

THE EXPOSITORY FILES

Genesis

[Genesis 1:1 - Creator](#)

[Genesis 1:27 - God's Work,
God's Image, God's Distinction](#)

[Genesis 2:24 - "They Shall Be
One Flesh"](#)

[Genesis 3 - Sin and its
Consequences in This Life](#)

[Genesis 3:15 - Genesis Three:
A Light in the Darkness](#)

[Genesis 3 - Sin Changes Things](#)

[Genesis 4:1-12 - It Was A
Religious War](#)

[Genesis 4:1-10 - The Example
of Abel](#)

[Genesis 5 - Adam's Family](#)

[Genesis 6:1-8 - Causes Of The
Flood](#)

[Genesis 12:1-3 - The Promises
of God To Abraham](#)

[Genesis 13 - Pitching Tents
Toward Sodom](#)

[Genesis 18:1-33 - God Makes
No Mistakes](#)

[Genesis 25:29-34 - Do Not Sell
Your Birthright](#)

[Genesis 39:1-12 - Lessons from
Joseph in Potiphar's House](#)

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Index



Magazine Index
by year and month

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A Commentary on Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians 6:10 is the culmination of a line of thought begun in chapter five: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (v. 13). Then in verse 16, he continues: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." The following verses draw a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit and their works and fruit. Then in verses 24 & 25, Paul warns: "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

But a question would naturally arise in the minds of the brethren, which Paul anticipates and answers in the first paragraph of chapter six. It might be worded something like this: "What about those Christians who are weak and give in to following the flesh? Should we turn away from them and reject them?" Let us look at Paul's answer. I am making a few comments in parentheses as we read these verses.

Verse 1 - "Brethren, even if a man (this is the Christian man) is caught in any trespass (he is overtaken in a fault, he is walking after the flesh, he needs to be restored), you who are spiritual (the obligation is not placed on the church--the case is not assumed to have progressed that far--but it is to those walking after the Spirit), restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted (to turn aside after the flesh)."

The apostle sets the stage in this first verse for the subject of burden bearing. Someone is overtaken or overcome in a fault or sin. The subject is not overcome with hunger or exposure to the weather, but rather to sin. This becomes even more obvious in the end of the verse when Paul warns the restorer to be careful for he might "also be tempted." The fault of the one needing restoration is the result of temptation, not physical needs.

Verse 2 - "Bear one another's burdens (this sets forth the individual nature of the repairing that needs to be done), and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Christ is in the business of forgiving sins and reconciling men to God and to each other)."

The burden we are to help with is the "fault" of verse one. Because of the love we have one for another we should be concerned when a brother is overcome of temptation and sins. Providing a bag of rice or potatoes and a pound of bacon is not going to fulfill the law of Christ in this passage. The only thing that will do that is helping the man to overcome sin.

Verse 3 - "For if anyone thinks he is something (superior to his erring brother) when he is nothing (he also has sinned at times), he deceives himself."

The first word in verse three shows that the approach mentioned in that verse is the state of mind necessary on the part of the sincere individual who seeks to bear a burden for the backsliding brother per the instructions in verses 1 and 2.

Verse 4 - "But let each one examine his own work (by God's standard instead of by a sinning brother), and then he will have reason (the right) for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in respect to (comparison to the error of) another."

Verse 5 - "For each one shall bear his own load (of God-given responsibility)."

Verse 6 - "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." This verse has been used out of its context to prove that we should support those who preach the gospel. While there are several passages in the New Testament that teach that a gospel preacher may be supported, this passage does not so teach. Look again at the context. Paul says when a man sins, help him. When he is restored, he may rejoice in himself. What then? Is he to give the preacher a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken? Is that what Paul is saying? To put such a meaning to the passage degrades the thought Paul has in mind. The thing under consideration is that of an erring brother being corrected by those who are not in error. The one who is taught should come to a point when he participates jointly with the one doing the teaching.

The person who is walking after the flesh and the one who is walking after the Spirit are no longer in step; they are going in different directions; their fellowship has been broken; and the one walking after the flesh is the one guilty of breaking that fellowship. He needs to heed the correction and instruction given him in order that he may return to the fellowship of good things from which he has parted. Hence, Paul admonishes the erring person, "And let the one who is taught the word (the one being corrected) share all good things with him who teaches." In other words, the erring brother is not only to listen, but he is also to do what he is instructed to do to correct the situation in order that fellowship may be restored.

It is true that the word "communicate" in this verse is sometimes used to refer to financial support (see Philippians 4:15). But that has to be determined from the context and not from the word itself. The word translated "communicate" here is also translated "fellowship" and "partaker." Basically, we are told, it means to "share," but what is to be shared must always be determined from the context. It is not included in the word itself.

Verses 7-8 - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh (by walking after the flesh) shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit (by walking after the Spirit) shall from the Spirit reap eternal life." These verses express the eternal truth taught in Genesis 1:12, that of reaping relative to the sowing. It expresses quite vividly our individual responsibilities in the realm of helping one another, as individuals.

It is quite sad that some are trying to shift their personal burdens to institutions, but their real responsibilities stay with them. God is not mocked--they shall reap as they sow.

Verse 9 - "And let us not lose heart (growing weary or complaining because of prolonged effort) in doing good (it is easy to count them as weary burdens and shift them to others, to the church, or to an institution), for in due time we shall reap (based on our sowing) if we do not grow weary."

Verse 10 - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

In this verse, Paul gives a general admonition concerning the matter to all Christians. The word translated "therefore" or "so then" connects this verse with what has been said before. In the Greek of this verse, the definite article comes before "good." Paul has in mind "the good" he has been discussing of correcting and instructing those in error, especially those of the "household of faith" that have been overtaken in walking after the flesh.

This verse does not have anything to do with helping those who are materially destitute or in need of financial benevolence. In fact, it has nothing to do with finances at all. It is the need of correcting those in error that is under consideration.

By Bob Buchanon
From Expository Files 12.12; December 2005


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Expository
New Testament




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Index


Magazine Index
by year and month

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God's Work, God's Image, God's Distinction

Genesis 1:27

A serious reading of the early chapters of Genesis is crucial to the development, maintenance, instruction and obedience of faith. J. Sidlow Baxter was right. "The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as they flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis," ("Explore The Book," p.#23). An example of the practical value of teachings in Genesis is this familiar statement:

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them," (Gen. 1:27).

Three things stand out and need our attention:

God's Work: "God created man." This is the truth about our origin. God called into existence that which had no previous existence, and the highest act of this divine work was to create human life. When you read the claims of the Bible, consider the evidence and decide that the document is the Word of God - you are glad to read Genesis 1:27 and accept this truth of man's origin: "God created man." As you hold this conclusion in your heart, you are doing what is described in Hebrews 11. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen . . . by faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible," (Heb. 11:1,3).

Charles Darwin was a British naturalist, who lived from 1809 until 1882, and in his work *The Descent of Man* he asserted: "Man is descended from some lower form." This is just where the confusion begins for Darwin and his disciples. He changed, revised and sometimes contradicted his own theory. And Darwin's "theory of evolution" evolved. Today, there are interpreters of Darwin who debate their interpretations. Some begin with specific observations of Darwin and build a scientific creed. They apply their interpretation of Darwin and label their fellows as either Darwinian, anti-Darwinian or neo-Darwinian (what we sometimes call "drawing lines of fellowship"). There is a growing number of highly esteemed scientists who argue vigorously against Darwinianism (Michael Behe, Robert Jastrow, Phillip Johnson). There are scientific journals published today, devoted to the theme of "Intelligent Design," responding to the old Darwinian models. Thus, there are many, conflicting evolutionary doctrines claiming authority in Darwin, and many non-Darwinian models and theories now gaining more attention. Not all that is called "science" is academic and objective. Modern science is sometimes encumbered by myth, prejudice, politics, arrogance and human competition (just like modern religion).

So what am I to do? What can I believe? What should I teach my children? "God created man!" Hebrews 3:4 teaches that "every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God." When you study science, presented with validity and without human agenda, you are studying what God built. Good science yields agreement with the Genesis account, and in particular this affirmation: "God created man."

God's Image: "God created man in His own image." This word "image," in common discourse, is suggestive of something visual. A camera captures an image, for looking; for observation with the physical eye. Pictures or graphics in computer format are often called "images." So the word is often used for something visual; something that becomes the object of sight. Not in Genesis 1:27.

In dealing with the word in this context, we must move beyond simple visual similarity. This "image" is real, but not necessarily or primarily visual. The word "image" in Gen. 1:27 means "likeness, resemblance." The previous verse reports God's declaration: "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

We were made like God; according to His likeness. Now this cannot be understood as duplication; we are not clones of Deity (see Deut. 4:35). We are like God; we are not God. He made us in His image. We must not attempt to make Him in our image.

