**Biblical Theology**

Lesson 4 – The Fall & Spread of Sin (Genesis 3-11)

1. At the end of Genesis 1-2, everything is good, harmonious, and in order. When we look at the world around us today, we see evil, disharmony, and chaos. How did this come about?
2. Genesis 3 introduces us to the antagonist in God’s story, Satan. It does not give us Satan’s origin. But what this does depict is that temptation does not come from God, but from an evil being that exists within God’s creation.
3. Man succumbs to the temptation of Satan and as a result loses fellowship with God, depicted as being evicted from the garden of Eden. Satan, Adam, and Eve all end up being cursed by God. Life is now going to be difficult and fraught with challenges. All of humanity is now going to be in conflict with evil. The seed of the woman will have enmity with the seed of the serpent.
4. But in the midst of the curse, comes Genesis 3:15 and God’s promise of a seed of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head. In the midst of judgment, comes mercy. God provides hope in the midst of darkness. Geerhardus Vos writes, “The promise is that somehow out of the human race a fatal blow will come which shall crush the head of the serpent.” God promises to destroy evil and rid the world of its curse.
5. But Genesis 4-11 shows us the radical increase of sin across the world to all people. Cain kills his own brother and we are given his genealogy which depicts an increase of sin. Evil has not only affected man’s relationship with God, it has also affected familial relationships. The end of Genesis 4 through Genesis 5 introduces us to another line, the line of Seth, and this line focuses on righteousness. Seth’s descendent Enoch walks with God (Gen 5:22) and Lamech shows forth a belief in God’s promise (Gen. 5:29) and it is Noah, the only one who finds favor in God’s sight. So, Genesis 4-5 show forth that people are either of the line of Cain (ungodly) or the line of Seth (godly). This traces back to the seed of the woman (Seth) and the seed of the serpent (Cain). The ungodly outshine the godly as we see the increasing wickedness and further descent into sin with Genesis 6.
6. So, God sends a flood to destroy all of mankind except Noah and his family. After the waters reside, Noah builds an altar to God and worships Him (Gen. 8:20). In response, God institutes the Noahic covenant. This is a common grace covenant in that the Lord promises never to destroy the earth with a flood. The earth will continue with its orderly days, months, seasons, and years.
7. But this also raises the question: Is Noah this promised seed? His name means “rest” and he is named so by his father in hopes that God will provide “rest” from the cursed land and cursed labor. He has found favor in His sight. He alone with his family is preserved from God’s judgment. Genesis 9:20 answers this question with a big, emphatic “NO!” Noah gets drunk which leads to his son Ham sinning and Noah’s grandson, Canaan, being cursed.
8. From Noah’s sons come a whole host of people (Gen. 10). But not even the flood has removed sin and wickedness from the Earth. Noah sins. Ham sins. And now the unified descendants of Noah sin in settling together in one place [ancient Babylon] and trying to make a name for themselves. God had commanded man in the garden to fill the earth. This meant they should scatter and spread abroad. So God punishes them and forces them to disperse across the face of the earth (Gen 11:8).
9. Before this section ends, after the tower of Babel episode, we are given the genealogy of Shem (the blessed son of Noah) which ends with Terah and Abram (Gen 11:31-32).
10. From a literary perspective, Genesis 3-11 serves as a bridge between creation and election, which will be the epoch we look at next week.
11. Willem VanGemeren writes, “The drama of Eden intensifies outside of the garden from the story of Cain and Abel to the corruption of mankind, leading into the Flood narrative. After the Flood, the drama builds up to a climax in the Babel narrative. In each case, God renews His blessing and focuses it more particularly on one of the descendants of Adam. First, He renews his blessing with Seth, then with Noah and Shem, and finally with Terah and Abraham.”
12. When we consider that Moses is writing Genesis 3-11 to Israelites on the verge of the Promised Land, additional layers of meaning of Genesis 3-11 are revealed to us.
    1. Genesis 3-11 serves as a warning to the Israelites. Just as God evicted Adam and Eve from the garden, and destroyed 99.9% of mankind in the flood because of sin, so too God will evict Israel from the land and destroy them if they sin within the Promised Land which is Eden.
    2. Genesis 3-11 explains that the Canaanites are a cursed people going all the way back to the sin of Ham.
    3. Seed of the woman🡪Seed of Seth🡪Seed of Shem🡪Abram  
       Seed of the serpent🡪Seed of Cain🡪Seed of Canaan🡪Canaanites
    4. Genesis 3-11 also explains the origins of the various people groups that Israel will encounter in the Promised Land. The very existence of multiple ethnicities reminds Israel of the sin at Babel and the dispersal of man over the face of the earth by God Himself.
    5. Genesis 3-11 also explains the fundamental unity of the human race. Though there are a variety of ethnic groups, nations, and languages, all people trace back to Noah and further back to Adam and Eve.
13. When we look at how the rest of Scripture uses Genesis 3-11 [Biblical Theology as defined at RTS-Charlotte], we get further understanding of the meaning of these chapters.
    1. Luke records Paul’s sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17 and Paul makes mention of this time period in verse 26 which says, “and He [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God…”
    2. In Romans 5:12-21, Paul sees Adam as a type of Christ in the fact that they both represent a people and their actions affect all whom they represent.
    3. Paul goes on to use Adam in 1 Timothy 2:12-14. He uses the fact that Adam was formed first PLUS the fact that Eve was deceived first in order to teach about proper roles in the church as well as restricting offices to men only.
    4. In 1 Peter 3:18-19, Peter says that Christ preached the gospel through Noah, but the unrighteous would not listen to it. So, Peter shows us how Christ is found in this part of the OT as well as how that portrays Christ’s preaching which the unrighteous did not listen to as well as how Christ preaches through His ministers today and the unrighteous will not listen to it.
