

# The Story of Salvation in Genesis

## Purpose of This Class:

My desired purpose of this lesson is to:

- Organize material you are already familiar with to show how great the continuity of the Biblical theme of salvation is from the very beginning.
- I want us to be impressed with the profound spiritual emphasis of the Bible from the very beginning.

## The Beginning of Man, Sin, and the Need for Salvation

The book of Genesis tells about the beginning of man. It is remarkable that from the very beginning, the Biblically emphasized problem of mankind is sin. Genesis presents sin as the source of all problems and points to the need of salvation. Finally, Jesus is the one who solved the problem of sin by saving us. Beginning, end, and middle, the Bible is a story of salvation.

### In His image

- God created the whole world, but there was one thing He created that was different: humans
- Humans were different because they were made in God's image.
- What does it mean to be made in His image?
  - Image = likeness (there is something humans have in common with God)
  - Since we are the only creatures in His image this difference in humans should be unique from the rest of creation
  - It is likely to be numerous things. In the context it seems to be that we rule over creation similar to God ruling over creation.
  - However, scripture shows it's something bigger than that.
  - **Capacity to know good and evil:**
    - Gen 3:5, 22: Being like God is knowing good and evil.
    - Being made in the image of God most significantly refers to that, like God, we have the capacity to KNOW good and evil, and CHOOSE good or evil.
    - This means humans have the ability to choose good or evil, choose to obey or disobey.
    - This makes us unique from the rest of creation that can't freely choose right or wrong since they have no comprehension of right or wrong.
- Why would God make us in His image?

- Having the capacity to know good and evil and the capacity to choose good or evil amply provides the potential for humans to sin against God. This provides some problems. Why would God bother making us this way?
- We can't know absolutely for certain, but I believe the best clues are in Gen 2:18-22.
  - Man was alone because there was no helper suitable.
  - God has man name all the animals so it will be clear to Adam that there was no one else suitable.
  - Why was no other creature compatible? No other creature was made in God's image; just Adam. So Adam had no other suitable creature to relate to.
  - Thus, God makes woman, another creature, in His image.
  - Since the woman is also in the image of God, it makes her a suitable being for Adam to have a relationship with.
  - Only beings in God's image can relate with one another.
  - God makes us in His image to make us able to have a relationship with Him. Since being in His image entails knowing good and evil, then this will be our means to relate to Him.
- The capacity to know good and evil gives us the capacity to relate to Him, and since God is good, our choosing to be good becomes the basis of our relationship.
- Having a relationship with God by freely choosing to obey Him and be good is the entire premise of the Bible, and ultimate goal of our faith.
  - Col 3:10
  - Rom 8:29
  - II Cor 3:16

Gen 1:27 says that male and female are the image. Not that they are just both independently in God's image, but that combined they are the image. Consider the leadership and submission of Jesus and the Father. That system seems to be the image of God. Male and female corporately work together to fulfill the image of God.

- Obey or disobey?
  - If God gives us the ability to obey or disobey, we should then expect some imperatives in which to follow.
  - Gen 1:28: multiply
  - Gen 2:15-17:
    1. Cultivate the garden (positive command = good)
    2. Don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (negative command = evil)
- Here are the commands by which the first humans could relate to their God with obedient submission. From the beginning, it's always been the doing of good as well as the abstaining from evil.

## **The first sin and consequences**

In chapter three, both man and woman deliberately eat of the tree full aware that they were not supposed to. This was the first sin. Let's now consider the significant consequences of this event.

## 1. Death

- Gen 2:17: God said they would die
- Gen 3:19: God said they would return to dust
- Gen 3:22: God removed them from the tree of life so they would not live forever

## 2. Knowledge of Good and Evil

- Gen 2:17: the tree is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil
- Gen 3:5: Satan says they will know good and evil
- Gen 3:22: God says they've become like Him knowing good and evil
- Gen 2:25, 3:7: we see an example of them having an increased knowledge of good and evil.

