

# Sovereign Joy Adults' Catechesis

## THE SHORTER CATECHISM

*A Baptist Version*

*Q.13: What was the estate wherein man was created?*

A. Man was created<sup>1</sup> in an estate of sinlessness<sup>2</sup> and happiness<sup>3</sup> in which the Lord God entrusted him with care for the garden of Eden<sup>4</sup> and forbade him to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Genesis 2:7-8* Then the LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

<sup>2</sup>*Genesis 1:31a* God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.  
*Ecclesiastes 7:29* Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but that have sought out many devices.

<sup>3</sup>*Genesis 2:9* Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

*Genesis 2:25* And man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

<sup>4</sup>*Genesis 2:15* Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

<sup>5</sup>*Genesis 2:16-17* The LORD God commanded man, saying, "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 that day that you eat from it you will surely die."

### **An Arrangement Between God and Adam**

What we see in Genesis 2 is not only an account of the creation of Adam and Eve. In the garden, God and man entered into an agreement. God bestowed certain benefits upon Adam; He gave him life and all the provisions he needed to sustain life in the garden. He creates man sinless and in a state of joy and fellowship. Moses recounts the boundaries wherein

this agreement is binding: the garden of Eden. Finally, God establishes the conditions whereby man might remain in this “estate”: care for the garden and do not eat of the tree.

This arrangement between God and Adam was fully determined beforehand by God; man in no way takes part in negotiations with God over this agreement. God has given life to man, and man is expected to honor God’s just requirements in order to remain in the estate in which he was created. This arrangement between God and Adam has major implications for us today. Paul tells us that we are either in Christ or in Adam. Where Adam was unfaithful and broke his agreement with God, securing that all of his children would be born in bondage to sin, Christ *is* faithful, redeeming His church *from* bondage to sin.

### **Benefits Bestowed by God**

#### **Life**

The first detail that must be examined in relation to the original state of man is the fact that God gives him life (Gen. 2:7). There were no preconditions to God’s choice to bestow life upon mankind, nor could man have done anything to earn this gift. God, out of His own good pleasure, bestows life upon man. We often do not think of life as a gift, especially when we’re going through hardships, but it is most certainly a gift of God (Deut. 32:39; Job 33:4; Eccl. 9:9; Acts 17:25).

All life is a gift from God. I am always confounded to hear of total strangers who see “large” families in the mall or in the grocery store and stop the mother to ask, “You know how to fix that, right?” Somehow, in our society, we have come to view the gift of life, and especially the lives of children, as a burden. We have forgotten the righteous prayer of Hannah (1Sam. 1:1-11).

#### **Provision**

Not only did God bestow life upon Adam, but he also provided him all he needed to sustain and enjoy life in the garden. God provided Adam with food (Gen. 2:16), companionship (Gen. 2:18-23), and fellowship with God (Gen. 3:8a). It had not yet rained on the earth, so Adam and Eve needed no shelter. Adam and Eve were not ashamed of their nakedness, so they

needed no clothes. Thus, we see that God had provided for them everything they needed and more.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus assures us that God provides for us all things that we need, and that we in turn are to be anxious for nothing:

*“<sup>25</sup>For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? <sup>27</sup>And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? <sup>28</sup>And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil or spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! <sup>31</sup>Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ <sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt. 6:25-34).*

If there is one thing that we as Christians in America tend to be guilty of, it is relying on our fallen world system to provide us with all we need. Contrary to this mode of living, we ought to look to man’s original state and see that God is the giver of all things. He placed man in a state of perfect, abundant provision. The height of this mentality is most potently displayed during election seasons in America. Our default assumption seems to be that our country will fall apart tomorrow if we do not get what we want today.

We need to be constantly reminded that God is the one who is in control. God provides for us, and if He decides to take our prosperity from us, so be it. He has not promised us prosperity; He *has* promised us

provision.

## **The Character of Man's Original Estate**

### **Sinless**

Whatever we might say about man in his original state, it is important to recognize that man was created sinless (Gen. 1:31a; Eccl. 7:29). When first created, Adam knew neither bondage to sin nor the effects of sin. His estate was not only ideal because of his external circumstances, but also because of his internal disposition. Man was created in a state of perfect communion and union with God (Gen. 3:8a).

This state of perfect communion and union with God is the ultimate goal of redemption (Rev. 21:3-4). God's purpose in redeeming His elect is that they be conformed to the sinless and perfect image of His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 4:15), ensuring an eternal union and communion with God in heaven. What Adam and Eve had in the garden, freedom from bondage and penalty of sin, we will have in glory, but with the full assurance that we will be subject again to the dominion of sin over us.

### **Joyful**

Regarding the joy man had in his original state, first, we should recognize the fact that Adam and Eve had no shortage of joy in the estate in which God created them. They not only had an abundance of necessary provisions, but God also provided them with the most delightful provisions. "Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). In other words, God originally created man to enjoy his existence and enjoy the rest of creation.

Second, God created man to enjoy the blessing of relationship. I believe that this is an aspect of the *Imago Dei*. Just as the Trinity is eternally relational, so too man (His image bearer) is created to be in relationship (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18, 22-24). Man and woman were created for one another and, in their original state, their relationship did not bear the mark of shame (Gen. 2:25).

## **The Boundaries of Man's Original Estate**

### **The Garden of Eden**

In the ancient Near-East, when two kings would sign a treaty, they always established the boundaries wherein that treaty was binding. For man, his arrangement with God was binding within the garden of Eden. God created the garden especially for man and placed him there to tend it (Gen. 2:15), it was in the garden that God walked in their midst in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8), and it was in the garden that God placed the tree of life. When Adam sinned against God, he was kicked out of the garden and lost direct access to God and to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

When we ponder these realities, it should cause us to look forward to our glorious inheritance in heaven. All those who are no longer in Adam, but have been transferred into the New Covenant, in Christ, have the hope of experiencing all these things. God will transfer us to the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-27) where He will once again walk among His people (Rev. 21:3-4) who will yet again have access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2).

## **The Conditions of Man's Original Estate**

### **Care for the Garden**

There were essentially two commands that God gave Adam in the garden. He placed him there to tend the garden (Gen. 2:15) and commanded him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam's care and cultivation of the garden was one aspect of the dominion that Adam was to have over the earth. One thing of which to take note is the fact that Adam never complained of his work. In fact, it was not until after Adam sinned against God that we see that his toil and labor became toilsome and laborious (Gen. 3:17-19).

Work, in and of itself, is not evil. In fact, when we look at the fourth commandment, we see that it was not only God's design that man rest on the seventh day, but that he work all six days leading up to it:

*“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or*

*your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:8-11).*

### **Do Not Eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**

In the Garden of Eden, God expected perfect obedience from Adam and Eve, upon pain of death. God commanded him not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded man, saying, ‘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 will surely die’” (Gen. 2:15-17).

Of course, we know that Adam did not obey God. That’s why we see in Romans 5:19: “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” Adam was the first man. Through his disobedience, we all became sinners but, through Christ’s obedience, all who believe in him are freed from the dominion of sin.

### **Conclusion**

In Adam, we see that the original arrangement between God and man was broken. In Christ, there is a new arrangement, a New Covenant, in which all who are in Christ are made right with God. Thank God for His sovereign, redemptive dealings with His people.