Of all God made, He made man unique, like Him. We have the capacity to think, to make choices, to love - unlike plants and animals. We can be good; we can chose good character, do good things, be good people. God never said to a tree, rock or insect, "Be holy, for I am holy," but He says that to us, according to 1 Pet. 1:16. We were made in the image of God.

Sin stifles that resemblance, defacing the image of God. Sin keeps us from personally realizing the full extent of our resemblance to God and living in fellowship with Him. But in your response to Christ, sin is forgiven. And in your continued life of response to Christ, sin is conquered. This was the basis of what Paul said to the saints in Colossae. They had "put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." Romans 8:29 defines this process in these terms: "for whom he foreknew, He also predestined (to become) conformed to the image of His Son." We were created by God, made in His image. Through the choice to sin, we fall into the bondage and guilt of sin (defacing the image). But in obeying the gospel, we are renewed and conformed to the image of His Son.

God's Distinction: "male and female He created them." Because of the systematic working of error in our culture, we have to talk about things we thought we would never have to bring up. I had no idea in my earlier years I would be addressing this peculiarity of our culture: the blending and blurring of gender differences! That distinction God built into nature is today denied, re-defined and perverted, to accommodate the culture (and ultimately, the perverse desires of individuals serving their own lusts). This is where we are in the culture of 2002.

Sometimes we become aware of men who want to be women, and women who want to be men! There is

such a powerful movement, rushing and running away from traditional "gender stereotypes" and roles. According to some who are given their voice by the media, it is no longer good to let the little girls play with dolls and let the little boys have trucks and learn to throw a ball. There is an agenda (subtle in some cases, but bold in others), and the purpose is to deny, confuse and blend the sexes.

Before the Bible is ever opened, the uniqueness of male and female is evidenced in nature. Men and women are different, and that is objectively discernable. Once you get away from the "softer sciences," the evidence joins Biblical truth to confirm the obvious. There are differences in metabolism rate; in skeletal structure; in the circulatory system and certainly in the reproductive system. Forensic scientists can detect the differences between male and female years after the body and spirit have parted! In addition to biological differences, there are social, emotional and psychological differences - about which there was no debate, before the current gender neutral movement (sometimes called "unisex."). {For an excellent study of these issues, see Florida College Annual Lectures, 1995 - In His Image: Male and Female In Nature, by Wayne T. Galloway, p.#151}.

Biblically, here is the case: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." God created man, in His own image, and the distinction is God's: male and female. Sexual differentiation was not a result of social evolution; it was explicit in divine creation. The suitable partner for man was a woman (Gen. 2:18)!

Romans chapter one is describing the behaviors of a people who have forsaken God. This has always been the context of Romans 1 (long before current discussions that confuse the genders).

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." (Rom. 1:26,27).

Paul uses the terms "natural" and "unnatural," reflecting what is explicitly written in Genesis 1:27 - male and female. When men or women choose to ignore the gender distinction God ordained, they go against God, against nature, corrupt themselves, produce victims, contribute to the decay of their society and work against the purposes of Almighty God. And every work against the purposes of God will be defeated.

"We ought not fear the differences between men and women, rather we should fear a loss of that distinction. Does not nature itself teach us that men and women are different? And in agreement with these natural differences and building on them, the Scriptures clearly teach the proper role for men and women. These innate differences and these traditional gender roles have been so fundamental to mankind's progress and happiness that we may have taken for granted their importance. But if we lose these distinctions it will be painfully clear how important they are." (Thaxter Dickey, "Male and Female Created He Them" in the book, "A Tribute To Melvin Curry," p.#87).

Conclusion:

The book of Genesis must continue to inform our faith. Do not be intimidated by any modern efforts to

confuse or merge human science with divine revelation. In these early chapters of Genesis, there is truth given in simple terms, for us to digest and act upon today. If you think you have "grown" beyond the book of Genesis, you have deceived yourself and you have confused growth with apostasy.

Helpful Resources:

"In His Image," The Implications of Creation; FC Annual Lectures, 1995.

"A Tribute To Melvin Curry," see page #71: "Male and Female Created He Them" by Thaxter Dickey.

By Warren E. Berkley
From Expository Files 9.11; November 2002

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"They Shall Be One Flesh"

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.(Genesis 2:24, KJV).

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.(Genesis 2:24, NIV).

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.
(Genesis 2:24, NRSV).

"Therefore..,"

takes us back to what had just happened in this context. God saw it was not good for man to be alone, so He made a suitable helper. The record says that: "...the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man." On this occasion Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." When these creation events took place, God said: "THEREFORE," or "for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." [NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES: Matt. 19: 5 & Eph. 5:31].

"...A man..."

The statement in Genesis 2:24 was meant for every human being. Adam had no father and mother; thus it is implied, this is meant for all in the human race; everybody with a father and mother. God was setting up an institution for the human race.

"...Leave his father and his mother..."

It is noteworthy, there is a "cleaving" in this statement, but before the "cleaving," there is "leaving." This is about leaving your family of origin and making your own family. As vital and permanent as the child-parent relationship is, a proper husband-wife relationship warrants leaving the earlier relationship.

"...And shall cleave unto his wife..."

This is about marriage as God intends it, and this involves leaving and cleaving. Sometimes the English word "cleave" means to divide or split (a butcher uses a cleaver to cut meat). But in Genesis 2:24, the opposite is meant: to adhere, to stick, to be attached by strong tie. It is a verb, and it involves determined

action to stay with somebody, out of deep love and commitment; It is not just emotional; it is not passive; it is the attitude and activity of staying close to someone. It is adherence rooted in a shared will or intent. The same word is used in Deut. 10:20 (NASB) and other passages in that context, to signify wholehearted commitment (Deut. 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). Marriage requires maintenance!

"...One flesh..."

To be one flesh is the result of leaving and cleaving; and this is much more than just a physical union. This is about giving and receiving; joining and responding. This is emotional; this is intellectual; this is about love and care and attention. And - only as we leave and cleave and develop closeness in all these other ways - can there be the kind of physical union that's right, ideal and nourishing. This union should last as long as we live. The Bible teaches one man and one woman for life with only one exception (Matt. 19:9).

When marriage is dealt with in Matthew 19 by Jesus, and Ephesians 5 by Paul, both refer back to God's institution of this union at creation. Here is something that has never changed: The law that binds a man and woman together in this relationship is the law of God, expressed in the statement: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

By Warren E. Berkley
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Index


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by year and month

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Sin and its Consequences in This Life

Genesis 3

Our world and our lives have not been made better because of sin. In fact, sin has made everything about our existence much, much worse. The thief may think his life is better after having successfully stolen something valuable. The shoplifter is pleased that he avoided the security cameras. The hedonist is on top of the world with his latest sexual escapade. The con artist found a good mark and the corrupt politician got away with the lie and the drug dealer settled an old score. All of them are pleased that their lives are better for it. But they are wrong. Sin changes things, Many may be subtle changes but in the end the consequences are horrific. If sinners only knew what they were doing to themselves, they would not feel so clever. If disciples will always remember that sin is never free, then they will much better be able to deal with temptation. Sin changes things.

Sin Changes Your Relationship With God

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8). One observable result of the first sin was fear and insecurity. Before sin, there had been joy, confidence and trust. But sin took all that away and replaced it with fear and guilt.

Adam and Eve had a very immature concept of God, as seen in their attempt to hide from God behind some trees. They could not, and we cannot, either hide our deeds nor ourselves from God. Far better to keep our deeds in line with His commandments, for God does see (Psalm 10:11-13).

Does everyone live in fear who lives in sin. No, not really. If one denies the existence of God, or the reality of judgment, then he or she may succeed in canceling out the fear of judgment. Some boldly mock the idea of the righteous retribution of God, but will they be so bold when they stand in His presence? More likely, they will try to follow the lead of Adam and Eve and vainly find a tree to hide behind (Revelation 6:16,17; Hebrews 10:30,31).

Sin Changes Your Self-Relationship

"Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). One definition of "peace" is the absence of conflict. Up until the time of disobedience, there had not been the daily moral struggle, no pangs of guilt, no inner conflict. It was only when temptation was given permission to bear fruit in Eve's heart that the problem began.

Along with the loss of security in the world came the loss of self esteem.. The peace within was gone, and mankind has been forever since trying to rediscover it. The search has led to many false hopes and promises. The answer was not to be found in eastern religions, drugs, alcohol or suicide. though people have searched in all these to find peace. Some have chosen to just look at themselves as products of blind evolution and their lives are without purpose. Believers are not afraid of death because of confidence in the purposes and promises of God, but these lost ones are not afraid of death because they have nothing much to live for.