    5. Peter goes on to say that baptism corresponds to Noah and his family going through the water in the ark. So the ark becomes a type of baptism which symbolically depicts the work of the Holy Spirit regenerating a heart and sprinkling it clean from unrighteousness. So that Peter can say, “Baptism now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). There is such a close connection between the sign of the covenant and what that sign represents symbolically that Peter uses one for the other. Though they remain distinct, they can be used almost interchangeably. In other words, regeneration saves. Baptism sacramentally depicts regeneration. Therefore, baptism [sacramentally speaking] saves. So, Peter not only sees Christ in the story of Noah, but he also sees the sacrament of baptism in the story of Noah.
    6. In 2 Peter 2, Peter calls Noah a preacher who preached a message of righteousness to the world of the ungodly. Noah gets spared in the midst of such wickedness. Therefore, using Noah as an example, Peter says that God knows how to rescue the godly from their trials as well as keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of judgment. Thus, for Peter, in this case, the story of Noah is a story about persevering as a child of God in an ungodly world.
    7. The covenant sign with Noah of the rainbow reappears in Revelation 4:3 and Revelation 10:1. The rainbow appears around God’s throne room which means God has not and will never forget His covenant with Noah. It also appears on the angel of the Lord in Revelation 10 which symbolically appears to be Jesus. So, we see that the rainbow is always with God. The reminder of His common grace covenant with Noah is constantly in His presence so that He will always keep His oath.
14. When we look at how Genesis 3-11 fits into the overall story of Scripture [Redemptive-History], we see:
    1. God’s care in the face of His children’s rebellion. Sin begins with lust in the heart (Eve desired the fruit; Cain envied Abel), expresses itself in action (Eve took the fruit; Cain killed Abel), increases in corruption of all mankind (Gen. 6:5) and matures into full-scale rebellion (Tower of Babel). In spite of this, God continues to care for His creation. He clothes Adam/Eve with animal skins; promises a coming Messiah (Gen. 3:15); provides Seth to Eve to “replace” Abel (Gen. 4:25); spares Noah and his family; covenants with Noah to never destroy the world again with a flood; and blesses Shem. VanGemeren writes, “In spite of the pervasiveness of sin, God cares for mankind and his world. He has reserved a place for people in this world as the object of His affection.” Jesus affirms this in Matthew 5:45 when He says, “For he [the Father] makes His un rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” In preserving the world in face of man’s rebellion, God has preserved mankind and human history in order to bring forth the Messiah at the right time. Additionally, God continues to uphold the universe and care for His children though they spit in His face. From one perspective, He is giving them an opportunity to repent (2 Pt. 3:9), while from another perspective, He is allowing them to heap up their iniquity for the final day of judgment. Additionally, He continues to uphold the universe for His chosen ones that they may see and receive His grace and mercy, until the full number of the elect are brought in. Behind Genesis 12-Revelation 20 lies God’s care in the face of His children’s rebellion.
    2. God’s judgment upon sin and evil. Death has entered into the world because of sin (Rom. 5:12). Death is part of God’s judgment upon sin and evil. And it has spread to all mankind as well as to creation (Rom. 8:22). Thus, every facet of our being (thoughts, speech, deeds) as well as all of our interactions (marriage, parent/child, vocation, neighbors, government, etc.) are affected by sin. VanGemeren writes, “Human existence is continually overshadowed by the specter of death and failure, making life all the more uncertain.”
    3. God’s salvation for the righteous. Salvation is promised in the first revelation of a coming Messiah in Genesis 3:15 and this hope is preserved through the line of Seth all the way to Abraham. Luke tells us in his genealogy that Jesus is the son of Abraham…the son of Shem, the son of Noah…the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God (Lk 3:33-37). The Messiah will come from the righteous seed that is preserved in Genesis 4-11. VanGemeren says, “In Noah’s blessing of Shem, he expresses hope that the Lord will dwell in the tents of Shem! Jesus is the God-Man, the divine Warrior who revealed His royal splendor while on Earth (Jn 1:14). When He was on Earth, He struggled with Satan and overcame (Col. 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The hope of humankind thus lies in Jesus Christ, who alone has authority to shatter the kingdom of evil and to restore creation and to share His victory and glory with redeemed humanity.”
    4. The whole of human history until the return of Christ can be described as the seed of the serpent waging war on the seed of the woman. The Apostle John picks up on this theme and imagery in Revelation 12. There, a woman is pregnant and gives birth to a male child, but a great, red dragon [serpent] appears in an attempt to devour the male seed of the woman. When the serpent’s plan is frustrated by God and the serpent is thrown down to the Earth, he pursues the woman who is protected by God. So the serpent gets furious and goes off “to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17). The true seed of the woman is Jesus Christ the Messiah and by faith in Him we become members of the godly line of Seth/Shem/Abram. Those who reject Jesus are members of the ungodly line of Cain/Canaan. There is constant war and friction between these 2 lines until Christ returns.
    5. Paul uses this imagery in describing Jesus in Romans 16:20 which says, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your [the Church/elect] feet.” He can say this because the Church is so united to Christ as the Bride and Body of Christ, that the Church will take part in the crushing of Satan when Christ crushes Satan.
15. James Hamilton writes, “Those who kill like Cain, exalt themselves like Lamech (Gen. 4:23), scoff like Ham, and oppose God’s purposes by fighting against Abraham and his offspring are, in the figurative words of Jesus, of their father the Devil (John 8:44). They are seed of the serpent, or in the words of John the Baptist, a “brood of vipers” (Matt. 3:7).”
16. “Acts I [Creation] and II [Fall] take only the first few pages in the Bible to be completed. Yet they introduce the struggle that dominates the rest of the story – and our story.” –International Bible Society