

CONNECT GROUPS
word time



AUSTRALIA *for* CHRIST FELLOWSHIP

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THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION IV

GOD'S COVENANT TO THE PATRIARCHS

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 12:1-3

2. Key Verse: Galatians 3:9

"All who believe today are blessed just as Abraham was blessed."

3. Reference scripture: Genesis 17:1-8 Romans 9:6-13

4. Objectives

Tonight we'll learn that God established a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and promised to send Jesus Christ to redeem us. This should serve as a reminder to give thanks to God for His bountiful love.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. God promised "... All the people on earth will be blessed through you." Who are "all the people on earth"? (Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:8)

2. If we are children of faith, whose children have we become? (Galatians 3:7)

3. In Genesis 22:17, who would capture the cities of Abraham's enemies?

Today's Message

The divine providence for the redemption of mankind was born out of God's love. It was not an improvisation. God ordained it in the very beginning out of His great love that always plans and fulfills the needs of mankind. God revealed to Adam and Eve His plan of redemption, established that covenant of redemption through Noah's ark, and reassured His covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob again and again.

Today, we will study God's covenant given to these three leaders of the Jewish tribes.

God's covenant made with Abraham

When God chose and called out Abraham, Abraham was living in fertile and flourishing Ur of the Chaldeans near the Persian Gulf, where the Euphrates River and the Tigris River met.

God commanded him to leave his homeland and gave him four promises:

1. God would give him many descendants and they would become a great nation.
2. God would make his name great.
3. God would make him a great blessing.
4. Through Abraham, God would bless all other nations.

When Abraham left his native land and moved to Canaan, God fulfilled all the promises He had made with him. The fourth promise especially was fulfilled through a great miracle when Abraham became the father of Isaac at the age of 100. Isaac was to be the fulfillment of God's plan for Jesus Christ to be born through his lineage.

God promised Abraham:

“And I will make an agreement between me and you and all your descendants from now on. I will be your God and the God of all your descendants.” (Genesis 17:7)

Here, God's covenant declared Abraham would become the father of many nations and exactly as the covenant stated, it came to pass. Abraham became the father of our faith and we became his children.

One day, God gave a shocking command to Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. But Abraham obeyed God's command in faith. When God saw his absolute total obedience and trust in Him, God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son and said;

“I will surely bless you and give you many descendants. They will be as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. And they will capture the cities of their enemies. Through your descendants all the nations on the earth will be blessed. This is because you obeyed me.” (Genesis 22:17-18)

If you look up these verses in the AV, you will see the word “seed” instead of “descendants” and this “seed” means Jesus Christ. Jesus became the “corn of wheat”, that was buried, died and resurrected for us. He is the Holy Seed that never dies, through whom we are born again. Jesus Christ came to this world as the righteous seed to redeem all mankind and we too received the same life from Jesus when we believed and accepted Him in faith. The Apostle Paul declared this truth:

“If anyone belongs to Christ, then he is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This blessing of redemption, whereby “everything is made new”, came from the covenant that God had made with Abraham.

God’s Covenant Established with Isaac

Isaac was a good man. He was meek and pious by nature. But God still demanded that Isaac be offered as a burnt offering. Without God’s intervention, Isaac could have died by his father’s knife. But God stopped Abraham and provided a ram.

All mankind without exception, no matter how meek and pure they may be and even if they have a temperament like Isaac, deserve death through the shedding of their blood for the wages of their sins. Isaac was a symbol of mankind under the power of sin and judgment too, but when God saw the faith of Abraham and Isaac, God sent a sacrificial offering of atonement for them.

Two thousand years after Isaac, Jesus Christ came to this world as the very Lamb of God that died on the cross in the place of Isaac and mankind.



The land of Moriah, where Isaac had been brought to be sacrificed, is located in Jerusalem. There, many years later, King Solomon built the House of the Lord where the blood of countless animals was shed for the atonement of the people's sin. These sacrifices were also a foreshadow of the coming of Jesus, who would shed His blood once and for all, for the price of our sins.

