

October 16, 2005

40 Days of the Bible #3:

**The Basic Pattern of the Bible:  
Creation, Fall and Redemption**  
(Genesis 1-3)

As we continue with our emphasis on 40 Days of the Bible, the next few weeks will be focused on giving you a handle on the big themes and the big story of the Bible. This week, we'll be looking at the three themes that you'll find all over the Bible: the themes of *creation, fall and redemption*. Next week will be our Walk Thru the Bible Old Testament Seminar, and our guest speaker, George Wood, will bring the message and lead us in the seminar in the afternoon. The following week, we'll see the Abraham to Christ connection and then we'll look at what I call the Jesus explosion.

The Bible is a big book, and it's intimidating. It was written a long time ago in a culture very unlike our own. It can be kind of overwhelming for even the reading Christian.

It's easy to make the mistake of believing that it must be just about impossible to understand. Here we have 66 books—over 40 authors—from ancient times. If you've never read it, an easy guess would be that it's a jumble of mumbles.

But instead, there is an incredible consistency in the Bible. A close study shows very precise parallel ideas from across the 1500 or so years it was written. It is a single, unfolding story of the Rescue Plan of God for the people of this world.

There are **three simple words**, which, if you get a firm grip on them, will give you a firm grip on the basic plan, the basic story, the

basic pattern, of the Bible. Those three words are:

**CREATION**  
**FALL**  
**REDEMPTION**

Let's define those, then let's illustrate those from the opening chapters of Genesis and then dip into a few other places in the Bible to show just how consistent that pattern is all over the Bible

We start with **creation**. The Baptist Catechism of 1689, also known as the London Catechism, does a great job of defining God's work of creation:

***Question 13: What is the work of creation?***

*Answer: The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power and all very good.*

***Question 14: How did God create man?***

*Answer: God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.*

You know the story of the scientists at Cal Tech who found a way to create life from the soil, don't you? They challenged God. "Hey God, guess what? We can do what you do. We can make life just like You!"

So God said, "OK smart guys, let's have a competition. You create life and I'll create life and we'll compare."

The Cal Tech crew agreed. One Ph.D. said to

the other, "OK, go outside and get a scoop of dirt..."

God overheard them. "No way. I made the dirt. Go get your own dirt!"

The Bible teaches that God, the One God, the God who is also the One in Three God (Father, Son and Spirit) created the whole universe from nothing by the word of His power. And when He created it, *it was good*.

Put Genesis 1:1 and 1:31a together:

*1*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

*31a* God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

The goodness of all God made, including the first two people, is stressed again and again. Six times in Genesis 1 we're told that what God made was good...very good.

That's the first big concept: **CREATION**. God made all things, and in their origin, they are VERY GOOD.

Too bad it didn't stay that way! The next big idea is **FALL**. Again, let me borrow a few words from the London Confession:

***Question 17: Did our first parents continue in the glad obedience for which they were created?***

*Answer: No, but desiring to be like God, our first parents {Adam and Eve} forsook the obedience of faith, ate of the forbidden tree, sinned against God, and **fell** {there's the key word] from the innocence in which they were created.*

***Question 20: Did all mankind fall in Adam's first sin?***

*Answer: All mankind, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first sin.*

***Question 21: Into what condition did the fall bring mankind?***

*Answer: The fall brought mankind into a condition of sin and misery.*

As a child, did you ever get a present on Christmas morning, only to manage to break it by Christmas evening? I know I did! That's kind of what "our first parents" (Adam and Eve) did a long time ago. God gave them a perfect world and a simple test of trust: it's all yours except that one tree there. Don't eat its fruit. And they made a beeline for the tree.

Was it a magic tree? Was it like Pandora's box: take a bite, and sin and chaos comes into the world? No way. *The point was—by disobeying God, they chose independence from God. They chose to in effect to try to be gods themselves.*

Genesis 2:15-17 says,

*15The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

What's this "knowledge of good and evil" business? Four times in the Old Testament (see the references in your outline) this phrase is used to refer to making your own decisions

about right and wrong.<sup>1</sup> Here in Genesis the issue was: shall we trust that God knows what's right and wrong, or are we going to make that decision independent of God? Well, we went solo, independent of God, and we've been paying for it ever since. As Paul puts in Romans 5:14, because of that sin "death reigned." That just doesn't mean we get old and die—it means that death reigns even now in the sense that we are estranged from God, from our own selves, we suffer in our minds and souls, we have pain and sickness and death, and left uncorrected, we are on the path to eternal death, eternal separation from God. We are **fallen** creatures.

So, the first category is **creation**. The second is **fall**. A God who would leave it at that may be a *holy* God, but He wouldn't be a loving God.

We get glimmers of His love even in the Genesis story. Remember that when they sinned, Adam and Eve made fig leaf coverings for themselves? That wasn't so much to cover their bodies as to cover their shame before God. It was the original "cover-up"—like Watergate or some other scandal. That was a pretty pathetic cover-up. What did God do? In Genesis 3:21 we read, "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." Our attempt to cover over our shame was a sham and a failure. So God takes the initiative and He provides a cover-up made of animal skins. Now most animals don't give up their skins easily; there had to be a *blood sacrifice* to get those skins to cover their sins. The fact that blood had to be shed to cover up the first man and woman points forward to the blood of Jesus shed for us to cover up and take away our sins.

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<sup>1</sup> Deut 1:39, 2 Sam 19:35, 1 Kings 3:9 and 2 Sam 14:17.

Think about it. God *could have* just blasted them into oblivion, and would have been justified to do it. He said that if they sought *independent knowledge* of right and wrong via the tree, they would die. It's pretty amazing that they didn't die on the spot. Even that was God's grace and love.

