God created for them.

Adam's sin broke this *conditional covenant* with God and left humanity in a fallen state, but God made a new *unconditional* promise of redemption with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14–24). Like the Edenic Covenant, this one is not explicitly referred to as a covenant in Genesis, but it is a significant promise that God makes to mankind. It is the first promise of redemption and the first promise of Christ's coming (Genesis 3:15). Here, only three chapters into this remarkable book, God is already giving us hope of a Redeemer. Genesis 3:15 is sometimes referred to as the **protevangelium (prot.evangel.ium)**, or the first announcement of the gospel in Scripture. God's promise to Eve that the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the seed of Eve and the seed of Eve would bruise the head of the seed of the serpent, is the foretelling that Satan would wound Christ on the cross, but that Christ would triumph over Satan on that same cross.

Both the Edenic Covenant and the Covenant of Redemption that follows are significant for several reasons. First of all, they establish a pattern to be repeated throughout the Scriptures: 1) man sins, 2) God judges the sin, and 3) God bestows grace and mercy by providing a way to redeem man and restore man's relationship with God. Second, the covenants show us that sin always has consequences. Understanding the different covenants in the Old Testament and their relation to each other is important in understanding God's covenantal relationship with His chosen people as well as His plan of redemption as revealed in Scripture.

For a deeper dive:

- Some theologians name up to 6 conditions that are outlined in the Edenic Covenant. See how many your class can identify.
- What is the significance of Adam naming the woman "Eve?"
 - (Hint: Because it is Hebrew, always look for the meaning of the name)

