

Rediscovering the Story of the Old Testament – Session 1 Lesson 3

From Freedom to the Fall

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Main Idea

Tracing the descent of the humans after they rebelled against the authority of Yahweh

Exercise

Why is it that when different people through the years have tried to create a utopia on earth, that they all failed?

Core questions

1. How does rebelling against God and turning from love creates a disorder that leads us back to the chaos that reigned before God gave the world meaning and purpose?

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[NOTE: Much of the material for this course can be found in my book, Dancing in the Kingdom. You can download a free PDF of the book by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page for this course on TranscendentTouched. Also, if you wish to, you can click on the other link that brings you to Amazon.com where you can buy the paperback or Kindle versions.]

The Mandate

- a) **Genesis 2:15** The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
 - i) Abad and shamar have agricultural and sacerdotal (priestly) meanings. They are also used later on in reference to the priests taking care of the tabernacle.
 - (1) Abad – work, serve, labor, worship, till
 - (2) Shamar – keep, guard, observe, give heed, attend to, protect
 - ii) Many translations say that the woman was created from Adam's "rib" but most of the time that word is used elsewhere in the Bible, it refers to an entire side. And the word to describe Adam's deep sleep in Genesis 15 to describe the deep sleep Abraham had when God gave him visions of the future. So we could say that Adam fell into a deep sleep and saw a vision of his body being split in two and Eve being created from his full side. This meaning (remember that the main purpose of the creation account is to establish meaning) of the vision would seem to be the woman is an equal partner with Adam. This view would be supported by the passage in Genesis 2:20-24 where God says Adam had no "suitable partner," which in Hebrew is 'ezer kegredo.' 'Ezer which gets translated as "helper," is used most of the other time in the Bible to refer to the help that God gives people in various situations. So the implication here, is that the woman is given to Adam as God's help. Kegredo means parallel to or opposite to, so the woman is God's help to Adam to stand alongside of him.
- b) From Genesis 1 and 2, we see that God's image-bearers are to fill the earth and rule it and to act as farmer-priests in maintaining the earth. But after reproducing and filling the garden, what next?
- c) Genesis 2 begins with "these are the generations (Hebrew: *toledot*) of the heavens and the earth when they were created. That phrase will be repeated nine more times in Genesis as the image-bearers procreate, creating new generations. As the generations grow, culture and society develop as communities develop across the world,
 - i) When we follow the use of *toledot* in the Bible, it is typically used when ending the description of one generation and beginning to introduce a new generation. Each *toledot* expands as the people in each generation multiply. Then the next *toledot* begins by reaching into the previous generation to pick out one individual and expands and grows from there from there. So we see this used when listing the generations from Adam, then from Noah,

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then from Terah (Abraham's father), etc. So when we see this word used in Genesis 2:1 we can see the intent is to end the description of the creation of the universe, and then picking up one piece of the universe, the earth, and beginning a new generation starting from the earth.

d) Through the natural laws, through the process of procreation, God is constantly creating new living plants and animals. For “resting” in this home does not mean a cessation of activity but living in this home, using the home what it was designed for. So just as the Creator God continues creating, his co-creating image-bearers continue their creating as well.

- i) This is the mystery we have to deal with. When living things procreate, particularly when humans procreate, what part is natural and what part is supernatural.
- ii) NYTimes article “This vial is made to hold human embryos.” This article talks about the quandary of in-vitro-fertilization. The process of using IVF usually involves many the generation of many embryos out of which one is chosen to implant. So what is the status of the other unused fertilized eggs – are they property, are they humans or are they something else? This is a tricky situation with no clear answer. At what point do we say that these fertilized embryos are not just biological, but also contain the soul of a human being. Does it happen at conception or sometime after that? We are beyond our wisdom here. Scholars have differing opinions on when ensoulment happens – is it at conception or some point after that.
- iii) The meaning of rest
 - (1) In Genesis 2:2, God uses the term “shabbat.” So God shabbated, or ceased, his activity of dedicating the temple (universe) he had made.
 - (2) In Exodus 20:11, which talks about the Sabbath command, the term for “rest” is “nuach,” which means to settle down, set down, repose. The idea is that the 7th day is the day to – not stop all activity – but to settle into the new place and do what it was intended for. So the full meaning is that God ceased the creating/dedicating activity so that he could settle in and be with his people, because that is what he created the universe/temple for. God ceased from the dedication activity so that he could settle into the temple he created

e) But what will this future look like? In Revelation we see some of the details. All of heaven and earth, not just heaven and the Garden of Eden, being joined together.