So review: **creation, fall** and **redemption**. Now get this: *Most of the story of the Bible, from Genesis 12 on, is the unfolding story of God's loving redemption.*

That's what we'll see in our **Walk Thru the Bible Old Testament Seminar** next week. That's what we'll see when we make the Abraham-Christ connection the week after that. And then we'll see the Redemption mode in full operation when we look at the Jesus Explosion the week after that.

Now let's see if this creation/fall/redemption pattern holds throughout the Bible. Before we do that we have to get a really firm grip on the meaning of **redemption**.

The word "redeem" describes God's costly action on behalf of sinful human beings. The basic meaning of the word is release or freedom on payment of a price, deliverance by a costly method.

In the Old Testament, God **redeemed** Israel from Egypt by delivering the people from bondage and placing them in a new land.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. **At its heart, redemption has do with the forgiveness of sins.**

That's the part of redemption that comes to the front in the New Testament. Human beings are slaves of sin. Here's what Jesus says in John 8:34, 36:

*34* Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... *36* So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Jesus says this about redemption in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom [or, redemption price] for many."

On the cross, as the old song says, "Jesus paid it all." Redemption through the sacrifice of the life of Jesus is a completed act as far as God is concerned. That's exactly why Jesus says, moments before He dies on the cross, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

That was the end of the trail that started on the day when the Lord killed an animal to cover the bodies of Adam and Eve. That trail leads through the Tabernacle and the Temple of the Old Testament right to the Temple as it existed at the time of Jesus. And this in part is why God saw to it that the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed 40 years after the death of His Son on the cross.

And redemption is still in process in the sense that the victory is being worked out. Both Jesus and Paul refer to the time of the Second Coming of Jesus as the completion of redemption.

Jesus says in Luke 21:27-28:

*27* At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.  
*28* When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your **redemption** is drawing near.

And Paul writes in Romans 8:23:

*Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the **redemption** of our bodies.*

Again, let's review those three key words:

**CREATION**  
**FALL**  
**REDEMPTION**

Creation is God's good work; fall is our rebellion; redemption is God's restoration of His goodness.

Let me illustrate that with two passages in the New Testament. The first is the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

OK, so there's no reference to creation; that's not surprising; we all know we're here! If you want to get technical, John does make reference to God's creation in John 1, but let's set that aside.

What John 3:16 does say is that we're **fallen**. Apart from God's intervention we will—what? "Shall not **perish**..." We're in need! We've fallen, and like the lady in the commercial, we can't get up!

So God acts to get us up--to **redeem** us. Out of a motivation of **love**, He **gave** His One and Only Son. Giving—that's the language of redemption. He is given over, like a lamb on the altar, to death. The one proviso is this: we have to exercise loving **faith** in Him, and His redeeming sacrifice, for the effect of that redemption, to apply to us.

Now let's go to a passage from Paul's letters and see the same pattern. Turn to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Verses 9-10, we see fallen humanity in all its wreckage:

*9Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

That's pretty definitive, isn't it? By the way, this passage should settle forever the matter of whether homosexuality is just an inborn trait or whether God regards it as a moral wrong. It's lumped in with heterosexual wrong, worshipping idols, stealing, being greedy, drunk, or being a slanderer or a swindler. And it says that all these expressions of fallenness separate us from God to the point that if that's your life, you can't "inherit the kingdom of God."

But, praise God, the passage doesn't stop there. Look at verse 11:

***And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.***

That's what the church at Corinth was filled with: a bunch of "exs". Ex-promiscuous, ex-idolaters, ex-gays, ex-thieves, ex-greedy, ex-slanders and ex-swindlers. But the good news is that's PAST! ***But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*** That's great news!

In our fallen state, we're **messes**. In our redeemed state, we're **blesses**. Praise God!

What are those three words again?

**CREATION**  
**FALL**  
**REDEMPTION**

Now these aren't just three words that bring the whole story and plan of the Bible together. These are three words about God's love and plan for you. God made YOU. He's YOUR creator. And even though we are fallen sinners, God doesn't give up on us. He extends His hands of love toward you. Think of the spread arms of Jesus on the cross as the embrace of God, calling you to be part of His family, to be forgiven, and to be changed by His mercy and grace.

If you know Him, if you've put your faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God, then know that what God wants to do in your life is to keep changing you, more and more, so that you reflect God's love and mercy and holiness. He wants you to be a **full moon**, not a little crescent, reflecting every bit of the light of **God's one and only Son**.

If you don't know Him, what's the delay? Those open arms of Jesus are **for you** today.

You need to establish a spiritual **BASE** with God. **BASE** stands for **believe, admit, switch** and **express**. Here's how. You need to...

**Believe God made me to love me and to live for his purposes.**

*"Long before God laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, and settled on us as the focus of his love." Ephesians 1:4 (Message)*

**Admit I've lived for myself, and then accept God's free forgiveness that was paid for by Jesus on the cross.**

*"Jesus personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross so we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on." I Peter 2:24 (Living)*

**Switch to living for God's purposes in my life.**

*"Give yourselves to God...and surrender your whole being to Him to be used for righteous purposes." Romans 6:13 (TEV)*

**Express my desire for Jesus to be the Lord (leader) of my life.**

*"You will be saved, if you honestly say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from death." Romans 10:9 (CEV)*

**A simple prayer you can pray:**

*"Dear God, I don't understand it all yet, but I believe you love me and created me for yourself. I'm sorry that I've lived for myself instead of for you, and I ask for your forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to redeem me, to pay for my sins. I want Jesus to be the Lord of my life. Please help me to learn to love you and trust you and live for your purposes."*

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