Through Isaac's experience, we are able to see how God established His covenant of redemption. Abraham called the name of the place "Johovah-Jireh" meaning "In the mount of the Lord, He provides." As shared above, when the fullness of time came, God provided the Ram of Atonement for our sins, Jesus Christ.

God also gave a prophetic promise to Isaac's wife Rebekah, that her descendants would capture the cities of the enemies. (Genesis 24:60)

God's Foretelling of Redemption Through Jacob

With Abraham, God established a covenant for redemption. Through Isaac, He revealed how the redemption would be carried out. To Jacob He showed His sovereign right.

Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. While still in their mother's womb, God chose Jacob and established him as the seed for His covenant. This shows certainly that the decision for redemption came from God's grace and love according to His sovereign choice, not from the things that man did.

Jacob was a very greedy and deceitful man. In terms of moral conduct, he was not a bit better than Esau. But God loved Jacob to the extent that he put his hip out of joint in order to bring him to a place of repentance, and allowed him to enter the Promised Land by faith. When we see all this we know that our salvation is the gift from God to those who believe in His grace.

The Word of God states:

“All people have sinned and are not good enough for God’s glory. People are made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They are made right with God by being made free from sin through Jesus Christ.” (Romans 3:23-24)

“So people receive God’s promise by having faith. This happens so that the promise can be a free gift. And if the promise is a free gift, then all of Abraham’s children can have that promise. The promise is not only for those people that live under the Law of Moses. It is for anyone who lives with faith like Abraham. He is the father of us all.” (Romans 4:16)

Our God is a good God who shared His plan of redemption and His covenant with us. As the Mediator of His covenant, Jesus Christ came. Therefore we should give thanks to God who brought us into His covenant, and invite all our family members and friends to come into this wonderful agreement as well!

Closing questions:

1. What do you think would have come of Abraham if he had said “no” to God’s command to kill Isaac.
2. Do you think he still would have been useful to the Lord’s ultimate purpose for his life?
3. Would God’s plan for mankind have been thwarted? Esther 4:14

Application in our daily lives

1. Let’s rededicate ourselves to the purposes of God for our lives, doing our best to live lives of obedience and faithfulness to the Lord.

GOD'S PROMISE OF REDEMPTION V

THE PASSOVER LAMB AND THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION

1. Today's scripture: Exodus 12:1-4

2. Key Verse: Exodus 12:13

“But the blood will be a sign on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Nothing terrible will hurt you when I punish the land of Egypt.”

3. Reference scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

4. Objectives

a. To appreciate and give thanks to the Lord God Who revealed His redemptive plan to us through the Passover lamb.

b. By studying the purpose of the Passover lamb for the Israelites' exodus we'll remember and understand what Jesus did for us believers. As we partake of His broken body and His shed blood, through the Lord's Supper, let's strive to discipline ourselves to live a victorious life, knowing His crucifixion made our new life possible.

Questions to answer before Connect Group:

1. Where did the Israelites kill the Passover lamb? (Exodus 12:1)

2. Where did God command them to put the blood of the Passover lamb? (Exodus 12:7)

3. What did God tell them that He would do that night? (Exodus 12:12)

Today's Message

Twilight faded into evening shadows and night fell on the land of Goshen in Egypt. Suddenly, shrieks of dying lambs were heard here and there and immediately the Israelites were busy putting the lambs' blood on the doorposts and above the door of each home, using hyssop dipped in the blood to strike the doorposts.



All the community of the Israelites had followed their orders specifically and quickly. They had placed the blood of the lamb on all the doorposts and over the doors of each home, and every household was now ready to set out for the long journey. They immediately gathered together to eat their roasted lamb.

Then abruptly at midnight, the whole country of Egypt was shaken by the wailing sounds of all the Egyptian families. Every household of Egypt from the palace of Pharaoh to the homes of the servants saw at the same time, the death of their firstborn.

King Pharaoh then hurriedly called for Moses and told him to get out of the country quickly with the Israelites. Now all the people of Israel, packed and ready to leave, set out for the Promised Land - Canaan - at last leaving behind the foreign land where they had been enslaved for 430 long years.

Enslaved Mankind

The lamb killed for Passover in Egypt was a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. In partaking of communion together, we look back to the great day of deliverance for the Israelites, which came as they partook of the lamb according to the instructions which were given.