It is for this reason that the promise of Jesus, the "prince of peace" to give "peace" is so inviting. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7). The Lord counsels us that we can maintain this peace by keeping our thoughts in perspective. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." (Philippians 4:8). As I read this verse, I cannot help but think that this probably well describes the minds of Adam and Eve before the fall. In Jesus, we can approach this peace again.

Sin Changes Your Relationship With Others

"And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." (Genesis 3:12). It seems as chivalry was already dead long before the demise of the knights of the round table. Here we see how suspicion and conflict enter into human relationships. This conflict will lead to one of this couple's children murdering his brother, and countless more conflicts through the ages to come. This is the true "mother of all battles."

Jesus advises us on how to repair human relationships and make them what they ought to be. Much of His teachings has to do with that very thing. There are many "one another" passages in the New Testament.

"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." (1 John 4:20,21). When we apply the teachings of Christ to our lives, our relationships will improve accordingly. When two true and obvious disciples of Jesus relate to one another, there is no room for distrust, selfishness and suspicion. Think about what this can do for a marriage!

Sin Changes Your Relationship With Nature

"Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life." (Genesis 3:17). Finally, we see that nature itself was cursed. Every human tear of sorrow ever shed can be traced back to the fall. Exhaustion, pain and natural calamity are the result of sin. Sin demands too heavy a price, both now and in eternity, don't you think? There is a better way

(Romans 6:23).

By Jon W. Quinn
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Genesis Three: A Light in the Darkness

Genesis 3:15

There are several pivotal passages in the Scripture which record events that greatly altered the course of human history. One of these passages is found in Genesis chapter three. It is here that we find sin making its grand entrance into the world, and the beginning of the consequences that would follow. Things would never be the same.

In verses 1-7 we find the temptation and the fall. In verses 8-21 we discover that human suffering, guilt, hardship, pain, sorrow and death all entered the realm of human experience as a result of sin. Finally, in verses 22-24 we find the first human couple expelled from Eden and beginning a much less satisfying existence. Is there any light of hope?

The central theme of the rest of the Bible has to do with the development and implementation of God's plan to save from sin and restore fellowship between Himself and us. The ultimate goal of the plan is "eternal life" - a term the Bible uses to describe the unequaled glory of heaven.

In the middle of the darkness and gloom of Genesis chapter three - verse 15 to be exact - we have the first promise that a Savior is coming who will defeat the work of Satan. In the New Testament, we will find this promise is received by faith in Christ. But here the veil is lifted ever so slightly allowing a small light to shine through. It will grow brighter in the centuries to follow as the prophets expound upon the message of the Messiah to come. And then - Jesus is born in fulfillment of the prophecies and the Provider of redemption and hope.

By Jon W. Quinn

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Index**


**Magazine Index
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Sin Changes Things

Genesis 3

Our world has not been made a better place because of sin. Our sins always have a negative impact on our lives. The thief may think that he has improved his life by stealing something valuable. The hedonist imagines that his life could be no better as he relishes his latest sexual conquest and begins to plan for the next. What a good feeling it is to get away with something, whether you are a corrupt politician, a con artist or a shoplifter.

But sin changes things. Subtle but serious changes that have horrendous consequences. If sinners only knew what they were doing to themselves they wouldn't be smiling. If Christians would only remember some of these things when temptation seems so strong then perhaps the temptation would wilt away. Sin changes things.

SIN ALTERS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (GENESIS 3:8).

It had not always been that way. Fear such as this was something new. Before sin there had been only trust and joy, but now that was gone.

The couple had a very immature concept of God. They tried to hide from the One who is all-seeing. Neither can man today hide his actions from the eyes of God. Let your actions be of such a nature that there is no need to hide them.

Yes, there are many people who revel in their rebellion against God. They mock any idea of judgment. They are not made afraid because they refuse to believe that they will ever be called upon to give account for their lives. They may be bold now, but will they when the hour of recompense comes? Adam and Eve did not become afraid until they realized that they were in the immediate presence of the Lord. One passage well describes the reaction of the rebellious as they faced a judgment of the Lord. Remember: these had also previously been bold and mocking in their contempt for Christ and His people; "...and they said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come;

and who is able to stand?" (REVELATION 6:16,17).

With Adam and Eve, Satan had put a question mark where God had put an exclamation point. What God had forbade Satan had declared permissible. The course of these two lives, as well as the entire span of human history, was changed forever. One sin. One sin can wreck a whole life. It often happens.

No matter how far from God we fall, the answer as to how to be reconciled is always the same. Jesus is the only way to regain fellowship with God. There is no other way. Because we deal with a loving God, He, Himself, has paid the price for our transgressions. The relationship broken by our sins can be restored by God's grace through our faith (JOHN 14:6; EPHESIANS 2:1-10).

SIN ALTERS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil...' (GENESIS 3:22). Man had been at perfect peace with himself. There had been no inner conflict between right and wrong, no pangs of guilt, no struggles. There had really only been one moral choice to make: obey God's command not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden.

But now there was no peace. That, too, had changed. Something had awakened within Adam and Eve that had taken away their innocence, and with it, the security that they once knew. No longer did the world seem the safe home it once was. They felt threatened and exposed.

The search to regain inner peace continues today. Though the search has led many to false hopes, there is an answer. It is not in eastern cultic religions, they offer no Savior. It is not in drugs and alcohol, they remove no problems and only create more. It is not in suicide, that final solution merely sends one to judgment more quickly. Again, the only correct choice is Jesus. He will restore peace legitimately. He will make it possible for you to face life and death without anxiety. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (PHILIPPIANS 4:7).

SIN ALTERS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

"And the man said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate' (GENESIS 3:12).

Now there is strife. There is suspicion, distrust and conflict. In this passage we have the beginning of disharmony in the home. It will lead the way, as the world is populated, to conflict between brothers, between neighbors, between cities and finally between nations. But here we have the beginning. This is the true "mother of all battles" Mr. Saddam.

Again it is Jesus who teaches the principles necessary to get us back on track in all of our human relationships.

The answer is unselfish dedication to others, whether it be husband or wife, brother or sister, neighbor or stranger, friend or enemy.

Only when the teachings of Jesus are applied to our lives can we really expect there to be much improvement in this area. Whenever two people are obviously dedicated to the teachings of Christ, distrust and suspicion between them will dissolve and be replaced by trust and confidence. That is why Christians will make the best husbands and wives; friends and neighbors; employers and employees. They have risen above the world's standards in their dealings with their fellow human beings. God is the greatest builder of human relationships; Satan is the destroyer of whatever good relationships we may enjoy.

SIN ALTERS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

"...cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (GENESIS 3:17).

Various natural consequences resulted from the first sin. Not only was the ground cursed, but being separated from the tree of life meant that man became mortal and destined to die. From then on, through one means or another, the day would come for each human being where the body of flesh would fail and the spirit depart.

Pain in childbirth, wasteful vegetation such as thorns and thistles and physical exhaustion are other results mentioned specifically in the context. Everywhere we look today we see human suffering caused by living in a fallen world. No human tear of sorrow or pain has ever been shed but what can ultimately be traced back to the first sin. And sin has its direct consequences as well: disease, hunger and poverty are many times the direct result of sin.

Again, the answer to this human dilemma is Jesus. he said, "And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am you may be also." (JOHN 14:3). The place prepared by Jesus is referred to in the Bible as "the new heavens and a new earth." It is described as a place where tears have been wiped away, where there is no more pain or death, sickness or crying. This is our destiny if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. It is the only answer available to those who are tired of the human condition.

Sin has demanded too heavy a price. There is a better course to choose. There are much better things to enjoy. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (ROMANS 6:23).

By Jon W. Quinn
From Expository Files 3.2; February 1996

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It Was A Religious War

Genesis 4:1-12

Recently, a well known entertainer, ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, remarked how that religion was responsible for so much war in history. He's right, it has been. Often world religions have extolled peace while bringing war. Paul's friend John Lennon wrote a song entitled "Imagine" where he invites us to imagine a world without religion, or thoughts of God or heaven or hell.... or politics or nations or personal property, and with everyone living just for today.

Concerning violence as it relates to religion, it must be understood that the culprit is not religion itself, but evil tendencies brought on by envy or jealousy or greed or pride. A power hungry despot may well urge his followers on, even inflaming them with religious rhetoric, but that is just a cover up of his evil motivations. That's also why we are often left scratching our heads when men call upon God for justification of the most horrendous acts of cruelty, hatred and mayhem. We seem to understand that God condemns such behavior.

The fact is, if these quasi-religious leaders lived in a world with no religion, no concept of God or heaven or hell, they would be just as hateful and cruel and violent. It is their own evil lusts that is responsible. Religion is just window dressing. Perhaps a good way to examine this issue would be to look at the first "war". It, too, was set against a religious back drop. But religion was not the cause of it. Consider the first surprise attack launched in human history.

