

From One Covenant to the Next: A Guided Tour From Adam to Noah Genesis 2-6 (selected verses)

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Most of us are familiar with Genesis 3. Eve is tempted by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit. She eats some and gives some to Adam. She eats in partial ignorance, but he eats with full knowledge of the sin he is committing against God. It is his disobedience that leads to man's fall (I Tim. 2:12-15). Not when Eve ate, but only after Adam ate does the Scripture read, "*Then* the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked" (Gen. 3:7).

Adam, not Eve, sinned, and what is more, he sinned with a high hand, to use an old-fashioned expression. We'll talk about what that means later on. But first I want you to see how . . .

1. Adam's fall resulted in two lines of human descent: Cain and Seth. You can read about this in Genesis, chapter 4. One line, the descendants of Cain, refused to acknowledge God or His covenant. The other line, the descendants of Seth, acknowledge the covenant, accepted its penalties, and looked forward to the Saviour God had promised in Gen. 3:15.
 - a. First, Eve gave birth to Cain, who worked the ground, then she gave birth to Able, who tended flocks (sheep).

"I have had a male child with the Lord's help" (4:1) is an indication she was looking to God to fulfil his promise that one of her descendants would crush the serpent. She was a covenant believer, looking in faith toward the coming Messiah.

- b. The brothers are first seen at worship (sacrificial offerings), but only Able's offering is accepted.
 - i. How God approved or disapproved is not known, but the difference between the two offerings was clear to those involved.
 - ii. We know for certain that the difference was not animal offerings vs. grain offerings. Israel was encouraged to bring both kinds later on.
 - iii. The difference is in the attitude of the worshipper (see 4:3-4). Able brought the firstborn of his flock, along with their fat portions—the first and the best. Cain brought "some of the land's produce," whatever came to hand. Later God would instruct Israel to bring the firstborn of the livestock, as well as the firstfruits of the grain and wine (Ex. 22:29, II Chron. 31:5).

Eternal principle: In worship, attitude is everything. By bringing our best we show our heart's desire to honour Him! Throughout Scripture the quickest way to anger God is to make light of worship.

Malachi 1:6 "A son honours his father, and a servant his master. But if I am a father, where is My honour? And if I am a master, where is your fear of Me? says Yahweh of Hosts to you priests, who despise My name." Yet you ask: "How have we despised Your name?" 7 "By presenting defiled food on My altar." You ask: "How have we defiled You?" When you say: "The Lord's table is

contemptible.”⁸ “When you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is it not wrong? And when you present a lame or sick animal, is it not wrong?”

- iv. So how do we honour God in worship today under the New Covenant? Romans 12:1
Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; *this is your spiritual worship*. (“This kind of worship is appropriate” GW)
- c. As you know, in life one sin leads to another. Cain sinned in worship and soon sinned in a worse way by murdering his brother. God warned him not to do it. He was offered an opportunity to repent before he had done anything irrevocable, but he paid no attention.
- d. Here’s the problem with sin. It always grows. Through seven generations the line of Cain led directly to Lamech; he was a kind of perfection of narcissism and evil. In his blindness Lamech sinned three ways.
 - i. Sexually: Lamech took two wives; he defied God’s purpose in marriage as outlined in chapter 2. He wanted what he wanted, and he took what he wanted without restraint. He did not care that his actions degraded the humanity of both his wives. Anywhere you see men and women defying the purposes of God through sexuality divorced from marriage and procreation you can know that the spirit of Lamech is abroad in the land!
 - ii. Socially: He killed a man for a minor offence, and hinted at more killing
 - iii. Spiritually: He believed his murderous actions were righteous and he expected God to honour him and protect him just as God protected Cain (compare 4:24 to 4:15). You can hardly believe it, but Lamech was a religious man. He expected God to bless him in his evil.
Can you think of a modern example of men who expect God to bless the most horrendous evils that can be perpetrated upon human beings, the blowing up of innocent people, the beheading of Christians, crucifying and raping women and children? The spirit of Cain and Lamech is abroad in the land.

2. Adam’s third son Seth became the line through which the Son of God would come.

Genesis 5:1 These are the family records of the descendants of Adam. On the day that God *created* man, He made him in the likeness of God; 2 He *created* them male and female. When they were *created*, He blessed them and called them man. 3 Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. 4 Adam lived 800 years after the birth of Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. 5 So Adam’s life lasted 930 years; then he died.

- a. Though chapter 5 records the line through which the Messiah would come, yet fallen man still had to face death. “Then he died” is the constant refrain.
- b. Except Enoch. He was a complete anomaly. “Then he was not there because God took him” (5:24). He did not experience death (Heb. 11:5). For those early generations Enoch was a foretaste of the blessing that comes to all who are in Christ!