After believing in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, every time we take the communion elements we are reminded of His torn flesh and His shed blood, how as the ultimate sacrificial “lamb” He and what He did for us is the reason we can be right with God. John the Baptist declared this in John 1:29:

“Look, the Lamb of God. He takes away the sins of the world!”

Through the miraculous work of the Passover we can clearly see God’s sheer determination to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin’s slavery. He induced this through the power of Jesus’ sacrificial death for you and me.

In his original state of creation, man was a free and noble being, just as Jacob and his seventy family members were free and noble when they first entered the land of Egypt. Jacob’s whole household was treated as royal guests of the Egyptian king Pharaoh, because the king had

successfully overcome severe famine with the help of Joseph's wise counsel. For this reason, the king settled them in the land of Goshen.

But the children of Jacob living in Egypt generation after generation forgot about their God and followed the Egyptians' lifestyle, eventually indulging in idol worship. They had forsaken their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and punishment from God had followed in the form of oppression by the Egyptian king.

Time passed and the king who favoured Joseph died. Then Joseph died too. A new king who did not know Joseph came to power. He did not like the Israelites multiplying and becoming strong. He made all of the Israelites his servants and persecuted them by killing every Jewish boy born at birth. He intended to exterminate every descendant of the Israel race.

If we see this persecution through the window of our spiritual eyes, it is the same as it was when mankind became servants of Satan by the sin of Adam and Eve. But God wanted to save His suffering children from the bondage of slavery.

In the light of God's righteousness and justice, all sinners deserve death just as the firstborn child of each Egyptian family received death. But God, through His Son's redemptive work forgave our sins, transferred us from death and delivered us from the slavery of sin. God set us free.

Let us now study how the blood and flesh of Jesus, our Passover, set us free.

The Blood of Jesus Christ

The Bible clearly states:

"All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory."
(Romans 3:23)

Jesus came to this world as the sinless Redeemer to bear our sin in our place. By shedding His blood, He once and for all removed our sins, unrighteousness, curses and despair. Jesus died as the Passover lamb to buy back all of us from every race, language and nation, and to give us to God (Revelation 5:9). Jesus' blood is so precious that for the price of His blood, our lives could be redeemed back to God.

The blood of Jesus also established a covenant, or agreement, between God and us (1 Corinthians 11:25). By this covenant "...whosoever believes in Jesus and makes Him boss will receive eternal life and salvation." (John 3:16)

Furthermore, Jesus' blood is the sin-forgiving blood. Because we are weak, we commit sin. But when we confess our sins to the Lord Jesus Christ, through His blood we will be forgiven. The peace and joy of being forgiven by our Lord comes to us and we gradually learn to live a clean life by depending more on the Lord.

The blood of Jesus has the power to make us righteous and lead us to the way of sanctification. By the blood of Jesus we also enter into peace with God. Jesus' blood is powerful enough to change the vilest sinner. On the merits of His blood, we can always come forward to God and pray. Through his blood, He always helps us to live a victorious Christian life.

Thus we must always put the blood of Jesus over the entrance of our heart. Place the blood of Jesus over your life – your home, your work for God and every area of your daily living. When we rely on His blood, all the blessings, power and victory come from God to help us. In order for us to apply the blood of Jesus to our hearts we should sing about His blood, recognize its power, and give thanks to the Lord.

The Flesh of Jesus Christ

The Israelites in Egypt not only put the blood of the Passover lamb on both sides of the door and on the lintel but they also ate all of the Passover lamb.

The meat of the Passover lamb signifies the Body of Jesus. As the Lord Jesus stated in John 6:51:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh. I will give my flesh so that the people in the world may have life."

The meat of the Passover lamb also means the **Word of God**. Jesus Christ dwells in us as God's Word that came, in flesh. Just as the children of Israel ate the meat and obtained the necessary strength to travel through the wilderness en route to Canaan, we too should "eat" the Word of God to obtain spiritual strength to live through the wilderness of life.