- i) We will not be bodiless spirits, sitting on clouds and playing harps. We will have resurrection bodies, such as what Jesus had, and still has. But then heaven and earth, the spiritual and physical, will be joined together.
- ii) In Revelation we see a metaphorical image of the “New Jerusalem” coming down to earth. Physically it is described as a 1500 mile cube with 200 foot thick walls and only 12 gates. If there are no dangers to defend from, why are the walls 200 feet thick. Symbolically, the length and width of the New Jerusalem is the size of the Roman Empire at that time in history.

f) There will be a city as well as a garden. The image-bearers will be reigning and judging the angels. The worship and glorification of God will be more than just being with Him and singing His praises for He has created us for so much more.

- i) 1 Cor 6:3 (judge angels); 2 Tim 2:12 (reign)
- ii) We will have things to do, but it won't be toil where “the soil resists us.” We can have useful things to do.

The Choice

g) **Genesis 2:9,17** The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

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- i) **[merism** – using the extreme ends of an item as a way of referring to the entire item. i.e. “I looked up and down for something.” So the knowledge of good and evil could refer to all knowledge] Ex: Ecc 3:1-10
- h) For God to create creatures in His image, He had to take a **risk**. To make creatures who could freely choose to **love**, they also had to be able to choose to **not** love. However, choosing to not love the one who is the very source of **goodness** is incredibly disastrous; it means putting a barrier between one’s self and the source of **goodness** itself, indeed, it is to take on evil itself.
- i) To test the love of his image-bearers, God placed the Tree of **Knowledge**, whose fruit they were told not to eat of on the penalty of **death**. These were **good** people in a **good** world, but where they could make a choice to not **love**, and to risk death by making something more important than their relationship with the Creator.
- j) God’s creation was good, very good, and was destined to **mature** and grow **fuller**, giving more and more glory to God.
- k) There were also other beings, **angels**, that also had the option to obey or disobey God. Some angels rebelled against God, the chief one being **Satan**, and those angels were removed from the presence of God. For reasons known only to God, **Satan** was allowed to tempt the image-bearers to also rebel. A **serpent** convinced the woman to **question** God’s intentions and God’s consequences of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.
- l) The deceived woman, and the **undeceived** man, **who was with her** chose to rebel and eat from that Tree.
 - i) God told Adam about the Tree of Knowledge, so when the serpent was talking Adam was not deceived, but he was tempted – to the point that he didn’t contradict the serpent. Apparently, Adam did not tell the woman beforehand and so the woman was deceived. She may have taken the first bite but Adam, who was not deceived and could have – should have – spoken up, but he remained silent.
 - ii) We are not told specifically when Satan rebelled against God. It could have been before this incident, but it may have been simultaneous with this incident.

The Consequences

- m) **Genesis 3:21-24** The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil ... the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken ... at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
 - (1) The tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is probably a merism, where we refer to an object by referring to the extreme end points. There are many merisms in the Bible. For example, Ecclesiastes 3 has many of them in a list: “a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build ...” In this perspective the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, could be translated as the Tree of All Knowledge.
 - (2) One thing we see in the universe is that natural processes take time. Physical reactions take time, chemical reactions take time, biological processes take time. Living things take time to become mature. The humans had an opportunity to grow and mature in the presence of God. But they couldn’t wait, and they were tempted to grab that knowledge for themselves without waiting for God.
- ii) The consequences were immediate and drastic. The signs of deaths affected everything. There was death of **relationships**:
 - iii) between the serpent and **humans**
 - iv) between the people and **God**
 - v) between the people **themselves**.

