

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 3

Good Gone Bad

In 1962, a movie was made of a very successful Broadway play entitled “The Music Man.” The movie’s main character was con man Harold Hill, played brilliantly by Robert Preston (both on Broadway and the film). Hill traversed from town to town, convincing townsfolk to buy instruments and uniforms for a boys’ band he was allegedly starting. Once the uniforms and instruments were paid for, Hill skipped town without starting any such band.

Preston landed the lead role because of his ability to sing “Trouble,” a “pre-rap,” rap song. The song memorably reprises his sales angle for this small town of River City, Iowa, stating:

We got trouble! Right here in River City – with a capital "T" that rhymes with "P," and that stands for Pool. We've surely got trouble! Right here in River City! Gotta figure out a way to keep the young ones moral after school!

Trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble, trouble...

Preston was right – and wrong. The town had trouble, but it was not the recently delivered pool table. The real trouble was the con man Hill himself and the deceitful sales pitch he used to seduce the townspeople of their savings.

Trouble is part of the human existence. It seems as old as creation, and it almost is! We turn our attention this week to the story of Genesis after creation. The story speaks of troubles big and small in scene after scene, and generation after generation.

WHEN GOOD THINGS GO BAD

Things were good – really good. Man was living in a garden the LORD God planted in “Eden.”¹ Eden likely comes from the Hebrew root that means “pleasure” or “delight.” Man and woman² were in God’s garden, a place of

¹ Biblical archaeologists in days gone by were fascinated at the idea of finding the remains of the Garden of Eden. Genesis tells of its location as where one river divided into four (the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates). Unfortunately, only two of those, the Tigris and Euphrates, are known today. Efforts to find and locate the garden have never been fruitful.

² Reading the English Standard Version, we read of “man” and “woman” rather than Adam and Eve in Eden. This is because the name “Adam” has multiple meanings and the scholar translators are trying to determine where it is used in Genesis as a proper name. “Adam” can be a proper

pleasure and delight. The joys of walking with God in the cool of the day, of tending the garden, of easy food and godly purpose, were the normative for both man and woman.

Temptation, however, entered the garden and their lives. Genesis does not tell us that the serpent was Satan. That truth comes later in Scripture.³ We are told that woman was tempted to commit “moral mutiny”⁴ by “the serpent [who] was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made” (Gen. 3:1). The serpent seizes on the one area of the garden that was forbidden, consuming the fruit of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Through subtle half-lies, the serpent seduces the woman into making her own moral choices in rebellion against the morality of God. The woman then feeds the same sin to her husband, and at this point, things go from really good, to bad. Satan was able to shift man and woman’s trust away from God and his expressed will for man and woman’s good. Instead, man and woman decided to trust their own moral judgment and act disobediently to God.

God had told man, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). But, the serpent tells woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of *any* tree in the garden?’” The woman then replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, *neither shall you touch it*, lest you die.’” At this point, the serpent has misdirected what God said, and the woman similarly misstates the rule of God. The serpent then closes his temptation adding, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:1-5).

name but also is a generic term for humankind. Genesis clearly makes a play on the word and its similarity to the events. For example, Gen. 2:7 reads, “Then the LORD God formed the man [*adam*] of dust from the ground [*adama*] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man [*adam*] became a living creature. Similarly, a play is made on the name “Eve” [*hawwa*] which plays off the Hebrew verb for live.” This places Eve as the “mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

³ It is not until John 8:44 that Scripture clearly sets out the persona of the serpent. In the John passage, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him.”

⁴ “Any human endeavor that determines a course of action without any God-given frame of reference or moral guidelines is moral mutiny, a usurpation of God’s authority.” Arnold, Bill T., *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, (Baker Academic 1998) at 34.

Here was the final half-truth deception. They would die as God said, not in the 24-hour day they ate of the fruit, but in the day/age they ate of it.⁵ The idea that their eyes would be opened and they would be like God knowing good and evil is the final seduction lie. The eyes were opened in a way never meant to be. Man and woman knew evil by experiencing it and taking it into themselves. Things would never be the same.