When we eat the Word of God we also are cleansed as Jesus taught His disciples:

"You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you. Remain in me" (John 15:3-4)

In the Word of God there is healing power! God heals us by His Word and also helps us out when we are in trouble. As we eat God's Word along the way, we are able to learn to make wise decisions in life and our inner person grows day by day. The scripture also states:

"We are healed because of his wounds." (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24)

As He hung on the cross and bore our curse, He set us free from the bondage of the curse. Our spirit, soul and body are born again through His sacrificial death for us.

Today we have learned that the Passover lamb of Exodus signifies Jesus Christ, who saves all mankind from the slavery of the devil and sin. It is the same today. By applying Jesus' blood on the doorposts of our heart, eating of His broken body, and living on the Word of God, we are able to enjoy true freedom and abundant life, freed from the shackles of the devil.

Closing questions

1. Whose sin did Jesus take away? (John 1:29)
2. What did God specifically require of the Israelites in order that they would not be destroyed along with the Egyptians? (Exodus 12:13)
3. How do you think the Jews - especially the children - felt when they killed the innocent lambs? (Understanding that lambs were also kept as pets)
4. Why don't Christians sacrifice animals even though the Law commands it?

Application in our daily lives

1. We should give thanks to our Heavenly Father who revealed to us His redemptive plan via the Passover lamb. Let us witness this love of God to unbelieving friends.
2. Let's claim the blood of Jesus in our household and lead all our family members to the road of deliverance from the power of sin and judgement, teaching them about God's forgiveness.
3. Let's always remember to meditate on the Word of God and devour it - so to speak - as we would food.

THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION VI

THE COVENANT THROUGH SACRIFICE

1. Today's scripture: Hebrews 10:1-18

2. Key Verse: Hebrews 10:10

“Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do. And because of this, we are made holy through the sacrifice of his body. Christ made this sacrifice only once, and for all time.”

3. Reference scripture: Leviticus chapters 1 – 6, Hebrews 7:27
Hebrews 9:11-14

4. Objectives

a. To study the differing sacrifices offered to God in Old Testament days and the meaning of each type of sacrifice.

b. To understand how these sacrificial offerings relate to the redemption work of Jesus Christ.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. Because of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, what kinds of efforts were eliminated on our part? (Hebrews 7:27)

2. What did the people of the Old Testament do to make themselves ceremonially clean? (Hebrews 9:13)

3. Through the offering of His body once and for all, what did Jesus do specifically for us? (Hebrews 10:10)

Today's Message

Leviticus is the most minutely detailed account of all the laws concerning sacrifices and offerings which were observed by the Israelites. The book of Leviticus is like a picture book that God Himself drew for use in religious training of His own children. All the word pictures in Leviticus point ahead to the coming of Jesus Christ.

One of the most fundamental questions for mankind is how an unholy man may approach the Holy God. The Bible clearly answers: To come to God one must bring a sacrifice offering. Without exception, we all know deep down in our hearts that we are helpless sinners. That is why even the pagans, knowing they cannot solve their sin problem by their own might, bring sacrifices whenever they serve their gods. These kinds of sacrifices are nothing but vain sacrifices to their lifeless gods. But the sacrifices and offerings as recorded in Leviticus were a foreshadow,

a type, behind which our Lord Jesus Christ was standing as our once-and-for-all sacrifice, to be offered at Calvary's Hill to make atonement for all the sins of mankind. All the religious ceremonies for God in the Old Testament point to it – "... the Lamb of God. He takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29)

Today, we'll study how the five sacrifices and offerings recorded in Leviticus foretell the redeeming work of our Saviour Jesus Christ which was to come.

The Burnt Offering (Leviticus Chapter 1)

A "burnt offering" originally meant "going up" because it goes up to the altar to be offered. This burnt offering was mentioned more than all other sacrifices as it was the first and most generally offered sacrifice.