Background of the Conflict

After Adam and Eve were driven from the garden as a consequence for their disobedience, Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain (Genesis 4:1). Then she gave birth to another son and named him Abel. In the relationship between God and these two sons of Adam, and in their relationship to each other, we learn several principles.

Abel was a keeper of sheep and offered the "firstlings" of his flock. Cain offered his offering of the fruit of the ground. (Genesis 4:2-4). Centuries later, Jesus would call Abel "righteous Abel" for the manner in which he worshipped God and lived his life (Matthew 23:35). He offered a sacrifice that was "more excellent" than his brother's (Hebrews 11:4). The Scriptures tell us that the Lord respected Abel and his offering but did not respect Cain and his offering (Genesis 4:4,5).

God expects a sacrifice or an offering from man. Today, it is the praise of our lips and the service we render in the name of the Lord (Romans 12:1,2; Hebrews 13:15,16). Just like in the beginning, these sacrifices can be accepted or rejected by the Lord. Only that which God commanded is acceptable to

Him as an offering (John 4:23, 24; Matthew 15:8,9; Colossians 3:16,17). Also, God expects the first and best from us, and has a right to expect nothing less than that (Matthew 6:33; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Malachi 1:6-10; 12,13).

We are never really told why the Lord rejected Cain's sacrifice. Some have thought that it was because he did not offer an animal sacrifice like Abel did, but we recall that God did at times require both animal and vegetable sacrifices.

It could also be that Cain's heart just was not right. Or maybe he offered that which was rotten or spoiled. Whatever it was, it was not righteous and faithful as Abel's was.

The Anger Of Cain

Cain was angered when the Lord did not respect his sacrifice. The anger was evident in his countenance, or the expression on his face (Genesis 4:5). The options open to Cain were explained to him by the Lord (Genesis 4:7).

If you do well, you will be accepted .

If you do not do well sin lies at the door.

Cain's actions were subject to his decision. This does not all have to end badly, even at this point. There need not be war, but if there is, the source of the problem is not that Abel worshipped God by faith, but Cain's unwillingness to do what is right.

If you do well, God will receive you. Our past may not have been "done well" but that does not mean our present and future must match past failures. It is up to us (John 15:5; Acts 10:34,35; 2:38; 8:22).

Sin is ready to take advantage of you if you allow it to do so. Do not make yourself vulnerable (Ephesians 6:10-13; 1 Peter 5:8). Like Cain, your actions are up to you. To trust and obey... or not, in good times or bad is our decision to make. "Oh, my problems are worse than everyone else's so God will overlook my neglect!" Do not count on it (1 Peter 5:9; 4:19).

"Religious War"

It was a "day that will live in infamy!" Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). Cain was of the wicked one. He was angry with his brother because his brother was doing what was right and he wasn't! (1 John 3:12). But Cain's jealousy was not caused by religion. If there had been no sacrifice unto the Lord, and if Abel has been successful and Cain not in some other area, Cain's reaction would have been the same.

Of course, God was displeased with Cain. He cursed Cain. The ground would not longer yield its strength for Cain (Genesis 4:12). Cain would be a fugitive and vagabond (4:12). A mark would be placed upon Cain to prevent him from being murdered for his deed (4:15).

Men do become angry when they are unwilling to do as God says (Galatians 4:16; Acts 7:54-60). But pleasing God is as easy as doing from the heart, earnestly and diligently, what God has commanded (1 John 3:24).

Also, murder is condemned (see also Genesis 9:6). But we should also understand that harboring hatred in our hearts is also contrary to God's will for us (1 John 3:10,11; 4:20,21).

And a final thought: The blood of Abel brought a curse, but the blood of Christ brings forgiveness (Hebrews 12:24). It speaks better than the blood of Abel.

So, it is not religion that is the source of the problem, even in the so called "religious wars." Instead, the sources are the same as they always are for any human conflict; greed, hatred, jealousy and pride. Jesus came to show us a better way. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

By Jon W. Quinn
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The Example of Abel

Genesis 4:1-10

There are several Old Testament characters about whom we know a great deal, such as Abraham, Moses, and David. There are others about whom we know very little, sometimes not even their names, such as Lot's wife, the butler and baker in Egypt, and David's little child who died. Then there are those in between, about whom we know some but not a whole lot. The story of Abel, found in Genesis 4:1-10, would fall into the latter category.

However, the lives of all people recorded in the Old Testament, whether we know much or little, are there for a reason. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4). It is not just to give us some interesting biographical or historical information, but to provide important lessons by which we can learn something about God's will for us. What can we learn from the example of Abel?

Obeying

To begin, we see that Abel obeyed. "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the LORD.' Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering" (Gen. 4:1-4).

Why did God respect Abel and his offering? The Bible says that it was because Abel acted by faith. "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks" (Heb. 11:4). There is only one way to act by faith. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Thus, we conclude that God must have spoken. We do not know exactly what God told Cain and Abel about sacrifices. The most logical conclusion is that He wanted animals offered. But whatever He said, Abel did exactly as He commanded.

From Abel's example we can see the importance of obeying God's will. We must obey God to meet His conditions for our salvation. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). However, even after we become Christians, we must continue to obey God in all things. Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi and said, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out

your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). We need to obey as Abel did.

Suffering

Next, we see that Abel suffered because He obeyed God. In contrast to God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, it is said, "But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.' 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" (Gen. 4:5-8).

Why did this event occur? It is an example of the righteous being persecuted by the unrighteous. "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" (1 Jn. 3:12). Cain chose to follow the will of the evil one in offering a sacrifice that was not acceptable to God. Rather than repenting, he continued to listen to the evil one in venting his frustration by murdering his righteous brother. Jesus warned us that such things would happen. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matt. 5:10-11).

Christians in the first century often were persecuted for righteousness' sake (Acts 5:40-42). And even though we may not be put to death, as were Abel and many in the first century, we are told, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). From the example of Abel, we can learn to expect it.

Speaking

Finally, we see that Abel still speaks. "Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground'" (Genesis 4:9-10). Even then, though Abel was dead, his blood spoke to God. And remember that the writer of Heb. 11:4 said that he, being dead, still speaks. Though now long dead, Abel still speaks to us because his obedience and suffering for righteousness' sake are recorded in the scriptures, so that Jesus was able to make reference to him (Matt. 23:34-35).

However, our lives are not recorded in the scriptures. So when we die, can we yet speak, and if so, how? One way is by the influence that we have on our families. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Let me cite a personal example. I am a Christian because I heard and obeyed the gospel of Christ, but the circumstances that brought me to hear and obey the gospel are interesting in this regard. At some time in my family's history, I do not know exactly when, where, or how, one or more of my ancestors heard and obeyed the gospel. As a result of teaching done in the family, my grandfather was brought up in the training and admonition of the Lord, so that he became a gospel preacher. In turn, he brought up my mother to know the Lord and become a Christian, and it was from her that I first came to remember the Creator in the days of my youth. So, someone whose name I do not even know still speaks through my life.

Another way that we can speak is by our example on our friends. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Even young people who are trying to serve the Lord can be a good example to their friends at school and play, so that in later years, perhaps after they are dead, others whom they have influenced for good may still remember them. I have heard older Christians on occasion speak of some friend who is no longer alive but led them to Christ when they were younger. Such influence can still speak after death like Abel does.

Conclusion

We do not know very much about Abel, other than that he was the second son of Adam and Eve, that he was a shepherd, and that he was murdered by his brother Cain. Yet, by what we do know about him, he still speaks to us regarding the need to obey God, to be willing to suffer for righteousness' sake, and to be a good influence upon others. May we learn these lessons and follow this great example in our lives today

By Wayne S. Walker
From Expository Files 9.1; January 2002

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Adam's Family

Genesis 5

In chapter five of Genesis, we read of ten generations, beginning with Adam, and ending with the sons of Noah. In Genesis eleven, we also find ten generations, beginning with Shem and ending with Abraham. These generations are also found in the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3). These genealogies say very little of these men except that they lived, fathered children, and died. Death had entered the world with the sin of Adam. Victory over death would come through the descendent of these men. In this article, we will consider some of the notable persons in the family of Adam.

Some suggest that these genealogies are not complete, but rather just list the more notable characters and then skips several generations (the Bible does sometimes do this (Matthew 1:1), but I can see no evidence of it in these Old Testament records. Maybe... maybe not.

Seth (Gen. 4:25,26; 5:6-8)

Seth was the son of Adam and Eve. Three of the second generation of mankind are named; Cain, Abel and Seth. Many fail to realize that Adam and Eve had many other sons and daughters who are not mentioned by name in the Bible (Genesis 5:3,4). The children of these sons and daughters of Adam and Eve became the parents of the third generation.

