

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, August 19, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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The Spread and Impact of Human Sin

In our last study, we began to take up what the Book of Genesis tells us about one of the most important subjects we can consider in the development of any world view--and particularly a Biblical/Theistic worldview. We took up the subject of sin; and how it came to be that evil made its entry into God's good creation. In looking at the third chapter of Genesis, we saw how temptation first entered the world; how the first couple sinned and suffered God's curse for their disobedience; and how their fallenness began to manifest itself in a brokenness of relationship--a brokenness that showed itself first between mankind and God, then between the first man and the first woman, and finally between mankind and the rest of creation.

The closing words of that the third chapter tell us of how Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. But it's important to note that the impact of their disobedience didn't stop with them. If it *had* merely stopped with them, then we would not be able to explain how sin and evil continue to impact humanity. But because all human beings literally came from Adam and Eve, all human beings also inherited the fallenness of their first parents. As Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . ."¹

As we move on to chapter 4 of Genesis, we're shown how the sin of our first parents affect all the rest of their offspring. We're made to understand that all humanity is fallen and in need of redemption. This fallenness showed itself in . . .

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF FALSE RELIGION (vv. 1-7).

- A. The first "child" born in all human history was Cain. His name means "Acquire"; and that's why Eve said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord" (v. 1). It may be that her expectation was that he would be the one through whom God's promise of a Redeemer in 3:15 would be fulfilled--that it was from Cain that her "Seed" would bruise the head of the serpent. But she bore a second son whom she named Abel. And as it happened, it would be through neither of these two sons that the promised Redeemer would come.
- B. When Adam and Eve sinned, God provided tunics of skin for them as a covering (3:21). This would have meant that something had died as a consequence of their sin; and that God thus established the principle of an atoning sacrifice for sin (something that would ultimately be fulfilled in Christ; see Romans 6:23). The subsequent and genuine worship of the offspring of Adam and Eve should have reflected this principle. But we note that only Abel worshiped God in consistency with the principle of an atoning substitute. He brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat (v. 4); while Cain--a tiller of the ground--brought an offering of the fruit of the ground (that is, the work of his own hands) as an offering to God (v. 3). Abel's offering reflected an acceptance of God's provision of atonement; while Cain's offering reflected the vain attempts of Adam and Eve to hide their sin from God's sight (see 3:7). God accepted Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's. What's more, it's clear that Cain knew what God expected; because God told him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (v. 7; see also 3:16).
- C. In this story, then, we see one of the ways that the fallenness of Adam and Eve began to show itself to have been passed on to their offspring. Fallen human beings not only do not worship God in a way that He established;

but they set about to establish their own way of worship in the hopes that God will accept it. This is the beginning of every man-made, false religious system that has ever been practiced by fallen humanity in disobedience to God. It may be because of ignorance--as Paul writes in Romans 10: 3-4; "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Or it may be because of intentional rebellion--as it says in Romans 1:21-23; "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." But either way, man-made religion is an expression of separateness from the Creator--and rebellion against His revealed will--because of inherited sin. The story of man-made world-religions--with all the oppressive religious rituals and ceremonies that are involved in them--is, in a very true sense, the story of mankind's fall told in a grand scale.

II. THE FIRST MURDER (vv. 8-15).

- A. It's apparent that God's acceptance of Abel's offering aroused jealousy on the part of Cain. We're told, "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (v. 8). This act of murder was a product of Cain's own fallenness; but it's important to notice that the only other "killing" that Cain could have known about at that time would have been through the kind of atoning sacrifice that God accepted from Abel.
- B. This murderous act--a perversion of God's atoning principle, and an attack upon the very image of God Himself--was not hidden from God's own knowledge. "The voice" of Abel's blood 'cried out' to God from the ground (v. 10). God cursed Cain as a result of this.² The ground from which Cain sought to make an offering to God, and into which poured the blood of his brother, would now no longer yield to him (v. 12a)--thus, since the curse upon Adam was that he would labor hard and 'eat' his bread 'in the sweat of' his face, Cain could not have experienced even what his father experienced after *his* disobedience (see 3:17-19). He would also be "a fugitive and a vagabond" on the earth (v. 12b). He would truly be an outcast in the fullest sense--separated from a relationship with God, from the society of rest of humanity, and even kept from the blessings of the produce of creation (v. 14).
- B. Cain thus became, as it were, the father of all those who hate the righteous and who live in the misery of rebellion against God. As the apostle John wrote; "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you" (1 John 3:10-13).

III. A DIVISION IN HUMANITY (16-26).

- A. God placed a mark on Cain. Though we don't know the nature of that mark, it was an act of mercy on God's part; because it warned that anyone who killed him would be avenged "sevenfold" (v. 15). Then, we're told that Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, "knew his wife" (who, obviously, would have had to have been an unnamed sister or near relative), and dwelt

East of Eden. A series of generations flowed from them; the seventh of which, again, tragically demonstrated the presence of inherited sin. Lamech, the seventh from Cain, murdered a young man who somehow wounded him. Death for a mere wound--an act of extreme inequity and injustice! Lamech arrogantly boasted, "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold" (v. 24). Thus, a murderous and self-exalting sin nature continued to reveal itself in humanity--shown most clearly in the lineage that followed from Cain. The world--originally declared "very good"--was becoming a dark and dangerous place.

- B. But notice what we're told next. With their first son driven away in exile, and their second son taken from them by murder--and with the loss of both these sons, the hopes that it would be through them that a Redeemer would come--Adam and Eve again conceived and bore a third son named Seth ("Appointed"). Eve said, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed" (v. 25). Seth also bore a son, who he named Enosh ("Mortal"--suggesting the idea of frailty). Note that it was at the time that Enosh was born to Seth that "men began to call on the name of the LORD" (v. 26). Mankind was divided between the offspring of Cain and the offspring of Seth; and, as we're told in verse 26, it was at the time that Seth gave birth to Enosh that "men began to call on the name of the LORD." Men, even in their fallenness, began to cry out to God by the name by which He would most clearly reveal Himself to Israel--YHWY. And by calling upon Him by this name, they were embracing His full being as He truly is.
- C. Just as the Lord Jesus told the woman at the well; "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). Even today, some reject the God they know, and refuse to give Him thanks--worshiping corrupt images instead. And yet, some in humility cry out to God from the depths of their fallenness, and seek redemption and restoration with God--in spirit and truth--according to His self-disclosure through the word of truth.

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²We might wonder why it was that Cain was not himself put to death for having committed this murder. The answer may be in the fact that it was not until after the flood that God established the principle that "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed . . ." (Genesis 9:6).