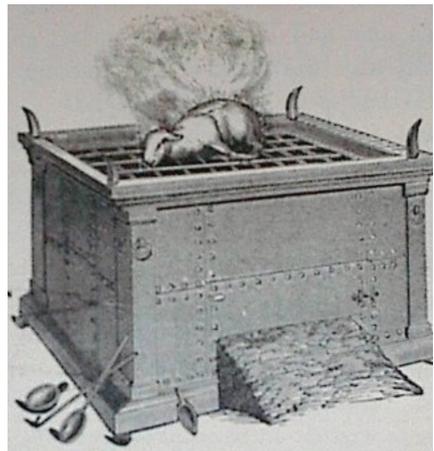
Most of the time the sacrifice were bulls but in some instances turtledoves or young pigeons were acceptable. The process was as follows: The sacrificer put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, killed it on the north side of the altar before the Lord, cut the sacrifice animal into pieces, and washed the inner organs and the legs with water. The officiating priest then sprinkled its blood all around the altar and burned all the sacrifice on the altar.

During significant feast seasons they offered the burnt sacrifices in the morning and evening of the day. The important meaning of the ceremony of the burnt offering lies in the perfect consecration and dedication of the one offering it, as Paul teaches in Romans 12:1:

"...offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him."

The burnt offering foreshadows

Jesus Christ Who gave Himself without blemish to God. Jesus Christ sacrificed His life totally as the sin offering in our stead.



The Grain offering (Leviticus Chapter 2)

The “grain offering” could be offered together with other animal sacrifices. Grains which were offered included fine flour, unleavened baked pan bread or grain from the first harvest. On the altar, the priest burned a handful of the grain offering that had salt, oil or incense added and the remaining of the grain offering was given to the priest. If the priest was the one offering the sacrifice, he burned the whole grain offering.

Usually, rich people gave the grain offering in addition to the burnt sacrifice or peace offering (Numbers 15:25-26) and the poor offered only the grain offering. The grain offering was a daily offering predicting Christ’s serving life. The fine flour represented Christ’s characteristics, His perfect nature.

The Fellowship or Peace Offering (Leviticus Chapter 3)

As the name indicates, the fellowship offering (or peace offering in the AV) was literally a sacrifice for peace and fellowship with God. The thanksgiving offering, vow offering and the voluntary offering all belonged to the peace offering. The thanksgiving offering was generally for giving thanks to the Lord God because the one who offered had already received blessings. The vow offerings were given in expectation of blessings to come. Voluntary offerings were extra offerings given willingly with the sacrificer’s prayer request, and they were not a condition for blessings.

For the peace offering, either male or female animals were acceptable and were given together with unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil. This peace sacrifice symbolizes the peace of Jesus Christ:

“For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” (Ephesians 2:14 AV)

“God made peace by using the blood of Christ’s death on the cross.” (Colossians 1:20)

The Sin Offering (Leviticus 4:1 – 5:13)

If the Israelites sinned against any of God’s commandments, they offered a sin offering (Leviticus 4:2-3). When a person did not respond to being summoned as a witness, when he touched unclean things which were

against their laws, when he carelessly made a vow, or unintentionally committed any sins, he was required to offer a sin offering.

In the case of a sin offering, it is interesting to note that the sacrificer came to the altar of God as a sinner, with an attitude of acknowledging and repenting his sins. He came not as a worshipper - as in the case of other sacrifices - but stood before God as a sinner. In other words, God, through our sin offering sacrifice, placed man in the position where he realized his responsibility for the sins he had committed. When the sacrificer offered the sin offering, he stood before the presence of God as a criminal stands before a judge in a court. All of his sins were atoned for by the blood of his sin-substitute animal. So this sin offering foretold the death of Jesus when He would shed His blood to atone for all our sins. Therefore the sacrifice of the sin offering represents the redeeming death of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

The Trespass Offering (Leviticus 5:14 – 6:7 AV)

The nature and meaning of the trespass offering was similar to the sin offering. It was offered generally when a person had committed sin against his neighbours and had to make restitution for a loss. For anything deceitfully obtained or harmed, the person was to give the full value back, plus an additional one-fifth, according to Leviticus 6:5. The sinner was forgiven and the victim also was recompensed.

First of all, the significance of the trespass offering is that Jesus Christ not only bore our sins against God but He also bore the sins we committed against others. If we come to Him with our sins He will always forgive us because of His great mercy.

