

GENESIS 3-4

THE FALL & IT'S RAMIFICATIONS

Our reading today covers the fall of mankind into sin. This first act of sin sowed sin, death, and darkness into the very fabric of our world that we are still experiencing to this day. And yet these chapters also record bright glimmers of hope, of a coming Savior who would undo the effects of this tragic fall. Remember in Genesis 2 that God gave one major prohibition to the first couple. “You may surely 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 surely die” (2:16-17). God, as sovereign creator has an authority over his creation whereby he can command obedience to his good design. The first sin comes as a result of questioning God’s design and his authority. Satan first approaches Eve and says: “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’? After Eve restates what God has said, Satan then says in 3:4, “You will not surely die.” Look at the following comparison to see how this is a deliberate twisting of God’s words.

God: “You may surely 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 surely die.” (2:16-17)

Satan: “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” (3:1) But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” (3:4)

Through a deliberate twisting of God’s words, Satan convinces Eve that it is not that big of an issue to eat the fruit. But the bigger issue at play is God’s authority. God announces his authority in the fact that creates the world and requires obedience from his creation. The first sin therefore comes from a twisting of God’s words that lead to questioning whether he really said, or even has the authority to say what he has told Adam and Eve.

After Adam and Eve partake of the fruit, they instantly feel the differences. Gone is their intimate relationship with God—they now react with shame as they hear him in the garden (3:8). Gone is a purity of heart in how they relate to God—they now play “the blame game” and pass the blame for the first sin from Adam to Eve, from Eve to Satan (3:11-13). The effects from this act of defiance continue to snowball. God pronounces curses on Satan (3:14) and the ground (3:17). Adam and Eve are going to experience pain and suffering in experiences such as work and childbirth—that continues to plague us to this day. The first couple is cast out of Eden as a result of their sin. This serves as a reminder: God’s presence dwells in sacred space, and his holy character cannot tolerate the presence of sin. He places a guard with a flaming sword to signify their banishment from sacred space where he was dwelling with them in relationship (3:24). Everything is now different—including their relationship with God—as a result of sin.

Chapter 4, the story of Cain and Abel, then serves as a narrative illustration of how the world is going to be different after sin enters. Even bears two sons: Cain and Abel. After bringing an offering that is not acceptable in God’s sight, Cain becomes angry. God warns him, “sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it” (4:7). This is now our experience as humans: sin ever stands lurking, threatening to dominate our lives and make us do foolish things.

Rather than heeding God's warning, Cain responds by killing his brother Abel with malice and jealousy. How serious is sin; how pervasive are the effects of the fall? Within one generation, a man kills his own brother. The world is suffering under the curse of sin and death.

What good news is there then in these chapters? Actually, there is a lot of good news. There is great hope and promise of what God will do in time to come. It begins in 3:15 – what is known as the first gospel proclamation. God, in the midst of pronouncing curse on Satan, says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." God announces: a war has been kicked off that will last much of the story of Scripture. A war between the offspring of the woman, and Satan himself. Except God announces—from the beginning—who the winner will be. The offspring of the woman will ultimately deal a deathly blow to Satan, that even as Satan will bruise his heel, the offspring of the woman will win the battle and the war. This gives us one of the main interpretive lenses for Genesis and all of Scripture: we are to look for this coming offspring, this descendant of the woman (Eve), who will deal a deathly blow to Satan and be the instrument of blessing to God's people (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise from God has been ultimately fulfilled in Jesus: the promised offspring of Abraham (Galatians 3:15-20) who has come to defeat Satan (Colossians 2:15), and defeat his minions of sin and death (Hebrews 2:14-18). That is what our Savior, Jesus, has done. He has reversed the curse and has ushered us back to the relationship with God that had been lost due to the first sin. Praise God that Jesus has done this work—and let this early promise of his coming stir your heart towards gratitude that we enjoy its fulfillment.

One final word from Genesis 4. Genesis 3 launches us into the war of the Old Testament: the seed/offspring of the woman vs. the seed/offspring of the serpent. Characters are constantly viewed in allegiance to one or the other: the woman (and therefore, God), or the serpent. In Genesis 4, it seems as if the serpent and his seed (Cain) have won. Cain kills Abel, is this it for God's people? Notice how Genesis 4 ends. Verse 25, "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.'" Another offspring was given. And with him, the hope that the ultimate offspring (Jesus) would come to reverse the curse and save the people. Friends, Scripture tells the story of our wonderful promise-making, and promise-keeping God. He didn't give up on mankind after Genesis 3, but thankfully chose to bring blessing and salvation to an undeserving world. That is the nature of our God: what a reason to praise him!