Due to the long life spans of human beings before the flood, it was not uncommon to live hundreds of years, living to see one's great great great great great great grand children. We find people having children on into the second century of life (it was nothing to have a child in one's 60's or 70's). After the flood, human longevity drops dramatically as the aging process is accelerated.

The population would grow quickly because of this, and herein is the key to the old question, "Where did Cain get his wife?" The answer, from a group of Adam's descendants who settled in the land of Nod, perhaps a century or two later (Genesis 4:16-17). The human population would have been quite numerous by then.

The name "Seth" means "set", or "appoint." Adam named him Seth because God had appointed seed from him instead of Abel, who was murdered by Cain (4:26). The implication is even more far reaching than this; for God had promised the coming of One who would defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15). It would be through Seth's descendants that this promise would be fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 3:38).

Seth named one of his sons Enosh, which means "frailty." (Genesis 5:6-8). Enosh is the son through whom the Messianic promise is fulfilled. Again, Seth had other sons and daughters, and along with his

brothers and sisters, are multiplying themselves rapidly. The Bible says that in the days of Seth, "men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). It has been suggested that Seth named his son Enosh (frailty) because he recognized the frailty of man and their need for God. Therefore they began to call on the name of the Lord.

The word "LORD" is from the Hebrew "Yahweh" or "Jehovah". It describes the eternal, self-existing nature of God... the "I Am"; One without beginning or end. The phrase "Call upon His name" shows trust in His mercy and the realization that we need His care. It is a humbling of oneself before God in worship and obedience.

Interestingly enough, contrast this with the statement about Cain (4:16). Sethites "call upon the name of the Lord" while Cain (and his descendants) are described as going "out from the presence of the Lord."

Enoch (Gen. 5:21-24)

Enoch "walked with God." He had close communion with God and directed his life in accordance with God's will. The Scriptures also state that Enoch "was not, for God took him." This expression means that Enoch did not die like those who preceded him. Instead, God "translated" him.

This is the same expression used concerning Elijah who also did not die but was taken into heaven (2 Kings 2:3-5). Enoch "walked with God" meaning he lived by faith and was pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:5). Without faith one cannot be pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). Enoch "sought for God" and was rewarded by God. In the New Testament, Jude called Enoch a prophet (Jude 14). This prophecy deals with the judgment of God upon the ungodly. Enoch's message to his generation was one of warning of God's judgment.

Methuselah (Gen. 5:25-27)

The only notable thing about Methuselah was that of all those mentioned in the Bible, he lived the longest, 969 years. Which would you rather do; live as long as Methuselah, or please God? Methuselah lived a long time, but was not pleasing to God (Genesis 6:5,8). The Bible states that only Noah was righteous during a time when Methuselah still lived. Interestingly, Methuselah died the year of the flood. We do not know if he died previous to the flood, or in it.

Noah (Gen. 5:29)

The name Noah means "rest." Lamech, Noah's father, gave him this name because, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed" This reminds us of the original cursing of the ground. Noah's parents look forward to Noah helping them toil out a living hoping it will ease their burden of survival.

But with Noah will come a different kind of rest; a rest of the earth itself from the sin which plagued it.

Things to Think About

The consequences of Adam's sin, physical death, continued through his offspring. Repeatedly the phrase is used in Genesis five; "and he died". The one exception is Enoch, as we already noted. For help, we turn to the One who blessed Enoch with life (John 11:23-26; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21-23).

Men should call on the name of the Lord. Today, since Jesus has now come, this entails obeying His gospel by faith (Romans 10:13). This involves baptism to have our sins washed away (Acts 22:16; 2:37,38).

Finally, one can "please God" by "walking with Him." Like Enoch, we need to "walk with God" by faith. It is the wise thing to do (Ephesians 5:15; 1 John 1:6-7). Remember, you and I are a part of Adam's family as well.

By Jon W. Quinn

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Causes Of The Flood

Genesis 6:1-8

When you begin to read the Bible and you start in the beginning with Genesis, you learn that God created the heavens and the earth and God made man in his own image. God put man in the garden and gave him a suitable companion. They were blessed by God and enjoyed life without shame before the choice to sin. This peaceful existence was enjoyed by Adam and Eve until they disobeyed God, resulting in their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Children were born to Adam and Eve, but Cain killed Abel. Genesis chapter five is a written account of Adam's line, from Seth through Noah. And you will notice, in Genesis chapter five, over a dozen men are listed, but only of one man is it said, "he walked with God." His name was Enoch.

Then you come to a time (Genesis 6), when evil on the earth was so widespread; when sin became so popular, it became the common way of life. God was watching. He "was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart," (Gen. 6:6)

A deluge of water was sent by God, to destroy and cleanse the earth. Only Noah and his immediate family remained after the event, to make a new start. Why did this happen? What causes are documented in the Scriptures? I will not try to address every form of sin that prevailed in the pre-flood era, but want to highlight three causes, apparent in Gen. 6:1-8.

"Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.' There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:1-8)

(1) Marriage Without Maturity

How were marriages commonly entered into in the pre-flood era? Men saw beautiful women and took them for themselves. Jesus referred to this when He said: "They ate, they drank, they married wives;

they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:27).

I do not believe the Bible recommends what people call "love at first sight." I know, there are stories people tell that have great sentimental and romantic appeal. "When I first saw Matilda, I knew she would be my wife." Likewise, I understand, it may happen that two people begin a relationship based on nothing but visual attraction. But then they apply themselves to the relationship; it endures and thrives. But good marriages do not mature and find permanence because of physical attraction! "Love at first sight" is not the Biblical ideal for beginning a marriage. To be captivated by physical beauty and charm makes good songs and movies, but can never be the strength or bond of a true marriage.

What should a man look for? "...Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God," (1 Pet. 3:4). Beauty, academic accomplishment, wealth, talent, social charm or popularity - all combined do not compare to character. (The next time you read the text in Prov. 31, consider that the text gives no hint or implication of what this woman looked like, only her good heart and responsible behavior.)

This doesn't mean that good women are ugly! The recommendation of Scripture is not - that you must ignore physical beauty. But it must be put in perspective, secondary to character. The highest kind of beauty is "the hidden person of the heart." (See also, Prov. 12:26).

One expression of the sinfulness of man that led to the great flood was the seeking of mates based on carnal and sensual motive.

(2) Popularity Without Piety

The ruling men of the time were "heroes of old, men of renown." Unlike Enoch, who walked with God (Gen. 5:22,24) and Noah who responded obediently to the grace of God (Gen. 6:8-22), these men were driven by self-exaltation, ambition to dominate and conquer; to be known and praised by all men. They were willing to form unholy alliances, use carnal violence, shun God and His moral order and seek to make a name for themselves.

After the flood, the same evil was apparent. Men came together and reasoned: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves..." (Gen. 11:4). "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he," (Prov. 16:18-20).

When we seek our own popularity, that self-exaltation puts us on threatening spiritual ground. It is displeasing to the Lord, injurious to others, morally destructive and often counter-productive to promote yourself. Inordinate pride sets us in the direction of extreme rebellion against God. Paul wrote of "the son of perdition" who would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4).

To avoid this evil (personal pride, haughty spirit), follow Christ, who said, "I am gentle and lowly in heart," (Matt. 11:29). And, "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . Let nothing be

done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem another better than himself," (Phil. 2:5,3). Pride without piety will cause a flood of awful consequence in your life.

(3) Thinking Without Truth

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

This is not about occasional evil thoughts, immediately rejected. Look at what God saw. "...That every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, all the time." Here is a significant statement: Only evil, all the time! Letting your mind fall under evil influence; becoming absorbed by evil; thinking, dreaming, talking and living evil - that's the essence of this form of sin.

One of the other vivid descriptions of human evil in the Bible is found in Isaiah 59. The chapter begins with the well-known affirmation, that sin separates us from God. Through the rest of the chapter, there are specific definitions of sin: Dishonesty, Violence, Oppression, Revolt. But in the middle of this chapter, there is this statement in verse 7: "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity." The sin they do, finds its original power in the sin they think about. Minds not governed by the truth of God, but filled with thoughts of iniquity - cause a flood of horrible outcome. Jesus said "from within" come the common evils in human behavior (Mark 7:20-23).

To avoid this, "keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life," (Prov. 4:23). It is my responsibility to protect my mind, by using the truth of God to protect myself against the assaults of the devil.

What happened that was so bad, God sent that great flood? Marital choices without mature consideration of character; the seeking of personal popularity, but without any pious influence, and the exercise of the human mind, absent the government of divine truth. These things are just as destructive today. But Jesus gave His life, so we wouldn't have to live destructive, disobedient lives. Like Noah, we can find that grace, act on it and be saved.


"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith," (Heb. 11:7).