We have reviewed the five kinds of sacrifices and offerings in the Old Testament and how they preordained the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ was born and perfectly fulfilled all the laws about sacrifices and offerings in Leviticus. He indeed gave Himself to God as the sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish. Shedding the blood of sacrifice animals, as the Israelites did, is no longer necessary. By being our sin substitute, Jesus Christ once and for all perfected the work of redemption.

Closing questions

1. The cost of sin was very high in Old Testament times with all the offerings that had to be made. But these were really nothing compared with what God himself paid for our sins. In light of this, what should our attitude be about our wilful sin?
2. It has been said whenever we sin it is like we are there at the cross, putting the nails into Jesus ourselves or the one whipping Him before he was crucified. How should this make us feel about wilfully sinning against Jesus?
3. What happened when Jesus was offered as our fellowship or peace offering? (Ephesians 2:14)

Application in our daily lives

1. Ponder deeply how the five sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament are related to you personally.
2. Share with one another any points on which you have been enlightened or blessed from today's message.

THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION VII

THE COVENANT THROUGH THE PROPHETS

1. Today's scripture: Isaiah 53:1-12

2. Key Verse: Isaiah 53:5

“But He was wounded for the wrong things we did. He was crushed for the evil things we did. The punishment which made us well, was given to Him. And we are healed because of His wounds.”

3. Reference scripture: Isaiah 7:14 Isaiah 61:1-2

4. Objectives

a. Our Heavenly Father promised through His chosen prophets that He would send our Saviour Jesus and He fulfilled His promise. Let us give thanks to God for sending Jesus to redeem us.

b. Let us also live in the blessed hope and faith that Jesus will return again to the earth, as promised by God.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. Who is “He” in Isaiah 53:1-3?

2. Whose suffering and pain did He take on Himself? (Isaiah 53:4)

3. To what was He likened when He remained silent during His suffering? (Isaiah 53:7)

Today's Message

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied that He would come and would be crucified on the cross for the wrong and evil things we had done. God let this plan of His love be known in advance. Today, we will study the prophecies concerning this plan and their fulfillment, through several scriptures.

The Prophecy and Fulfillment of Jesus' Birth

God foretold in the Bible the place, time and setting of Jesus' birth in detail.

When moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea, who lived seven hundred years before Christ, prophesied where Jesus would be born (Micah 5:2). Jesus was then actually born as told in Bethlehem, seven kilometers from Jerusalem (Luke 2:4, 5, 7). Around BC 600, Daniel - captive in Babylonia -

prophesied Jesus' coming (Daniel 9:25). As prophesied, Jesus came to this world and was crucified. God also said that Jesus would be born as "the seed of woman," ie of a virgin, without a natural father (Isaiah 7:14), and He really was born of the virgin, Mary (Luke 1:26, 27, 30, 31). The Apostle Paul witnesses to this miracle in Galatians 4:4-5:



“But when the right time came, God sent this Son. His Son was born of a woman and lived under the law. God did this so that He could buy freedom for those who were under the law. His purpose was to make us His children.”

Hosea 11:1, “calling my son out of Egypt”, was a prophecy that Jesus and His family would go to Egypt for a while to escape from the persecution of Herod. (Matthew 2:14-15)

The Ministry of Jesus

One thousand years before Jesus came to this world, David, moved upon by the Holy Spirit, prophesied in Psalm 2:7:

“Now I will tell you what the Lord has declared: He said to me ‘You are my son. Today I have become your father.’”

And when Jesus was baptized in water the heavens opened and a voice was heard:

“This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him.”
(Matthew 3:17)

After His water baptism, Jesus taught in Galilee as prophesied (Isaiah 9:1-2, Matthew 4:12-16). The word that Jesus taught meant He carried out His ministry as a prophet and this was also foretold by Moses:

“The Lord your God will give you a prophet like me. He will be one of your own people. Listen to him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Here the “prophet” means Jesus. (Act 3:20-22)

Isaiah prophesied Jesus' Messianic ministry of telling good news to the poor, declaring freedom to the captive and announcing God's forgiveness (Isaiah 61:1-2), Luke 4:18-19). His being rejected was also foretold in Isaiah 53:3.

Jesus became our eternal High Priest (Hebrews 3:1, 5:5-6, 7:1-3) as declared in Psalm 110:4:

"You are a priest forever, a priest like Melchizedek."