It is my understanding that Adam and Eve, had a limited knowledge of good and evil, like children perhaps, but by eating from the tree, they've become more like God by receiving an increased knowledge of good and evil (hence the awareness of being naked).

It might seem like a good thing to have an increased knowledge of good and evil, but it's a very challenging responsibility. With a greater knowledge of good, we are more likely to not fulfill all the good that we ought. With a greater knowledge of evil, we are more likely to do more evil that would ought not do. Ultimately, this increased knowledge of good and evil will lead to more sin.

## 3. Separation from God

- Gen 3:8-10: God was in the garden and they were hiding with shame and fear
- Gen 3:22: God removes them from the garden where He walked

These are some major consequences that came from that very first sin, and these are consequences that we are still facing today. We still suffer the sting of death. We still suffer from the burden of knowing good and evil, but failing to be obedient. We still suffer from not being in the garden with God. All these problems came from that sin. We continue to sin, so we continue to suffer these problems.

## Consequences vs. Punishment

You might be wondering about some things I haven't mentioned. When talking about the consequences, I never mentioned the cursed ground or pain in childbearing. That's because I think there is a difference between consequences and punishment.

- Consequences: a result or effect of an action.
  - A consequence happens automatically as a natural result of an action. A consequence requires no intervention from any other person. It is just what happens after doing a certain thing.
- Punishment: the infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offense
  - Punishment is not the result of an action. Rather, an authority figure intervenes and inflicts a punishment on the guilty party. Punishment doesn't have to happen by nature, instead it is made to happen by a different entity.

EX: If my parents catch me smoking cigarettes, they will punish me. They will take away my phone and TV and not allow me to hang out with my friends. That isn't the consequence of

smoking, but it's what my parents purposefully inflicted upon me. The consequences of smoking, however, are bad breath, shortness of breath, and addiction. My parents didn't make those things happen. They warned me and are punishing me so I won't suffer those consequences. Here lies the difference between consequences and punishment.

Now let's consider this idea with the events of Genesis 1-3.

**What are the punishments and consequences of sin?**

Punishment for sin	Consequences of sin
Pain in childbirth (3:16)	Spiritual death
Ground is cursed (3:17)	Knowledge of good and evil
Serpent crawls on belly (3:14)	Spiritual separation from God
Serpent's head crushed by seed of woman (3:15)	
Physical separation from God	
Physical death	

Pain in childbirth didn't happen as a natural consequence of sin. Instead, God afflicted that upon women as a punishment for sin. In the same way, the ground was cursed as a punishment for men. Also, the serpent being crushed isn't the consequence of eating the fruit. God is going to make the serpent to be crushed as a punishment.

I suggest however, that death, knowledge of good and evil, and separation from God are not punishments, but instead consequences.

**Knowledge of good and evil**

For instance, knowledge of good and evil is what happened to them naturally for eating the fruit. That wasn't a punishment. That was just the natural result of that action. Sure, God made the fruit to have that power, but it was still the natural consequence of eating the fruit nonetheless.

**Separation from God**

The other two consequences are more complicated though. Adam and Eve were separated from the garden when God kicked them out and set up barriers to keep them from returning. That was something God deliberately did. He made that to be. So being separated from God by being physically removed from His presence actually was a punishment that He inflicted. Today, we long to be with God, but we aren't. It's not that God can't physically be with man (he did that numerous times throughout the Bible), but being removed from the garden where He walked was a punishment.

But Adam and Eve weren't just physically separated from God. They were emotionally and spiritually separated. It's clear that there was more than just one kind of separation experienced. They felt shame and fear. Was that punishment? No. That was the natural consequence of sin. Likewise, though not stated so explicitly here, we know that our holy God of light can't have fellowship with darkness. When they sinned, that fellowship is disrupted. That's not punishment. That's just His inherent nature necessarily disallowing Him to perfectly

fellowship with unjust sinners. So spiritual separation from God is a consequence of sin that we are under. The punishment inflicted just helps us to fully understand that because of sin, we can't have fellowship with God.