By Warren E. Berkley
From Expository Files 9.8; August 2002

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The Promises of God To Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3

If you want to understand the Bible, start reading. There is no better place to start than in the beginning, Genesis. Commit yourself to a personal journey throughout the entire Bible. Begin in Genesis. Read the entire Bible (perhaps based on an annual schedule). When you finish, read it again. If you will do this, year after year - with all perseverance and diligence - you can develop a good working (practical) knowledge of the Bible to use in your life.

Begin in Genesis because that is the beginning. If you skip Genesis you will come to text after Genesis that will make no sense. There will be statements in the New Testament you cannot deal with if you have not read the book of Genesis.

One passage you will come to in this good pursuit is Genesis 12:1-3. Being familiar with this passage will provide good insight into the book of Romans and Galatians, for example. This has to do with the origin of the Jewish nation, the disposition of the land we now call Palestine, and the spiritual blessings we can enjoy in Christ today.

"Now the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." {Gen. 12:1-3}

In the New King James, the New International Version, and the King James, this is written as an explanation and in past tense: "Now the Lord had said to Abram." In the genealogical account in the last part of chapter eleven we are introduced to Terah, the father of Abram. We are told the family moved from Ur to Haran, and at Haran Terah died. Genesis 12 begins by explaining why they moved: "...the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country....."

In this communication from God to Abram, we discover three distinctive promises and we may refer to the three as - the land promise, the national promise and the spiritual promise.

1. The Land Promise: "A land that I will show you."

2. The National Promise: "A great nation."

3. The Spiritual Promise: "All the families of the earth shall be blessed."

In order to understand these promises, we must follow them through the text of Scripture to the points of fulfillment. We should not just read the promises, forget them and go on. In reading the Old Testament, when we come to a prophecy or a promise - we need to keep reading to find the point or points of fulfillment. If we neglect that there will be a hole in our Bible knowledge. Our task is to track these three promises.

The Land Promise

God called Abram out of his homeland, "to a land" that He would show him. That's in Gen. 12:1 (the last phrase). Also in Genesis 12, observe the statement in verse 7. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So, a land would be given to the descendants of Abram - that's the essence of the first promise.

When you read this promise of land to the descendants of Abram (or Abraham), one thing immediately comes to mind. If you have read the Bible, you know something about the history of the Old Testament. When you come to this promise of land to the descendants of Abraham, one thing enters your mind and that is à the children of Israel entering into the land of Canaan! That conclusion is correct. It is taught in Scripture.

The Bible says, that the promise of land to the descendants of Abraham was fulfilled when God gave them the promised land. Consider this reality as revealed in these places:

Ex. 6:2-8

2And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. 3I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. 4I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. 5And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 7I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'"

This is what God said to Moses, the leader of Israelite nation. At the time God said this to Moses they were not there yet. But this statement adds testimony and confirms that the land promise to Abraham's descendants has to do with the Israelite nation entering the promised land, Canaan.

Deut. 1:6-8

6"The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. 7Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in

the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates.

Moses was speaking to the nation of Israel in the land of Moab, east of the Jordan.

Joshua 1:1-6.

1After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: 2"Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them-the children of Israel. 3Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. 4From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. 5No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

This was "after the death of Moses." God said to Joshua, "Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them..."

Acts 7:2-5 & vss. 44-46

2And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' 4Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. 5And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

44"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, 45which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, 46who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. 47But Solomon built Him a house.

Psalms 105:7-13, 42-45

7 He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
8 He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,
9 The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
10 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,

11 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,"
12 When they were few in number,
Indeed very few, and strangers in it.
13 When they went from one nation to another,
From one kingdom to another people,

42 For He remembered His holy promise,
And Abraham His servant.
43 He brought out His people with joy,
His chosen ones with gladness.
44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles,
And they inherited the labor of the nations,
45 That they might observe His statutes
And keep His laws.
Praise the LORD!

God did what He said. He said this land would be given to the descendants of Abraham. The Bible says God did that. He fulfilled that promise. Joshua believed this, for just before his death he said to the people: "...not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you," (Josh. 23:15).

The Second Promise: A Nation

God fulfilled the second promise when He formed a great nation from the descendants of Abraham. The following passages show the fulfillment of the second promise.

In Gen. 46:3, God spoke to Israel, the man also called Jacob, and God said: "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there." This is what God said to Abraham's grandson Jacob (called Israel after Gen. 32) and the descendants of Abraham were called Israel, the children of Israel; Israelites - who went down to Egypt as the family of Joseph, but came out - a great nation.

After the family arrived in Egypt and were cared for by Joseph, he died, and the family grew. Exodus 1:7 says: "But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mightily; and the land was filled with them."

In Deut. 1, Moses is addressing the nation of Israel, east of the Jordan, with these words:

1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swear unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

1:9 And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

1:10 The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

1:11 (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you,

as he hath promised you!)

Already in Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy there are these statements leaving no doubt, when God formed the Jewish nation, He was fulfilling His promise to Abraham - multiplying his seed into a great nation.

Hebrews 11:11-12

11By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude-innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

God formed a nation out of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and gave them the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua. This is the fulfillment of two of the promises God made to Abraham: The land promise and the national promise. We have one more promise, but something needs attention first.

When we talk about God forming a nation from the descendants of Abraham and giving them the land of Canaan there is something else to be considered: God told this nation, God told His people - if they sinned, they would be driven out of the land He had given them:

Lev. 26:27-39

27 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me,

28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury;

and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

30 I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols;

and My soul shall abhor you.

31 I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas.

32 I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it.

33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you;

your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

34 Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

35 As long as it lies desolate it shall rest-

for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.

36 'And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies;

the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee;

they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues.

37 They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues;

and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

38 You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

39 And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away.

Deut. 30:17-20

17But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Let's put all this together: God promised Abraham that a great nation would be formed from his descendants and they would be given the land of Canaan. But God said clearly, sin would result in their being driven from the land. Bible students know that is exactly what happened! The Israelites sinned grievously, and although Jehovah was patient and longsuffering with them - He eventually did what He said.

The northern kingdom of Israel was carried away into Assyrian Captivity in 733 B.C. (2 Kings 17:5-6, 22-23).

The southern kingdom of Judah was carried away into Babylonian Captivity in about four stages of expulsions (2 Chron. 36, Dan. 1, 2 Kings 24).

God said this captivity would last seventy years, then only a remnant would be restored to the land, not the whole nation (Isa. 10:20-25; Jer. 23:3-4).

Now back to the promises to Abraham, revealed in Genesis 12.

We know about the fulfillment of two of those promises: God formed a nation from the offspring of Abraham; that nation was Israel; the land promise was fulfilled when they came into the land of Canaan under Joshua.

We have one more promise:

"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

We started our study in Genesis in chapter eleven and twelve with our focus on Abraham and his family; then Isaac; then Jacob or Israel; then the nation formed, called Israel, and the giving of Canaan to that nation.

Now in this third promise the statement is not confined to an immediate, single family or a single nation,

but "all all the families of the earth!"

What did God do that holds opportunity for "all?" What did God do - what offer, what gift that is available to bless "all the families of the earth?"

This is about Christ!

Acts 3:24-26.

24Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

Gal. 3:7-9

7Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Gal. 3:13-18

13Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

15Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," ?who is Christ. 17And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Isn't this clear? God fulfilled the third promise when He sent Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world. Today - anybody can respond to the Good News of Christ and be saved. The gospel is God's offer of salvation in Christ - to "all the families of the earth."

Whoever you are; whatever your blood line or national origin - you can hear, believe and obey the gospel. And thus become a participant in the spiritual promise God made to Abraham. All three promises to Abraham, in Genesis 12, fulfilled! God formed a nation from his offspring - gave them the land of Canaan. Then Christ came. Paul said, in Galatians 3:26-28 ...

26For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29And if you are Christ's, then you are

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Does God have a nation today? He does. Peter wrote this to Christians: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2:9.

I need to deal with one more matter that concerns all of this, and is relevant to things you may hear in our time. God had a plan. In bringing His plan to completion, He chose and used various people. He formed a nation from the offspring of Abraham and God did everything that He promised. To use the language of Joshua in Josh. 24 - "not one thing has failed." God had a plan ... it led to Jesus Christ ... so that today, "whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

This means the Biblical nation of Israel has served the purpose for which it was divinely created, and there are no obligations we have as Christians to hold the modern nation of Israel above other nations; no biblical grounds to esteem the modern nation of Israel above others! (See Acts 10:35)

Now I should be careful here, in what I say and you should read carefully. We may feel great sympathy toward the modern nation of Israel. We may be in favor of political friendship. We may observe how those people have been mis-treated and want to help.

There is little doubt - the Israelis have been the victims of terror. So - we may feel great sympathy toward the modern nation of Israel, and we may agree that the United States should maintain a good relationship with them. But all of this cannot be argued on Biblical grounds. We have no instructions from God - to maintain higher loyalty to modern Israel, above other peoples.