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- vi) between the people and the earth.
- n) Everything was corrupted by the evil that had now entered the world. The people were banished from the Garden and from the Tree of Life contained therein. Being separated from the Tree of Life would mean suffering physical death.
- o) However, God would use the curse of death eventually break the curse caused by the rebellion. God disciplined the man and woman with the punishment of pain and sweat, but at the same time, He provided a sign of the solution to their rebellion.
- p) Within the consequences, there was discipline, but there were hints of hope:
 - i) Hint of the ultimate solution by a future offspring of the woman,
 - ii) The provision of clothing was a hint of the future sacrifice that would be made on their behalf
 - (1) Adam did not name the woman until they were expelled from the garden. The name he gave her means “life” for “she would become the mother of all living.” That means, that they understood that their now impending death was not the end, but that one of “seed of the woman” would be the one to fix the relationship between God and the humans.
- q) One of life’s lessons is that processes take time. There’re no shortcuts to building relationships, growing to maturity, or pursuing justice. Adam and Eve couldn’t wait for their time to gain knowledge and they paid the price. God’s solution to the problem of sin was also a process that was going to take time.
 - i) In the future when we read of David as being a person “after God’s heart,” it was a reference to his willingness to wait for the kingship to be given to him, he didn’t grab for when he had opportunity. Story in a story.

Growth of Sin

- r) **Genesis 4** Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.
- s) **Genesis 6:5-7** The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.
 - i) The Bible is not explicit about how the practice started, but it is evident that offering sacrifices was seen as necessary to try to satisfy God, because we see Cain and Abel doing that. Early on, the idea was known that death was a penalty for rebelling against God.
- t) The curse caused by the rebellion, infected all the image-bearers who came after Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel showed that they understood that sin required the penalty of death. To reconcile themselves to God they made sacrifices for God. But Cain did not offer a proper sacrifice. His sinful attitude gave way to more sin, and then to jealousy of his brother, Abel, and then to killing him.
- u) Later on, we see that the effect of the rebellion eventually got so bad that God saw it necessary to start over and kill most of the people on earth through a great flood.
 - i) Gen 4:23-24. Lamech boasted that someone hurt him, but he killed that person and then bragged that if anyone hurt him he would be avenged 70 and 7-fold
- v) But even in the midst of their immense sin, we see signs of the innate potential that the image-bearers possessed as they created cities, musical instruments and tools.
 - i) Gen 4:12-22
- w) More rebellion, the image-bearers planned to make a name for themselves. God confused their languages, causing them to split up into nations.
 - i) Before the tower of Babel incident, we have the story of Noah and the great flood. Noah seemed like a hopeful character as being the only righteous person that God could find, and

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so God rescued Noah by having Noah build the ark. But when the flood was over and crops were planted, one of the crops was grapes for making wine – and after the first batch of wine was ready, Noah and his wife became drunk. This is where their son, Ham, misbehaves. The Bible uses euphemism of “uncovered his father’s nakedness,” which is defined in Leviticus 20:11 as having sex with a man’s wife. Canaan then seems to be the product of that incest and so it is that we find that Noah cursed, not Ham, but Canaan. Later on, we see that Canaan’s descendants settle in the land we call Palestine, or Israel, which is the “promised land” that God gave to the nation of Israel.

- ii) Even after the flood, people still wanted to go their own way. Instead of spreading out over the face of the earth as God wanted, the people decided to stay in one place and build a tower to “make a name for themselves.” This happened in what they called in their language, “gateway to the gods” but in Hebrew, that same word is translated as “bavel,” meaning confusion. The Bible usually translates this as the Tower of Babel to maintain that wordplay, but everywhere else in the Bible where the word, bavel is used, it gets translated as Babylon.
- iii) If you’ve ever heard of the “curse of Ham,” that phrase is supposed to refer to this incident where Canaan is cursed, but not Ham. Ham’s descendants were mainly settled in Africa, that is, Ham is the ancestor of the black-skinned people. So this supposed curse was used as a justification for enslaving black people.
- x) From those nations, God would separate out one **individual**
 - i) To form a new nation to
 - ii) create a pathway to restore His **relationship** with His image-bearers.
 - (1) Seed of the woman: Gen 3:15