## **Death**

Also, consider death. Returning to dust is something God speaks of when dealing out punishment. Why is it that we die? God removes us from the garden so we can't eat from the tree of life. Theoretically, sinners could physically live forever if they ate from the tree of life, but God doesn't want that. So He deliberately inflicts the punishment of being separate from the tree so we will die. Physical death is something that God made to be as punishment for sin.

But just as we saw there are multiple kinds of separation that they experienced, there are also multiple kinds of death that they experienced.

Physical death isn't the only kind of death that there is. There is such a thing as spiritual death. John 5:24-29 speaks of two resurrections. One resurrection is for people who are listening to Jesus and are still alive. The other resurrection is for those who are physically dead. Jesus also speaks of people living even if they die. This is because there is a spiritual life and death beyond physical life and death.

How can there be a resurrection for people who are alive? Though they are alive, they are dead in sin (Eph 2:1). Spiritual death is the consequence of sin. God said they would die, and they did. They entered into sin, and were dead spiritually. That was the natural consequence of sin. God didn't make that happen as a punishment. He did however make physical death the punishment and living parable to teach us of what real spiritual death really is.

Physical death is painful. It is our enemy. It is inescapable. It is permanent. We need to fear the real death represented by physical death. Death is seen to be the absolute consequence for sin (Rom 6:23).

So just as man sinned, was separated from the tree of life and doomed to die, so is man by sin separated from His source of life, and dead. The consequence of sin is being separated from our holy God, and the consequence of being separated from our God is death. Separate from God, we are dead.

## **The solution to sin and its consequences**

It's crazy to think that God made man with the capability to sin, thus allowing man to sin and suffer the consequences. Is it fair for Him to do that? Well if God provides a solution for the consequences of sin, then yes, that would be fair, and that's just what He does.

### **The serpent will be crushed**

- Gen 3:15:
  - The serpent will have a continuing struggle with mankind.
  - We know that the serpent is Satan (Rev 12:9, Jn 8:44)
  - The serpent will bite the heel of the seed of woman, but the seed will crush his head. Who wins? The seed does.
  - God is predicting that a human will conquer Satan, sin, and its consequences.

The Bible is much like any other drama. The beginning is picture perfect, when suddenly some terrible thing happens. The rest of the story is about solving that problem until at last, the hero arrives to save the day. And they all live happily ever after.

The whole Bible is about solving these three consequences of sin. Consider the Law that God put in place. It addresses the consequences of sin, but doesn't solve them.

Consequences of sin	The Law: portion of the Law that corresponds to the problem of sin	How it addresses problem of sin	How it fails to solve problem of sin	How Jesus fully solves problem
Death	Priesthood & Sacrifices	Intercession of death by animal	Sacrifice not sufficient: repetition unvoluntary not valuable life	Sufficient sacrifice: once for all saves us from sin and therefore death and grants us eternal life
Knowledge of good & evil	Moral Law (10 Commandments)	More guidance on what we should and should'nt do	No forgiveness, only condemnation	Forgiveness available
Seperation from GOD	The Tabernacle	God's dwelling place on earth	Still very separated: of all world only one nation of that nation only one tribe of that tribe only one family of that family only one man once a year goes into the Most Holy Place	Removes sin that separates and fully restores all men to complete fellowship with GOD to be ultimately fulfilled in heaven

Finally, Jesus is the seed of woman who comes and completely reverses all these consequences of sin.

Within this life, we no longer suffer from the knowledge of good and evil because Jesus can forgive us. We no longer suffer spiritual separation from God. We can come boldly before the throne. We no longer suffer spiritual death. We've already resurrected to eternal life having been unified with God once more. Soon, Jesus will return, and also conquer and remove all curses and punishments of sin. In heaven there will be no more physical death or separation from God.

# Sin and Its Consequences Reign

We saw how sin entered into the world and brought its terrible consequences; death being the emphasized poster child consequence. In the next chapters, we don't see God intervening with a plan of salvation, and what follows is sin and its consequences reigning and plaguing man. This more greatly emphasizes the need to be saved from sin and its consequences.