In Romans chapters 9-11, Paul argues against any theocratic definition of Israel. He acknowledges the role Israel had before Christ came, but denies any theocratic definition of this nation. He says, "whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Let me illustrate what we need to guard against.

Jerry Falwell: "God has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelism and for the protection of His people, the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for existence than those purposes... to stand against Israel is to stand against God."

A pro-Israeli Kansas journalist: "As a gentile American, as a Christian who considers loyalty to God above all human commitments, if the choice ever comes between loyalty to Israel, I have no choice. I must stand by Israel."

The bible doesn't teach us this! The religious doctrine called pre-millennialism demands this position - but the Bible doesn't tell us to stand with Israel, no matter what! God did everything He said to Abraham. And the modern nation of Israel is not the same as the biblical nation, used by God before Christ.

When people talk with you about: Israel's biblical right to the land ...protecting them today, so that

future purposes can be fulfilled - that's the language and teaching of premillennialism not the Bible. The only thing left for the Jews today is - to believe and obey Christ. Jews or Gentiles - "whoever!" Our loyalty must be directed to Christ, who is our only hope of peace.

Based on article by Kevin Kay, and material by Ferrell Jenkins.

By Warren E. Berkley
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Pitching Tents Toward Sodom

Genesis 13

As Abram (later Abraham) and Lot lived and prospered in the land of Canaan, we are told in Genesis 13:1-9 that the land could no longer support the flocks of Abram and Lot together. This situation required a difficult decision-- the type of decision that many face during their lives. Lot was given the opportunity to decide where he wanted to live. We can read of his decision in Genesis 13:10-12:

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

In economic terms, Lot made a good decision. He chose the land that would provide him the best chance for success-- the green land that provided great areas for pasture. There was only one problem with this land, as revealed in Genesis 13:13:

Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against the LORD exceedingly.

The land was good; its inhabitants, however, left much to be desired. Lot's decision would cost him greatly! Let us now consider the consequences of Lot's decision to live in the midst of an exceedingly wicked people.

Pitching his tents toward Sodom cost Lot dearly twice. Lot was not the only one to see that the land was good; it was also under the hand of kings from the east. These kings fought against the kings of the area of Sodom, defeated them, and Lot was taken captive (Genesis 14:1-12). Had it not been for Abram and his forces, Lot would have lost everything and would have been a slave back in Mesopotamia (Genesis 14:13-16)! Later, when Lot received divine visitors as guests, he felt compelled to offer the Sodomites his own daughters to defile rather than the visitors (Genesis 19:1-8). The next day, Lot fled from Sodom as God rained fire and brimstone upon the city, and his wife turned into a pillar of salt when she looked

back (cf. Genesis 19:17-29). While his wife made the decision herself to look back and disobey God, had Lot never been in Sodom in the first place, the temptation would not have been present!

Lot's ability to raise good children was rather compromised. Lot's daughters were married to certain men of the city; while we do not know how righteous they were, we know that there were fewer than ten in the whole city, and therefore it is doubtful that they were good influences (cf. Genesis 18:31-33). Furthermore, the fact that afterward they both made their father drunk so as to have children by him does not speak well of them (Genesis 19:30-38). Since Sodom was so saturated with sin, should we be surprised to consider that Lot's daughters were easily infected by it?

While we cannot know what was going through Lot's mind while he was in the cave after the destruction of Sodom, we can wonder whether he was reflecting back on that fateful day recorded in Genesis 13 when he made his decision to pitch his tents toward Sodom. If he had to do it all over again, what choice would he have made?

We can certainly sympathize with Lot's plight, for we ourselves live in a sinful world and have been called upon to live in the midst of sinners (1 John 2:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10). It is not as if we have the opportunity to separate ourselves entirely from sinners; how can we be lights in darkness if we are only around the light (cf. Matthew 5:13-16)?

Nevertheless, many times we do have the opportunity to make decisions as to where we will live, and we ought to consider Lot's example when we do. After all, Abraham also lived as a sojourner in the midst of people who also were sinners, and yet he did not suffer nearly as much as Lot! The land was perhaps not as good in the rest of Canaan, but the people were not as exceedingly sinful and respected Abraham (cf. Genesis 23:3-6).

We may be called upon to choose between two habitations. One may represent a great financial opportunity, and one will easily be able to satisfy physical needs and to support the family. What if that place has no congregation of brethren of like precious faith? With whom will you associate? How will you teach your children righteousness? There may be another habitation, where one will perhaps not have the best opportunity, but one can associate with good brethren and at least gain the respect of the rest of the community. Is not the benefit to the family far more worthwhile than a bit more money?

Lot shows that it is possible to live righteously in the midst of wicked sinners. His sufferings, however, ought to show us that we need to diligently consider how our environment affects our family and their relationships with God. Let us take care not to pitch our tents toward Sodom to our own destruction!

By Ethan R. Longhenry
From Expository Files 14.4; April 2007

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THE EXPOSITORY FILES

God Makes No Mistakes

Genesis 18:1-33

Anyone who understands the truth about God knows that God does not make mistakes. Not a one. Never.

But that is not to say that it does not appear to us that sometimes maybe He has. But it is our perspective that is limited, while God's is infinite. In the final analysis, the mistake will always be ours, due to our limited knowledge and wisdom (Job 42:1-3; Isaiah 55:8,9).

If you were to think that only people that were unbelievers, or perhaps with only very weak faith, would ever question God's decisions, plans or deeds, you would be wrong. In fact, the foremost example of faith in the Bible is that of Abraham. But sometimes, even Abraham had questions in his mind about whether God was doing the right thing.

He handled his puzzlement correctly. He was, after all, a man of great faith. He did not foolishly charge God, or mock Him, or rebel against Him, or curse Him. That is what many have done, and are doing, even today. But he did have some serious questions. I think, if we were to admit it, we would all have to say the same thing. Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand why God did this or didn't do that. That puts us in the company of Abraham, as long as we handle our puzzlement the same way he did. We continue to live by faith even when we do not perceive all of the answers. Being in the company of Abraham is being in pretty good company.

God's Friend

"...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and he was called the friend of God." (James 2:23).

First, Abraham walked with God in his life. Whatever questions Abraham may have had from time to time were not the result of his being hostile in mind toward God. He was not a rebel against the King of all.

Abraham's attitude was always, "When God speaks, I will respond in faith." He was quick to hear, not merely listen. In the New Testament, the Bible says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8). This was typical of how seriously Abraham took the word of the Lord. That is what faith is all about.

That is exactly what our attitude ought to be as well. We need to have that kind of reverence for the Lord our God. The Lord has spoken in these "last days" to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). In this message, revealed in the New Testament, we find the revelation of God's will, and ought to have just as much respect for it as Abraham had for God's word to him.

Abraham's Guests

"Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day." (Genesis 18:1).

There were three that came to Abraham. He was very hospitable to them, offering them shelter and food (Genesis 18:1-8). The Lord and two angels are the guests, though it appears that Abraham does not know that at first (see Genesis 18:16,17; 22,23; 19:1). He is just being hospitable. The New Testament tells us to be likewise (Hebrews 13:2).

As the guests were eating they inquired about Abraham's wife, Sarah. They promised that by this time the following year, despite her extreme age, she would have a son. Sarah overheard, and laughed at such an unlikely event. But the Lord responded, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." (Genesis 18:14; see vss. 9-15).

We would all do well to always remember that question when we have doubts or are dismayed. "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

Abraham - The Lord's Confidant

The Lord had decided to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their extreme wickedness. Their evil had constantly challenged God, and they had despised the opportunities granted to them to repent. Time was up!

Abraham had pleased God. The Lord expresses confidence in Abraham; "...since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Genesis 18:18,19).

Today, you and I can also be "friends of God"! Jesus said, "You are My friends, if you do what I command you." (John 15:14). It worked for Abraham, and Jesus says it will work for us as well.

God - How Could You?

The Lord had made the coming destruction of Sodom known to Abraham. Abraham was flooded with dismay. "And Abraham came near and said, 'Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?'" (Genesis 18:23).

Abraham had relatives living there. Once he had saved the city from a foreign invader. Not everyone in Sodom were corrupt, were they? Abraham is very disturbed by this decision God had made.

The reason is that Abraham had always believed that God was just. But this did not seem just to Abraham... to "sweep away the righteous with the wicked." That does not seem fair to me either. But I know something Abraham does not know, at least not yet.

Abraham sums up his problem. He said, "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:24,25).

Ultimately, Abraham found out the truth (Genesis 18:25-33). God was no tyrant. He already knew there would be no righteous souls involved in the destruction. God would be just, and Sodom would be destroyed. The Lord would not treat the righteous and wicked alike. Abraham's problem had been that he had not known all the facts.