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey He was praised as a king and this was mentioned in Zechariah 9: 9.

Jesus Christ came to this world as prophesied in the Word of God and He fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Him as a Prophet, Priest and King.

Jesus' Suffering and Resurrection

David prophesied Jesus' betrayal:

"My best and truest friend ate at my table. Now even he has turned against me." (Psalm 41:9)

On the night of the last Passover feast, Jesus told Judas:

"The thing that you will do – do it quickly" (John 13:27)

He also said:

"Judas, are you using the kiss to give the Son of Man to his enemies?" (Luke 22:48)

As prophesied in Zechariah 11:12, Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15).

Though He was accused falsely by witnesses (Psalm 35:11, Mark 14:57-58) He remained silent (Isaiah 53:7). As prophesied, people spat at, mocked and hit Jesus (Isaiah 50:6) and hated Him without cause (Psalm 35:19).

Jesus died as a substitute for our sins (Isaiah 53:5) and the Apostle Paul states this in Romans 5:6:

"Christ died for us while we were still weak. We were living against God, but at the right time Christ died for us."

Isaiah 53:12 told that He was treated like a criminal and He was in fact hung between two thieves (Mark 15:27-28).

Zechariah prophesied how he would be pierced with a spear (Zechariah 12:10) and in John 20:27 Jesus told His disciple Thomas to touch His pierced side. Jesus Christ received all kinds of insult and mockery as Psalm 22 states.

Giving Jesus vinegar was also prophesied in Psalm 69:21 and His prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34) was in Psalm 109:4:

“Father forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing.”

His bones remaining unbroken (Psalm 34:20), lots being cast for His clothes (Psalm 22:17-18) and His burial in a rich man’s tomb (Isaiah 53:9) were all prophesied and actually happened as foretold.

David also prophesied:

“... you will not leave me in the grave. You will not let your holy one rot.”
(Psalm 16:10)

“But God will save my life. He will take me from the grave.”
(Psalm 49:15)

His ascension was also prophesied in Psalm 68:18.

As we have shown above, Jesus’ birth, ministry, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension were all prophesied. The New Testament witnesses the fulfillment of all these prophecies too.

When we study these prophecies and their exact fulfillment, we cannot help but praise God and give thanks to Him that the planned redemption was thoroughly and faithfully accomplished.

Closing questions

Read Isaiah 53:5-6:

1. Why was Jesus wounded? Why was Jesus crushed? Why was Jesus punished?

2. Imagine that you knew from young the date of your death. Further, you knew you were going to die a brutal, humiliating, painful and torturous death. What would that do to you? What do you think it was like for Jesus to know and have to anticipate all that was going to happen in his painful and humiliating whipping and crucifixion?

Application in our daily lives

1. When we are telling others about Jesus and explaining mankind's obligation to serve Him, it could be helpful to compare the prophetic words about Him in the Old Testament with their actual fulfilment in the New Testament.

GOD'S CREATION I

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

1. Today's scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:31 -33

2. Key Verse: Isaiah 43:7

"Bring to me all the people who are mine. I made them for my glory. I formed them; I made them."

3. Reference scripture: Psalm 19: 1-6 Isaiah 45:18

4. Objectives

a. To discover God's purpose in creation, In other words to discover the meaning of life.

b. To recognize that all things were created by God and we're responsible to proclaim this truth to the whole world!

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. Whose glory should the Christians live for? (1 Corinthians 10: 31)

2. Who is "I" in today's scripture? (1 Corinthians 10: 31-33)

3. As His children, what should we offer to God? (Isaiah 43:21)

Today's Message

In the beginning God created the sky and the earth (Genesis 1:1). After He had created all things by His Word, God created human beings to rule over them (Genesis 1:27). Humanistic evolutionists deny the idea of creation by God, but His answer to them is;

"There are things about God that people cannot see – his eternal power and all the things that make him God, but since the beginning of the world those things have been easy to understand, they are made clear by what God has made, so people have no excuse for the bad things they do." (Romans 1:20)

Why did God create all things? What is the purpose of His creations?