## Sin reigns

If we read Genesis chapter four, it is clear that sin is a major problem.

- Cain kills Able (Gen 4:8)
- Cain's descendants are not seek the Lord in any way
- A descendant of Cain, Lamech, is spoken of in detail.
  - His polygamy
  - His violence, pride, and vengeance
- Lamech is used to represent the nature of Cain's descendants.
- It's clear that sin is continuing to reign.
  - Of Seth's descendants, however, it mentions that they called upon the name of the Lord (Gen 4:26). So there are some who are in some fashion seeking God.

## Death reigns

Genesis 5 continues the genealogy of Seth's descendants leading up to Noah. It's interesting that death is the focus if this genealogy.

- Gen 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31 all state how long the person lived and that he died.
- This is the only genealogy to specifically state that people died.
- It's a strange thing to do. It's not necessary. If someone lived 775 years, it's apparent that they died in that 775th year. That's what is necessarily implied when we say someone lived a certain amount of years.
- The point that this genealogy is making is that everyone is dying. No matter how many children they have, no matter how many years they live, everyone is still dying.
- Sin is reigning, and death reigns with it. As sin continues, so does the consequence.

### Sign of life?

Actually, not everyone in this genealogy died. Consider Enoch (Gen 5:21-24). It does NOT state that he died. Instead, it tells us that he "was not" because "God took him". In some way, Enoch did not suffer death. He did not suffer the consequences of sin (this further solidifies the emphasis of this chapter is the problem of death). Why did Enoch not die? How did he escape the consequences of sin? He walked with God. Already, we see signs of hope in escaping sin and its consequences. God is the answer. God is the solution to sin and death. God is the answer to life.

## Sin and death reign

Next comes the well known tale of Noah and the flood. This story shows that both sin and death are reigning.

- Sin: Gen 6:5-8, 11-12 tells of how wicked and sinful man has become.
- Death: Gen 6:7, 13, 21-23 tells of the worldwide death that was suffered as the punishment/consequence/justice for sin.

- The story of the flood isn't a happy children's tale of salvation. It is emphasized as a display of wrath and justice against sin. Here we see painfully the consequence of sin.

### **Sign of life?**

Of course, there is one man who didn't die in this story. There is one man whose family escaped the consequence of sin and lived. That man is Noah. Why did he live? He walked with God (Gen 3:9). The repetition of this phrase proves that the emphasis of the text isn't just that sin and death are reigning, but also that God is the solution and hope for life. Having a relationship with God is the means by which we can escape sin and live, because God is life.

## **Rest from the curse of sin**

It's interesting. Almost as soon as the flood is over, God promises to not destroy the world in a flood again

- Gen 8:21
- Gen 9:11
- Why would God do something, and then promise not to do it again?
  - Two reasons why we do something, and then decide to not do it anymore:
    1. Mistake or regret
    2. One time is enough
  - God dealt this extreme global death and punishment once because once was enough. God has established how bad sin is, what the consequences are, and how severe the consequences are. God is not interested in continuing to do this global punishment in the future.
  - God says that He won't curse the ground on account of man because his heart is evil from youth. Basically this means God would have to do this over and over again because man is inclined to be sinful. God isn't interested in just judging and punishing sin though. He wants to solve and save from sin. This is what He's planning on doing.

### **Prophecy of Lamech**

Lamech, Noah's father (not Cain's son), spoke a prophecy concerning Noah in Gen 5:29.

- "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed"

Lamech says that somehow Noah will bring rest from the curse of the ground. What does this refer to? Naturally, Lamech was likely speaking of and focusing on the curse of the ground regarding the difficulty in agricultural labor. However, God has something else in mind. Noah survived the flood because He walked with God. After the flood, God decides to not curse the ground again (Gen 8:21); however, is God referring to difficult agricultural labor? God explains what curse He is referring to: "I will never destroy every living thing". The curse of the ground here is when God dealt the curse and consequence of sin upon every living thing. This is what God is vowing not to do again (by means of a flood (Gen 9:11)). And from Noah, the rest from this curse, judgment and death, will come. This is another prophecy speaking of a descendant of Noah, Jesus, that will free us from the curse, death, and judgment of sin.



