

ReGroups 7/23/23

Origin Stories: The Blood of the Lamb - Genesis 4

If you're at all familiar with the Scriptures, you know that a persistent theme from beginning to end is one of sacrifice and atonement. In this lesson, we will see how this becomes such a key element to the story and track how it builds throughout the Old Testament and ultimately leads to Jesus and His Cross. We've seen how Genesis is the origin of our world, our connection with God, and our fall into sin. Now we will discover that the origin and background of the Redemption story...

The Old, Old Story

Read **Genesis 2:16-17** and recall the warning that God issued over Adam and Eve. Did this literally happen after they disobeyed? *Well, no.* Of course people will say, "Well they died *spiritually*." There's truth to that, but the original warning wasn't given in mystery or veiled in symbolism. It sounded like God meant what He said.

Fast forward to Genesis 3 and the Fall and it's clear that God intervenes and makes a provision. It's easy for this act of God to go overlooked and be lost in the fallout. However, it's important that we take some time and fully appreciate why Adam and Eve didn't die. **Before we look at that passage, what are your thoughts on all of this? Why do you think they were able to escape death and judgment?**

Read **Genesis 3:14-15, 20-24** and discuss the following revelations:

- God promises that Eve will have a child who will crush the serpent, but the serpent will wound the child. **What is your reaction to this?** This is indeed the first prophecy concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Adam calls his wife Eve out of an act of faith in God's promise and future provision. Clearly he understands that he has been spared by the mercy of God and places his trust in the plan of salvation. Nobody would ever be saved on the basis of obedience or works - *it was always by faith*. This is later explained in great detail to Abraham, who trusts in God and becomes the founding member of God's chosen nation. **Romans 4:16, 20-22** details how salvation was and always will be based on faith in God's plan and provision. **Did you know that this would be how people were saved in the Old Testament? How does Adam's act of faith set a precedent for the future?**

- Although the full and final provision from God would be made far into the future, God does something right then and there to demonstrate and illustrate His means of pardoning sin. See how salvation would be totally based on something God would do for us in the statement, “*the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them.*” If not for God making this way, there would be no way forward for them. **Is that clear to you from this text?**
- What was the basis of God’s provision? How did God carve a path forward for them? He performed an animal sacrifice before them and clothes them in the skin of the animal. The animal’s blood was shed for their blood. They were covered in its skin, or literally by its life. **Do you see the powerful and awesome picture of salvation in this picture?**
- You may wonder, what kind of animal was shed that day - it’s pure speculation but context would suggest it was indeed *a lamb*. This is not only based on what takes place in chapter 4, but also in some of the Scriptures that reveal that God had always planned on redeeming us through the blood of a lamb. Read **1 Peter 1:18-21** and **Revelation 13:8** and see how Christ is referred to as a “*Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*”. This speaks of how it was always a foregone conclusion that God’s Word would become flesh and go to a Cross for all of us. **What are your thoughts on this promise and precedent set in motion by God, in the immediate aftermath of humanity’s rebellion?**

One for One

There’s no doubt that part of Adam and Eve’s faith in this Redemption Plan would include them sharing this Good News with their family and the world that would come together before them. This is why what happens in Genesis 4 is such a major point in human history, as it reveals that some will cling to the promise of God and others will reject it. While God’s arms are open to everyone and His plan offers hope to everyone, everyone will not respond to Him.

Why is this? Well, this is the greatest symptom of sin and the ultimate byproduct of the Fall. Whereas Adam and Eve chose to turn from God, all people born from them and after them come into this world with a disposition against God and a heart tarnished by sin. There are countless verses that explain this human condition, but some key reference points are **Romans 3:23** and **5:12**.

Of course, this isn't necessarily fair - but fairness went out the window when Adam and Eve sinned. However, God's efforts to circumvent our rebellion showcases His heart for us. In a world of fairness, clearly He wouldn't have went to the extent that He did for us through His incarnation and crucifixion. Check out **Romans 5:15-21** and **1 Corinthians 15:21-22** to see how God countered and would provide a cure for our fallen condition.

It's important to remember that all those who lived before Jesus came weren't doomed or without hope. As we've discussed, they could place their faith in God's future provision, *just like Adam did*. Even though God's focus would narrow in on the people of Israel as years went on, there are examples of God using people like Noah and Jonah to preach to the nations, as well as using pagan kings like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus to declare the wonders of Israel's God to the world.

It's All In The Blood

Read **Genesis 4:1-7** and see the two paths that Adam and Eve's children take. One follows the way they would have learned from their parents, while the other goes against his instruction. Abel brings a lamb to God, believing that it was a picture of the future pardon that God would provide. We see people offer animals like this with a similar posture all throughout the Old Testament, such as the story on Mt. Moriah in **Genesis 22:13-14** and of course in the Temple rituals as detailed in **Leviticus 1:4**. **Hebrews 9:12-14** shows us how these sacrifices of old were all pointing to the work of Christ.

Covered and Clothed

Abel was justified by the blood of the Lamb and would have found redemption and restoration through this act of worship. Just as his parents had been literally covered in skin, he would have found *spiritual covering* through his justification.

This can be - and should be - all of our experiences upon conversion. The New Testament uses this language of "*putting on Christ*" or being placed "*in Christ*" to show us the spiritual application of what those coverings of old symbolized. Read **Colossians 3:1-4, 9-14** and notice how Paul describes finding new life "*in Christ*" and how he talks about "*putting off*" the old nature and "*putting on*" the new nature. For us, it's more than just a changing of clothes, it's a change of heart and lifestyle. **Does this description help you to understand the practical benefits and transformation of salvation?**

Cain Couldn't And We Can't Either

If this way of salvation, atonement and justification was made so clear to Abel, what then do we make of Cain's disobedience? He chose to take matters into his own hands and bring the work of his hands to God, seeking approval. Notice, he didn't have to be taught this way - in fact, he was taught the exact opposite way. Therefore, this should serve as a *warning* for all of us that the way of religion and self-righteousness is one that we will all be tempted to take.

Self-Righteousness is Satan's great lie that he lures all of us in with. All of our consciences are aware that we fall short, and religion provides us an attractive, yet poor, solution. It says that we can counter our bad with something good. It tells us that while we indeed sin, surely we can work that sin off and proving ourselves to God.

This way is what leads to the exhausting competition and comparison we all have engaged in. This is why we are often so quick to knock others down and make much of other people's sins, so that we might *appear better* next to them.

God rejected Cain's offering because there was nothing he could bring that could undo his own unrighteousness. There is nothing that any of us can do to overcome our sin. **Isaiah 64:4-7** warns us that there is no good within us, and **Romans 3:9-12** confirms that. We need a Savior and the transformation that we've discussed previously.

Cain couldn't justify himself before God, and we can't either.

The story of Cain and Abel should remind all of us that we are either resting in the work of Jesus or we are standing on our own merit. It makes clear to us that only one way brings us to God, and the other way will lead us down a desperate, hopeless path.

Read **Genesis 4:8-12** to see how this story turns into a true tragedy. While it may be an extreme example, it certainly should show us how self-righteousness only isolates us from God and creates hostility between us and our neighbor.

Before you dismiss, share you thoughts about this Origin Story of God's Redemption Promise and Plan. What stands out to you the most? What was the most interesting or important thing you learned from this lesson?