

Article of the Month – August 2009

Twelve Missionary Themes in Genesis (5)

By Steef van 't Slot, Ph.D.



This month we look in our series of 12 missionary themes in Genesis at

Theme 5: God's Solution for the Sin Problem

God is looking for man, though he sinned.¹ This brings us to our next theme. Man knew he blew it, ran away and tried to hide. We see for the first time how unique our God is in comparison to other gods: He seeks the lost.² Other gods can only be found by man's own effort – but they cannot save him.³

God's character has two sides: He is all-loving as well as righteous and just.⁴ He loved sinners enough to leave heaven to live among them and at the same time hated sin enough to lay down His life for it. God made a Missionary out of His only Son. His mission existed of three components: He was to become in the likeness of man;⁵ He was to live a sinless life;⁶ He had to die innocently in order to justify sinners that believe in Him.⁷

This attitude grants Him the right to confront man with his sin.⁸ Man has to account for his deeds and there is no escape.⁹ We see *how* God executes His first judgment:¹⁰ He deals with all parties equally, without partiality, evaluating them and assessing their share of guilt. God starts His judgment by dealing with the originator,¹¹ the serpent, later revealed as Satan. He does so by cursing him, by setting enmity between him and humanity and by announcing his ultimate fall, the crushing of his head.

He deals with the originator first but *not exclusively*. He addresses the man before the man although she sinned first. Adam was seduced to sin by the woman, but this did not plead him free.¹² After the woman heard her verdict, the man too, faced the consequences of his disobedience. Sin never just happens to people. They have to *accept* sin – and

¹ Gen. 3:9

² Matt. 18:12-14

³ Dan. 3:29

⁴ John 3:16 & Heb. 10:31

⁵ Phil. 2:7,8

⁶ Heb. 4:15

⁷ John 1:29,36; 1 Pet. 1:19

⁸ Gen. 3:11

⁹ Gen. 4:9-12; Deut. 32:36; Ps. 135:14; Heb. 9:27

¹⁰ Gen. 3:12,13

¹¹ Gen. 3:14,15

¹² Gen. 3:16,17

accept the responsibility for it. People must face the consequences of their deeds: they reap what they sow, for life or for death.¹³

Here the Good News appears. We see for the first time that God comes up with a solution for the sin problem: He clothed man with garments of skin.¹⁴ Animals had to be killed and blood be shed to cover man's nakedness and provide a temporary reconciliation between his shame and his surroundings. It points for the first time to the principle, worded later in Hebrews: '... without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness'.¹⁵

The 'Mother-Promise'¹⁶ shows that enmity between humanity and the sin-originator is God-ordained. In the battle against sin He is on our side! It is not to be an enmity between humans. Furthermore, God promised victory for the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, Who crushed the serpent's head at Calvary; and finally: striking the heel is all Satan can do: it is not vital, but hinders and delays the redemption process. This promise was the first announcement of a Saviour Who would open the way of salvation to all. He is the First and only possibility God ever mentioned for salvation.¹⁷

When we consider the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, we see that *Cain* worked the soil and brought some of its fruits as an offering. He gave of his *works* and thought he could earn God's favour through effort. *Abel* brought fat portions (a type of worship) from the firstborn of his flock.¹⁸ He understood things his brother missed: *first* that sin was serious enough to shed blood for; *second* that his first earnings (firstborn) belonged to the Lord. Abel gave God the first place in his life.

God did not blame Cain for not understanding; He took time to talk with him and offered a solution for his problem, which was anger and depression ('downcast'). God explained to Cain his ability to choose either good or bad behaviour. God said that the danger of a bad choice is: increased vulnerability to sin's influence, which wants to master man. Yet it has been given to man to master over sin and not let it reign in his life.¹⁹ But Cain left God's presence.²⁰ From then on two sorts of people walk through history: the godless branch of Cain and the Godly one of Seth.

In the story of *Noah*²¹ we see a pattern, appearing throughout the Bible: God sees sin and decides to act;²² then He calls and sends a man (prophet, judge or missionary); this sent one (Greek: *αποστέλλο*, *apostello*) speaks on behalf of God; the majority of the people does not believe and persists in its unbelief; judgment comes as announced and the remnant is saved because they believe God.

Other stories in the Bible show this pattern too, e.g. Israel's liberation from Egypt, her liberations during the Judges-era, and the return of a remnant after the Exile.

¹³ Gal. 6:7,8

¹⁴ Gen. 3:21

¹⁵ Heb. 9:22

¹⁶ Gen. 3:15

¹⁷ John 14:6; Acts 4:12

¹⁸ Gen. 4:2-4

¹⁹ Gen. 4:5b-7; Rom. 6:12

²⁰ Gen. 4:16

²¹ Gen. 6:9 – 7:24

²² Gen. 3:22-24; 4:9-15; 6:5-7,11-14

The commonality in these stories is that everything stands or falls with faith or unbelief in God's revelation. In the NT we see it in Christ, God's Ark, the only way of salvation.