# The Story of Salvation Begins

We've seen that sin and death has entered the world. We've seen that apart from God's intervention, sin and death rule the world, and though God has promised a coming deliverance, His only intervention thus far has been to deal the justice and consequence of sin. Yet, we've also seen that God has promised not to globally curse the world for their sin again. We've seen the story of sin and death. Now it's time for the story of salvation and life to begin. That story begins with Abraham.

## The promises to Abraham

In Gen 12:13, 7 God makes seven promises to a man named Abraham. Some of these promises are less significant and are experienced within the life of Abraham. Other promises are more significant and will not be fulfilled within the life of Abraham.

Promises fulfilled within Abraham's life	Promises fulfilled after Abraham's life
I will bless you	Nation
I will make your name great	Land
You will be a blessing	Blessing
I will bless your friends and curse your enemies	

The promises during Abraham's life were things God was fulfilling to help Abraham accomplish the purpose God had for him. The promises to be fulfilled after Abraham's lifetime are all regarding God's plan to save mankind from sin.

### The first two promises

1. Nation
  - God would make Abraham's descendants into a powerful nation known as the Israelites.
  - God works to fulfill this promise through the latter half of Genesis by turning one man Abraham into a large family that, by Exodus, would become a numerous nation.
2. Land
  - God would put this powerful nation into their very own promised land. The land was Canaan (or modern day Palestine).
  - God begins to fulfill this promise by taking that large nation from Egyptian slavery into the promised land. This is finally accomplished by the book of Joshua.

The rest of the OT is all about the nation and the land.

- The nation has judges in the land
- The nation has kings in the land
- The nation is divided in the land
- The nation is kicked out of the land (captivity)
- The nation is restored to the land

The first two promises are the characters and setting from which the story of salvation will come. The Old Testament is all about these first two promises; yet, at the conclusion of the OT, the third promise is still unfulfilled. The NT is all about the fulfillment of this third promise.

### **The third promise**

1. Blessing
  - We refer to the third promise as the blessing for short. But what is this promised blessing?
  - Let's take Gen 12:3 and 22:18 (two times this promise is given) and combine them to make one promise:
    - And in you /in your seed (descendants) all the families of the earth/ all nations of the earth will be blessed
  - This means that somehow Abraham's descendants would bless the whole world? How does God fulfill this promise?
    - The NT reveals that the descendant of Abraham who blesses the whole world is Jesus, and that blessing is salvation
      - Acts 3:25-26: It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ' And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ' For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways
      - Gal 3:8: The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, " All the nations will be blessed in you

So here we see that, according to Genesis, sin is the biggest problem, God has promised to solve the problem of sin, and that is the main purpose of all His intervention on the earth. This theme originates from the first pages of the Bible.

Of course Abraham doesn't know this. There's no way for him to know how his descendants would bless the world or what the blessing is. We know this because the NT explains it to us, but is there in evidence in Genesis as to what this blessing would be? Or how it would come? The answer is "yes".

### **The blessing foreshadowed**

These promises are repeated numerous times. Well, actually the promise of the land and blessing are repeated over and over again to Abraham and his descendants. The promise of the blessing however is repeated a limited number of times. It's common for the promise of the nation and land to be repeated without mentioning the promise of the blessing (Gen 13:14-17, 15:5-7, 17:6-8, 16, 24:60, 26:24, 35:9-12).

The promise of the blessing however is only mentioned five times. One of those times God is speaking to Himself (Gen 18:17), so really this promise is only given four times. That leads us to infer that it's likely the few times this promise is given is going to be in a significant context. Here are the four times it's given:

1. The beginning when God called Abraham (Gen 12:3)
2. When Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22:18)
3. To Isaac during a famine (Gen 26:4)
4. To Jacob during a dream (Gen 28:14)

Consider the significance of each event

- It was significant to give Abraham these promises when he was first called. That's reasonable. That's why it was given in Gen 12
- The context in which the promise is given to Isaac is not significant, but Isaac's life, interestingly, was not very significant. Still, God had to repeat the promises to Abraham to reveal that the blessings were continuing through his generation to the next.
- The other two times the promise is given (sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's dream) however, have a very theologically significant context that foreshadows and prophesies about the promise of the blessing itself. Let's take a closer look at that.

