

Article of the Month – June 2009

Twelve Missionary Themes in Genesis (4)

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As announced last month, in our series of 12 missionary themes in Genesis, this month we take a look at theme 4: Satan, the originator of sin.

Theme 4: The Origin of Sin – Satan Contaminated the Human Race

There is only one God-ordained enemy of mankind, the devil¹ and his followers, the fallen angels. *God* put enmity between us and them. They are our real enemies and have inspired all enmity between humans. God never meant there to be enmity among humans.

One of Satan's tactics has always been to initiate evil, then hide and do as if he doesn't exist. He appears almost nowhere openly in the Old Testament, and only when Jesus ministered on earth were the works of the devil exposed and broken.²

When we take closer looks at Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we see glimpses of what happened in heaven, long ago. In Isaiah we read what is written about the king of Babylon³ – this king being typical of Satan. Several things written in this passage cannot possibly apply to a mere human king. Therefore it has more significance when we apply it to another 'king': one who was given certain authority and responsibility in the heavenly kingdom, a power he used for selfish ends.

In Ezekiel we see another description (typified by the king of Tyre) of who Satan was before his fall.⁴ He was covered with unimaginable heavenly splendor and glory. God called him a guardian cherub, a Throne angel.⁵ Before his fall, this cherub, originally called Morning Star or Son of the Dawn, found himself at the centre of Universal Rule.

Continually he saw God in His ruling authority, seated at the highest Throne, exerting all power and receiving all the glory, worship and adoration. That was more than this cherub could take. The great splendor that surrounded and clothed him was not enough. He wanted more. Being less than the Most High Himself was what he could no longer accept. He became jealous and rebelled, and seduced one third of the angels to join him.⁶

¹ Gen. 3:15a

² Col. 2:15; 1 John 3:8b

³ Is. 14:4

⁴ Ez. 28:1-19

⁵ 1 Sam. 4:4; Ps. 99:1; Is. 37:16 etc.

⁶ As may be derived from the figures of speech in Rev. 9:1 & 12:4

When Satan was cursed and a Savior had been promised to lost humanity,⁷ he developed his next strategy: corrupting the human race so that it would become unable to bring forth that Savior.⁸ God counteracted this by shortening man's life span, in order to limit his capacity for sin and his subsequent suffering under its burden.

Today, for the same reason, we see this happening again. In most parts of the world man's life-expectation becomes lower and lower, due to poverty, sickness, wars, famines, earthquakes, floods that lead to death – all because of sin. People are now dying at an earlier age than before. Where sin increases, life-expectation decreases. It is one of the laws of humanity that God put in place⁹ – not a law of punishment but one of mercy: earthly human suffering is thus limited to a lesser number of years.

The wording, used in 6:5, is very strong: 'The Lord saw how *great* man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that *every* inclination of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *all* the time' (italics mine). Before God spoke about the necessity of a judgment, He explained how humanity had sinned beyond recovery. In verses 11 and 12 we read about an all-encompassing corruption.

The outcome was horrible enough at the time, but we cannot read the story of the Flood from a historical perspective only. It has considerable significance for today too because of what Jesus said.¹⁰ Just before He returns to earth the behavior of its inhabitants will be comparable to that of Noah's generation. Moral decay and crime increase, environmental pollution worsens, bad behavior and attitudes prevail and occultism spreads like wildfire. Jesus said: 'When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?'¹¹ This situation is not improving, so we need to save what can be saved. That is our World Mission.

We see two other examples of the spread of corruption in Genesis, the *first* when Canaan is cursed.¹² A millennium (!) later the sins of his descendants are judged through Israel – but only after the 'sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure'.¹³ God is slow to anger and wants none to perish.¹⁴

The *second* example we see in Judah's sins: first he married a Canaanite woman, and after her death he visited a prostitute (his daughter-in-law in disguise). Later in the history of Israel we see that these sins have become patterns¹⁵ (part of Israel's male population committed immorality with Moabite women and there was much intermarriage in the time of Ezra).¹⁶

Fathers instill patterns of behavior in the lives of their children by example and words. These children, in maturing, make choices to either accept or reject their fathers' behavior. If they reject the God-fearing life style of their parents they will be counted as sinners in their own right. If, on the other hand, they reject their parents' sinful behavior and turn to the Lord, they will be saved of their sins and be counted as righteous by the

⁷ Gen. 3:15

⁸ Gen. 6:1-4

⁹ Gen. 6:3

¹⁰ Matt. 24:37-39

¹¹ Luke 18:8b

¹² Gen. 10:24-27

¹³ Gen. 15:16b

¹⁴ 2 Pet. 3:9

¹⁵ Compare the root sin in Gen. 38 with a people-wide bad fruit in Numb. 25

¹⁶ Ezra 9 & 10

Lord. The crux of the matter is repentance. God has never turned anyone down who came to Him in the humble attitude of a sinner and invariably, where judgment takes place, repentance has consistently lacked.