After two chapters of “good” and “really good,” we read of the following progression of bad:

- The eyes of man and woman are “opened” and they become self-conscious of the nakedness. They futilely try sewing fig leaves together, an almost laughable gesture to hide their nakedness from the one that fashioned them! (Gen. 3:7).
- Man and woman start hiding from God out of fear (Gen. 3:8-10).
- The blame game starts with man blaming woman for his sin and woman blaming the serpent. In fact, Adam even drops the suggestion that God is at blame for providing woman in the first place! (Gen. 3:12-13).
- The ease of the garden is replaced by painful childbirth and farming amidst thorns and thistles as man is expelled from the garden of pleasure and delight (Gen. 3:16, 18).
- The relationship between man and woman is altered for the worse (Gen. 3:16).⁶
- Cain has anger problems and is warned by the LORD of sin “crouching at the door.” While Eve had to be talked into sinning, Cain cannot be talked out of it. Despite the LORD’s warning, Cain kills his brother out of anger,

⁵ Some suggest that man and woman did die that 24-hour day, but the death was spiritual rather than physical. That is not suggested in the text, but whether accurate or not, it does not change the point that Satan was deceiving with half-truths. It merely makes it a *different* half-truth.

⁶ Edward Fudge writes of how sin changed man and woman’s relationship from “complete” to “compete.” Genesis says, “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” The actual Hebrew reads, “And toward your husband [will be] your desire, but he will dominate you.” This is the same construction used in the next chapter where God warns Cain that, “sin is crouching at the door. *It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it*” (Gen. 4:7). So with Cain and sin we see that sin desire was to Cain and Cain was to dominate/rule over it. While with woman and man, woman’s desire was to man, but man would rule over woman. In other words, woman will want to control man, and man in turn will want to dominate woman. This is no longer “complete” but is rather “compete.” It is in a Christ filled marriage that this result of the fall is reversed and husband and wife defer to each other and live instead to complete each other.

and then tries to hide the fact from God (Gen. 4:5-10). Adam and Eve lose one son to murder and another son is vanquished.⁷

- One of Cain's offspring follows his ancestor's killing ways (Gen. 4:25).
- As the generations grow, so does wickedness. It reaches a point where "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). It becomes so bad that God is sorry to have made humanity.
- The earth gets so "corrupt" and "full of violence" that God moves to destroy all but Noah and his family (Gen. 6).
- Floodwaters come to wash the earth clean from the violence of men (Gen. 7). But even with the fresh start of Noah and his family, troubles continue.
- Noah gets drunk and lies naked, with his son Ham seeing it, and speaking of it to his brothers. From this comes the curse of Noah on Ham and his descendants, the Canaanites.
- Out of pride and a desire to make a name for themselves, the descendants of Noah set about to build a tower to the heavens. This brings about God's dispersal of people and diversity of language (Gen. 11:4-9).

This progression and the ubiquity of sin explains Paul's understanding that:

Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... (Rom. 5:12).

What happened? How could something so good become something so bad? Genesis does not give the great, deep philosophical answer. It simply states a few simple facts. God made man in his image. Included in this was man's free will ability to make moral choices. Man could decide to live in God's morality or strike out on his own, setting his own rules and living in rebellion to godly obedience.

Scripture teaches further that sin separates man from God, and that separation leads to more and greater sin. It becomes a vicious cycle that so pollutes humanity

⁷ Many struggle over where Cain got his wife or how he eventually settled in a city. Scripture does not tell us. Some believe that Adam and Eve had other children and that Cain married a sibling and settled with other siblings or relatives. Others believe that along with Adam and Eve, God also made many other primates similar to Adam and Eve (although not filled with his Spirit). This is not answered in Scripture, likely because it is not the point of the story. The story is set to tell of the consequences of sin, Adam and Eve's first, followed by that of Cain. Sin separates from God and begins a spiral of descent that quickly implicates others.

and the earth that a thorough cleansing is needed. Even that cleansing, however, does not stop the sinfulness of man.

Consequences come with sin. Genesis 3 sets out the curses that God described as following the sin of humanity. Those consequences affect man, woman and beast. As Paul indicated about the entire world:

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time (Rom. 8:20-22).

The world is a different place, and the life that man had known was over.

Is this the whole message of Genesis? Is man to despair because of an inability to find peace with God or, for that matter, with himself? No, Genesis is not simply retelling sin's campaign against mankind. It also has something to say of God's coming rescue.

PROMISES OF RESTORATION

In writing to the Ephesian church, Paul explained that God:

Chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

Paul understood that God had the foreknowledge to know that humanity would one day make the moral choice of sin. Knowing this, God also planned his redemption in Christ – before God even began the process of making man as he did.