## The offering of Isaac

Gen 22:1-19, God commands Abraham to offer Isaac. Abraham obeys, and God responds by reaffirming the promises. This even though greatly foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Consider these points of resemblance:

1. "Only Son"
  - Abraham was told to offer his only begotten son (Heb 11:17) which is curious because Isaac wasn't Abraham's only begotten son. This however is more fitting of the Lord offering His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16) in which is foreshadowed by these events.
2. Moriah
  - Abraham was told to go to a specific place. This place was three days away. That means the specific place must've been important enough to justify a three day journey. They could've done this on the closest mountain, but there must be something significant about this mountain. II Chron 3:1 reveals to us that this is the mountain on which the temple would be built and where our Lord Himself would be sacrificed. The significance of the location shows the strong connection between the events of Gen 22 and the sacrifice of Christ.
3. "We will return"
  - For three days, Abraham saw his son as dead, but believed he could be resurrected (Heb 11:17-19). This foreshadows Jesus being dead for three days until His resurrection.
4. Isaac carried the wood
  - Isaac carried the wood on which he would be burned up the mountain. This foreshadows Jesus carrying His own cross up the hill on which He would be sacrificed (Jn 19:17).
5. "God will provide"
  - Though initially Isaac represents the Jesus, there is a shift when Isaac now is the one saved from death by the substitute sacrifice being provided. This foreshadows the theological concept of us being saved from death by a substitute sacrifice taking our place.

### How the blessing will come

It is in this context that God gives Abraham the promise of the blessing. God gives this promise again in this context because the context is theologically significant and foreshadows information about the blessing.

This story foreshadows that we would be saved from death by the substitute sacrifice of our Father offering His only Son. This story foreshadows HOW the blessing would come.

Consider how ludicrous this story is without Jesus. Without Jesus, this story is about a God sadistically challenging a human to do a terrible thing just to see if he will obey. With Jesus, this story becomes about God commanding a man to pre-enact the very means by which God will fulfill His promise to bless the whole world through his descendants. God didn't command David or Samuel to do this. God commanded the one who had received the promise to foreshadow the fulfillment of the promise. Not only is it foreshadowing by similar events, it is deeply steeped in a theologically significant context.

## **Jacob's Dream**

After deceiving his own brother in order to receive the promise of the blessing, Jacob flees for his life. With no where to go, he sleeps on the ground with a rock for a pillow. His dream is recorded in Gen 28:10-17:

- There is a ladder connecting heaven and earth. Angels are freely traveling back and forth between these two places.
- This dream signifies the earth having access to heaven. This signifies man having access back to God.
- Remember that being separate from God was a consequence of sin. Whereas previously it was impossible for man to go back to God, this ladder now makes it possible to have access to God again.
- It is DURING the dream that Jacob then receives the promise of the blessing. That means this blessing is directly related to the dream.
- Jesus claims to be the fulfillment of this dream (Jn 1:51). Jesus claims to be the ladder that brings access back to God.
- This dream foreshadows what the blessing will be: access back to God. We can only have access to God by the removal of sin. So this dream foreshadows that the descendant of Abraham will save us from sin so we can be blessed with access to God once more.

## **Conclusion**

So far in the book of Genesis we've learned these things:

- God made man with the ability to choose good or evil
- By choosing good we can have a relationship with Him
- Sin is the source of all problems and the most significant problem
- Sin results in more sin, death, and separation from God
- God is going to solve these problems and save us by:
  - A human
  - The seed of woman (not man)
  - A human that will free us from the curse of sin
  - A descendant of Abraham that will be a substitute sacrifice and allow us access back to God.