

The Plan from the Beginning
Daily Bible Reading Plan
Class Notes for Week 1: Genesis Chapters 1-4

Rather than endlessly debate the historical validity of creation's time frame, let's accept God's Word as written and try instead to gather spiritual lessons from the creation account. It is dangerous to argue about the meaning of "days" around the spiritually immature as it may lead them to question whether or not other parts of the Bible are real or literal.

Some facts we can know from the Bible:

1. God created the universe and its contents from nothing.
2. Nature itself is not divine, as many ancient and still a few modern religions teach. Nature is created by the Divine and all its great workings are God's design.
3. The Lord had only to speak to bring things into existence.
4. Human beings are the pinnacle of creation and the only thing made in the image of God. We can certainly discuss what that means.
5. God ceased from creating and established the Sabbath day of rest on the 7th day of this story. Exodus 20:8-11 commands that the people of God under the Old Covenant observe this day (interesting that a different reason for observance is given in Deut. 5:12-15).
6. Everything that God saw, He described as good except that man was alone (2:18).
7. God rules over nature and commands even the animals (1:22).
8. God has been in authority over man since the beginning, giving man instruction:
 - Be fruitful and multiply (1:28), the first of 613 commandments, or mitzvahs, in the Torah
 - Fill the earth and master it (1:28)
 - Gives foods they can eat (1:29)
 - Gives restriction about Tree of Knowledge (2:17)

The more thought provoking question is: Why did it take God six days? Is He limited by time constraints? Was his power exhausted by the seventh day, requiring "rest"?

The lies and deceit of the Devil have also existed since the beginning, as we can see in Chapter 3. God has also been swift to punish disobedience. Mankind has also been quick to deflect blame.

1. The Christian Scriptures shed light on who the serpent was (Genesis does not akin the serpent to the Devil or any other being): II Corinthians 11:3-4; Revelation 12:9; 20:2.
2. Satan can and will twist our minds, even by convincing us that God is wrongly withholding something from us that we deserve. He asks the woman whether or not God actually gave the command not to eat of the tree. This is interesting, since God gave the command to Adam, before her creation. When the commandment was relayed to the woman (by Adam or God?), it obviously contained the additional prohibition of not touching the tree. The Talmud holds that, when discussing the Word of God: "he who adds subtracts".
3. Some ancient Jewish commentators hold that the serpent pushed her back against the tree, showing her that indeed she would not die by touching it and invalidating God's threat.
4. The temptation was first mental, by the Devil, suggesting man could be equal with God, lowering her inhibition. It was then that she noticed the fruit looked good for eating and desirable for wisdom (3:6) and then ate. Satan fools men the same way today, removing the inhibition against evil by replacing it with selfish desire. The alteration of our perception changes the complexion of sin and makes it easier to accept and take in.
5. Following behind others who are disobedient can lead us astray. Adam gives no argument or resistance, but dives right into sin behind his wife.
6. It is curious as to why they were ashamed to be naked, where today a husband and wife are not (or at least should not be) ashamed to be naked in front of one another. Who were they ashamed to be

naked in front of? By God's Word, the knowledge that being naked was somehow uncomfortable and shameful came from their disobedience.

7. The Divine interrogation-God asks the question of man He surely already knew the answer to: Did you eat of the tree I told you not to? Man quickly tries to blame God ("the woman you gave me") and Eve ("she gave me of the tree"). The woman blames the serpent for duping her.
8. Punishment follows the reverse order:
 - The serpent is cursed more than any animal and made to crawl in the dirt. Division is forever placed between the serpent and man.
 - Woman is not cursed, but made to have pain in childbirth, have desire for her husband, and be subject to him. It is interesting that God's punishment of Eve is connected to the most powerful desire in any woman: to have children, to create life. It is also interesting that her punishment is not everlasting (does not exist past childbearing years) or continual (only in pain during childbirth, in great joy once child is born). Is God being merciful to Eve? Does he hold her less liable than the serpent or Adam? This thought is contrary to I Timothy 2:14, 15 and interesting to consider.
 - Man is told that because you did as his wife said, instead of obeying God's command, he shall be doomed to have to work to obtain food. The food, in contrast to the food readily and freely provided in the garden, will have to come from the working of the earth and the overcoming of thorns and thistles. Did Adam get the worst punishment?
 - It is now that Adam names the woman Eve and the final punishment is banishment from the garden and presence of God.
9. An interesting point about the mercy of our God is that He provided clothing to cover their shame (3:21) before banishing them.

In chapter 4, Adam and Eve have two children, Cain and Abel. This story centers on the killing of Abel by Cain because of anger and jealousy. There are some interesting thoughts generated by this story:

1. We deduce God's displeasure regarding Cain's offering is because, unlike the author mentions about Abel's, is not of Cain's best. The Lord does not give us clarification on this in the narrative.
2. This narrative is the first in the line of stories of the preference of the younger offspring over the first born (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) and the Lord's affection for those who watch over livestock.
3. The Lord does tell Cain that he should not be angry. After all, if you do right, you will be lifted up. However, if you do not do right, sin is ready for you at the door (tent flap) and it desires to consume you. God tells Cain that he can, however master it.
4. Cain is apparently not receptive to God's instruction as he allows his jealous anger to persist and goes into the field with Abel and kills him.
5. Am I my brother's keeper? Are we not to keep watch over our brothers?
6. The Hebrew word in verse 10 is plural, the blood of Abel and all of the descendants who would come from him are on the ground, crying out to God.
7. Cain, who showed no mercy to Abel, wails out to God that his punishment is too much to bear. Do we expect mercy and give none (Matthew 6:15; 18:21-35)?
8. Cain's punishment is very lenient in light of the subsequent commandments in the Torah regarding punishment for premeditated homicide. Why is Cain merely banished and in fact, protected from being killed by others? He ultimately marries, has a child, builds cities and is the forerunner of inventors. Why does God not kill Cain on the spot? In later Torah, the reason for capital punishment (for a variety of sins) is to expel evil from among God's people. Does God accomplish this by banishing Cain? His legacy of violence continues in his great-great-great grandson Lamech who commits polygamy and kills two people (4:19, 23).
9. It begs the question: Did Cain mean to kill Abel? How did Cain even know how to kill, or that a human could die?