Hints of this coming redemption are found in Scripture early and often. Since the second century, many in the church have seen the first prophetic glimpse of this good news (the “protoevangelium” from “proto” meaning “first” and “euangellon” meaning “good news”) in the curses following man's sin.⁸ When cursing the serpent, God declared that:

⁸ While traditional and conservative scholars see this passage as prophesying the work of Christ against Satan, other scholars, typically those of the “Critical” camp, do not. For an interesting reading of the Messianic-prophetic school see Collins, John, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary,*

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

The “he” in this curse is from woman’s offspring and it is “he” who will bruise the serpent’s head. The offspring will win over the force behind the serpent, but at a price (“you shall bruise his heel”). This bruising of the “heel” must reference the harm given to Christ on Calvary.

Paul certainly seemed to understand this passage in a prophetic sense of Christ and his work in the life of believers as Paul wrote the church at Rome explaining:

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Further indications of God’s willingness and promise of providing even for sinful man are found in a parental act of provisioning that occurs even as he is expelling man from the garden:

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them (Gen. 3:21).

In a desire to provide clothing beyond the sewn fig leaves man and woman concocted, God takes an animal and sacrifices it so that its skin can cover the sinful bodies of man and woman. This seems to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice that would give Christ as clothing to cover the sin of man and woman. Paul used clothing language when he explained to the Galatians:

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

For Paul, the ultimate clothing of the believer was not the skin taken from a slain animal, but rather Christ himself – the Lamb of God slain for the sin of the world.

Another amazing part of the Genesis stories are the interactions of God and man – whether Cain, his descendants, Enoch, Noah, or the people building the tower of Babel. God interacted. God cared. After the sin of man, one might suspect God would wash his hands and have nothing more to do with the people he made, yet God continues his involvement in the affairs of man.

In itself, this indicates that God is not finished with man. God is at work and is moving toward something that makes his involvement meaningful. Something will have to take place lest God’s relationship with Adam, Eve and others after the

and Theological Commentary (P&R Publishing 2006). For the critical dismissive approach see Westermann, Claude, *Genesis 1-11*, (Fortress 1994).

fall change from a fellowship of light to a fellowship of darkness. Something has to set aside the sin of man.

Paul explained that the death of Christ did this very thing. In Christ's death, God's justice is satisfied in such a way that he was perfectly able to interact with the faithful even before Calvary. Paul explained:

God put forward [Christ]...to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins (Rom. 3:25).

Man went his own way from God, but Genesis clearly communicates that God was not through with man.

CONCLUSION

The Music Man won Tony Awards with songs declaring the trouble in River City, but the real trouble goes beyond a pool table. The real trouble with man is almost as old as man himself. It is trouble, with a capital S for sin!

The solution for this trouble is not in Professor Harold Hill or his boys' band. The solution has always been in the hands of God. No one else could have created man the first time. No one else can bring about the necessary re-creation of man.

We have sin entering the world through one man. But in a similar way, we have salvation coming into the world through the one man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. “*Did God actually say...?*” (Gen. 3:1).

Satan's principle temptations so frequently seem based on distortions of Scripture and truth. The temptations of Jesus followed this same approach, although with a different outcome. Over and over, Satan set Scripture before Christ, but always in a distorted way. Satan used Scripture to promote a self-sufficient attitude, choices that would put Christ in the driver's seat, rather than in the position of devoted and holy follower of God.

Where do we stand against Satan's temptations? How often do we compromise the word of God finding ways to fold it into a shape that allows or justifies choices we are making? Consider, with humble prayer,

how Satan moves to tempt you away from your faithful obedience into the life of selfish wants and desires.

2. *“She took of the fruit and ate...Her husband ate...Cain killed him...Lamech killed a man...the wickedness of man was great”* (Gen. 3:6; 4:8, 23; 6:5).

Sin breeds sin. We should never deceive ourselves into thinking that our sin affects only us. The effect reaches further than we like to think. It affects our character, our relationship with God, and our influence on others. We need to stop and ask for God’s work in our life to give us victory in struggle over sin. The struggle is to be taken seriously. For just as sin breeds sin, so God’s righteousness is not without fruit as well.

3. *“Her offspring...shall bruise your head”* (Gen 3:15).

God offers victory for the condition of man, victory over the deceiver of mankind. That victory is in Christ, who, at the price of his co-existence with God, came to earth in humility and sacrifice. In him, we have forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

WANT MORE?

Next week, we will cover some of the unusual aspects of the early Genesis stories, including a consideration of the flood in light of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a closer look at the Tower of Babel, and moving into an understanding of who Abraham was and where he was from. Take a few moments and email us your questions about Genesis 1-13. We will try to add any of your questions into the lesson.