Sometimes it is the same way with us. We do not know all the facts, all the end results and we do not have access to all the important information. When we lack all the answers, we choose to live by faith. We do not have all the facts, but the Lord does. We trust in our God to do what is right as we trust in Him for victory. God makes no mistakes.

By Jon W. Quinn
From Expository Files 12.4; April 2005

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Old Testament**


**Expository
New Testament**




**Topical
Index**


**Magazine Index
by year and month**

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THE EXPOSITORY FILES

Do Not Sell Your Birthright!

Genesis 25:29-34

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. (Genesis 25:27). Genesis 25 records the birth of two boys to Isaac and Rebekka. From the very beginning, God said that their descendants would become two nations. From the start, it seemed as they were struggling against one another in fierce competition.

Esau's descendants did develop into the nation of Edom, while Jacob's, who's name was later changed to Israel, became the nation of Israel. The conflict between the brothers continued into adulthood, and ultimately, the nations that came from them were often at war with one another through the centuries (Numbers 20:14-21; 2 Samuel 8:13-14; 2 Kings 8:20-22).

Many centuries later, Edom was eventually destroyed by decree of God (Isaiah 34:5,6; 63:1; Obadiah 1-21; Malachi 1:3). It became a symbol of the earthly, non spiritual people of the world. People who care little for God and His will, but instead are carnal, greedy, and even treacherous are as the Edomites were, and as their ancestor, Esau, was. Even in the New Testament, Esau is looked upon as a profane person who foolishly squandered his life and the blessings of God, unable or unwilling to appreciate them or truly be thankful for them.

Esau's Birthright

In ancient times, the birthright was a very important and sacred thing. It belonged to the firstborn. The family name and titles were to pass along to the eldest son. He would also receive a chief portion of the inheritance. But it was more than just a title to the physical assets of a family. It was also a spiritual position, and in the case of the people of God, God would lead the family through patriarchs, or fathers (Hebrews 1:1-2). Additionally, in the special case of Esau and Jacob, that meant the one to whom belonged the birthright was the one through who the covenant promise made to their grandfather, Abraham, would be realized. Ultimately, the Messiah would come through the holder of the birthright and bless the nations of the earth. Esau was the firstborn, and the birthright was his. But like many, he failed to appreciate its value and sacredness.

"...When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, 'Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.' Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'First sell me your birthright.' Esau said, 'Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?' And Jacob said, 'First swear to me'; so he swore to him, and sold

his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." (Genesis 25:29-34).

There you have it. For a pot of stew, poor, hungry Esau sold his birthright. Such crass behavior would be a little like selling your wedding ring for a hamburger cause you had not eaten all day, only worse. It tells of Esau's attitude toward the things of God; His purpose and His will. It shows a lack of reverence and respect. It shows the same thing we see in too many people today when it comes to how little they regard the Lord.

Profanity

We do not usually use the word today for what it originally meant. Today, we immediately think of coarse, suggestive, lewd, vulgar language. Well, those things are profanities, but the definition of profane as used in Scripture is much wider than that. It means a lack of holiness. If you take something holy and good, and treat it with contempt, then you have profaned it. To treat the things of God as ordinary is to profane or despise them. It shows a lack of godliness.

And that is what the New Testament says about Esau. He was immoral, and lacked concern for pleasing God. His spiritual blessings and responsibilities meant nothing to him. The Lord tells us to be sure we are not like Esau in this, that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. (Hebrews 12:16).

But that was another time, another culture and another circumstance. We do not have the same traditions of birthright and our inheritance laws are quite different. No longer does the firstborn become spiritual head of the family. Is there still lessons and applications to be made from this? Definitely, there is!

The Value of Our Inheritance

The fact is, we do wait for a spiritual inheritance. And many think about it at about the same level as Esau thought about his. The lesson could not be more applicable if it came up and bit us on the nose. If we treat God's provisions, His commandments, His will, His purpose and His promises with less than the fervor and appreciation for them that we ought to have, He will hold us accountable for having profaned them.

If we just neglect the things having to do with our inheritance because the common things of this world are so important to us, as important as it was to Esau to have that bowl of stew, then we will be equally guilty before God. Well might we consider the rhetorical question of the Hebrew writer when he asked, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 12:2). Just what do we think one deserves if he or she turns their back on God? How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31).

Perhaps if we are under stress and pressure or duress, God will overlook our profaning our birthright. Don't count on it. There is nothing here worth belittling the value of our eternal blessings in Christ. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18).

The world rushes on today, giving little thought to God and His daily purpose for each of our lives. But we are children of God. Let us never forget, not for an hour, that God and His promises are holy. He expects our lives to reflect that awareness.

By Jon W. Quinn
From Expository Files 10.7; July 2003

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THE EXPOSITORY FILES

Lessons from Joseph in Potiphar's House

Genesis 39:1-12

From the FOCUS MAGAZINE

One approach by which the Lord has chosen to instill within us a sense of being proper examples, is to provide us with examples. Examples are effective in inspiring us to make a change. For instance, if a friend has just lost forty pounds, one may reason, "If he could lose forty pounds, surely I can lose my twenty." Bible examples are not recorded for merely interesting reading - they are recorded for our learning (I Cor. 10:11). The story of Joseph in the house of Potiphar recorded in Gen. 39:1-12 provides some interesting lessons.

In verse 2, the text states, "And the Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. . . ." Though this has reference to becoming materially prosperous, Joseph was also, of course, successful spiritually. One of the lessons that can be learned as the story unfolds is that even a spiritually successful person is not exempt from temptation. Paul warns, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). We must always be on guard against the schemes of Satan.

"The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph ." (v. 5). A second lesson to be learned is that even those outside the Lord can be blessed by simply having some contact with one who is in the Lord. The effective personable personal worker can be instrumental in leading many to Christ. The believing wife who is married to an unbeliever can have a profound influence for good on her husband (I Pet. 3:1-2). Christians will often pray for non-Christians, even enemies. The influence of one who is in the Lord transcends the circle of Christians only.

Joseph was "handsome in form and appearance" (v. 6). A third lesson is traits that the world esteems can become stumbling blocks to those who possess them. For instance, the handsome young quarterback who is convinced that he is God's gift to womankind or the beautiful cheerleader who considers herself on a higher level than anyone else has a mixed-up view of priorities. It is obvious from the text that Joseph did not allow his good looks to cause him to stumble. If you are a person who has been blessed with an attractive appearance, thank God for it but don't stumble because of it. Always remain humble as our Lord was humble.

Godly Joseph queried, "...how then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" (v. 9). A disservice to one's fellowman is foremost a disservice to God. When Nathan exposed David's sin with Bathsheba, the king's reply was, "I have sinned against the Lord" (II Sam. 12:13). Later, when David was reminiscing about his awful deed, he reflected, "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy

sight ..." (Ps. 51:4). Did David's sin not effect others - of course it did, in many ways, but he realized that most importantly he had sinned against his God. When the prodigal son finally returned to his good senses, he vowed, "I will get up and go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight" (Luke 15:18). Notice the order in which "heaven" and "in your sight" appear. What an important lesson to be remembered - when we sin against our fellowman, we first do a disservice to God.

Still, there's another lesson to be gleaned. The inspired record informs the reader that Potiphar's wife enticed Joseph not once, but rather "day after day" (v. 10). That means that she attempted to seduce him when he was weak as well as when he was strong. Some of life's strongest temptations are those which occur "day after day." To the dieter, it's not so much the one big meal that "does him in" as it is the day by day temptations for just one more bite. No wonder the AA organization strives to impress upon recovering alcoholics to live one day at a time - if they can get through one day without a drink, that's quite an accomplishment!

Finally, Joseph's response to his temptress' attempt to force herself upon him is impressive. One word describes that response - "fled" (v. 12). Joseph had a choice - he could either stay and attempt to justify himself that after all, it was her doings and he had no choice, or, flee. One must be willing to accept the consequences of one's own actions. It is never in order to say, "He/she made me do it." He may have contributed to the temptation but he didn't make you do anything. Some years back, a man in Newport Beach, CA ignored signs which stated, "Danger! No diving - shallow water." When he sustained serious spinal injuries after diving into the water, he sued the city for damages. We must be willing to accept the consequences of our own actions.

These are some lessons which can be learned from this story of Joseph in Potiphar's house. It appears, however, that the overriding lesson to be learned is moral purity. Honor, glory, and praise to God for giving us this example of moral purity for men of all generations.

By Larry Houchen
From Expository Files 6.9; September 1999

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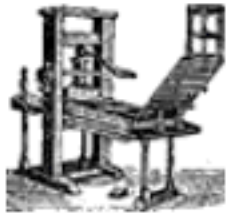
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