Ps. 86:17 [David said] “Show me a sign of Your goodness; my enemies will see and be put to shame because You, Lord, have helped and comforted me.”

- c. Enoch was such a sign for those early believers. And he is also a sign for New Testament believers. “Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die—ever!” Jesus said to Martha in John 11:26. Then Jesus asks Martha, “Do you believe this?” God help us to say along with Martha, “Yes, Lord!”
- d. The New Testament tells us that Enoch was one of the earliest and strongest of all the heroes of faith.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken away so he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his removal he was approved, since he had pleased God. 6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, *for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.*

- 3. After Enoch it was all down hill. By the time of Noah, the pre-flood fall of man was comprehensive and total, and total destruction was the only appropriate response. (Genesis 6:1-8)
 - a. Genesis 6 is not about angelic beings interbreeding with humans. Jesus Himself said that angels do not have marry (Matt. 22:30); they may be gendered, but they do not have sex. Moreover, the flood is a judgment against man, not fallen angels.
 - b. “Sons of God” is a reference to the descendants of line of Seth.
 - c. The sad truth is that the inhabitants of the pre-flood world had erased the distinction between Seth and Cain. When Genesis 6:2 says, “the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves,” the Bible is telling us that in their lust, the descendants of Seth, like Cain, had ignored the pattern for marriage that God had established in chapter 2.

Like Lamech, they wanted what they wanted and went after it—serial marriages, multiple divorces, polygamy, polyandry, and ultimately every form of perversion. The result? On a practical level you could no longer tell who belonged to God and who belonged to the world. Does that sound familiar? Does that describe today’s world?

- d. We see two things in Genesis 6:3.
 - i. All this wilful sin was done in spite of the Holy Spirit’s convicting presence.
 - ii. God gave them 120 years to repent (400 years for Canaan). God is never preemptory in His judgments. His patience is beyond imagination. But some might ask, “How did the people know their time was limited?”

II Peter 2:5 [God] . . . protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others when He brought a flood on the world of the ungodly.

One last issue from these first six chapters

- 4. The stress Genesis lays on the image of God in man

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

Purpose of “Image of God”

The “image of God” means that in a limited, but growing way, man is created to (1) communicate with God, (2) understand God, (3) appreciate God—worship, (4) relate to God—as mentor and friend, (5) work as God’s steward—Lord, (6) share in God’s life, (7) partake of God’s glory and eternity. This is just part of what it means to be made in the image of God.

Believing this one Bible truth makes all the difference in the world. Let me give you one example of what I mean.

In neither the Koran, nor in popular Islamic thought, is there a belief that man is made in the image of God. Muslims believe there is no connection between God and humanity, and they certainly do not believe there is any plan for humanity to share in God’s glory. If you need proof for this just think about the difference between the Muslim belief in paradise and the Biblical teaching about heaven. Paradise is an exaggerated version of earthly pleasures—where God is not present! For Christians, heaven is the realization of our purpose in creation, where we shall know God, even as we are known.

Let me say it again: Christians and Muslims have a completely different understanding of what humanity is, how man relates to God, and what God’s plan for humanity is. For them a personal God simply isn’t in the picture. This is why the incarnation of Christ as the Son of God who became man is illogical to a Muslim—not to mention blasphemous. In their teaching God has no son, nor does God have any children, because God does not personally relate to mankind in any way. Yet for the Christian who understands we are made in God’s image, the incarnation of God in Christ is fully logical—yet still amazing.

Now let me show you one way this theological difference results in a huge practical difference in daily life. Muslims have no meaningful prohibition against murder. They pretend they do, but they do not. In spite of Muslim misrepresentations of their own book, there is no equivalent to our sixth commandment which simply states, “Do not murder” (Ex. 20:13).

Obviously that prohibition is part of the Ten Commandments, but as we have already seen, the Biblical prohibition against murder is as old as Genesis 4—as old as mankind. Yet you cannot find it in the Koran because Islam does not believe in the universal brotherhood of man, nor does it believe in the relationship between God and man who is made in God’s image.

Genesis 9: 5 And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person’s life. 6 Whoever sheds man’s blood, his blood will be shed by man, *for God made man in His image.*

I’m getting a little ahead of myself, but let me throw this out anyway; when covenant denying Cain asked the question, “Am I my brother’s guardian?” God answered him with an unequivocal “yes” in the covenant he made with Noah.

Conclusion:

How are we doing on living up to the New Covenant, with its greater promises and even greater responsibilities? In I Thess. 4, for instance, we are called to increasing sanctification and growing holiness, a deepening love for one another, and a greater and greater distinction between ourselves and non-Christians. The question is, how are we doing?