The Purpose of God's Creation

God created all things for man. This is clearly shown when we look into the order of creation:

1. The mineral kingdom- including the air or "firmament" (AV), the earth, the sea, and so forth.

2. The vegetable kingdom

3. The animal kingdom

4. Then God created man to rule over all of His creation.

God revealed Himself to man by creating a beautiful world for him and giving that created world to him to enjoy and dominate. After He created the world, God specially provided the Garden of Eden for man where there was no destruction, no hurt, no lack or want, and only abundance.

However, when Adam and Eve transgressed they were driven out of the garden and began to experience a cursed life and spiritual death.

God later sent Jesus Christ to atone for man's sins. To save man, Jesus suffered on the cross. By this act His purpose of creation was then able to be fulfilled. Only those born of God

through Jesus Christ can truly fulfill God's creation purpose. (John 1:1-18, 1Peter 1:3).



As stated above, God created all things for man. Though man sinned and was removed from the garden, God sent Jesus Christ to suffer on the cross to restore man's rightful place with God – thereby fulfilling His purpose of creation. Unbelievers trust all the imperfect and mortal things of the world that pass away with time, but mistrust those of us who have found the purpose of God's creation through the grace of Jesus Christ.

King David confessed in Psalm 20:7:

“Some trust in chariots, others in horses. But we trust the Lord our God.”

This great God pours out His grace and love, unto those who only trust Him. For those who trust Him truly desire to be a part of building His Kingdom on earth and want to do His will. (Matthew 6:33).

The Purpose of God's Creation of Man

Many people - especially middle-aged non-believers who have lived half their lives - are seized with fear, doubt and hopelessness as they still do not know the meaning of life. They have struggled day and night with many goals for a better life, but even if they have achieved those things they still cannot help but feel emptiness in their lives. They constantly question, "What is the real meaning of life after all?" There is no doubt that Blessed is the man who finds meaning and purpose in his life.

But what is the purpose and meaning of the creation of man?

Every believer knows God created man for His glory (Isaiah 43:7)

When God created Adam, He wanted to receive glory through him. He wanted Adam to give worship, praise and glory to God for the blessings that had been bestowed him.

Before Adam's fall, he never worried about what to eat and wear, or where to sleep, as his good God provided every need for him. Jesus Christ further affirmed that all needs of humanity are God's business, but our priority is seeking the good of His kingdom and doing what He wants. (Matthew 6:31-33)

God is Love (1 John 4:8). To love, there must be a recipient to love and God made man His recipient. So our God - the God of Love - created man to share His abundant love through fellowship and communion.

Adam and Eve however, disobeyed God and were cast out of the Garden of Eden. But God provided a way to restore man. He did this through the cross of Jesus so that man would have fellowship with Him again.

Finally, the ultimate responsibility of man is to worship, praise and glorify God. He wants us to enjoy Him and be grateful for the gift of life that He's given. This brings much pleasure to Him.

"Always be happy. Never stop praying. Give thanks whatever happens, that is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Closing questions

1. For whom did God create all things? (Find answer from today's message)
2. By whom were all things created? (Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-4)
3. In one sense God is vulnerable to us in that we are able to bring Him pleasure. The famous Christian Olympian gold medallist and later missionary to China-Eric Liddell-stated "I believe God made me for a purpose. But He also made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure..." Have you ever sensed His pleasure in your life? What were you doing at the time?

Application in our daily lives

1. Examine your present life and discuss with each other whether we are truly living a life that glorifies our Heavenly Father.

GOD'S CREATION II

THE ORDER OF CREATION

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 1: 1-31

2. Key Verse: Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the sky and the earth."

3. Reference scripture: Psalm 104 Hebrews 11:3

4. Objectives

a. To understand that all the worlds are created by the Word of God.

b. To allow the study of each stage of God's creation and learn how it related in parallel spiritual truths to our daily living in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions to answer before Connect Group:

1. What was the status of the earth in Genesis 1:2?

2. In what order did God create all things? (Genesis 1:3-31)

3. How did God feel about His creation? (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31)

Today's Message

God Created All by His Word

"In the beginning God created the sky and the earth."

(Genesis 1:1)

God is the Creator of all things and He created all things by His Word.

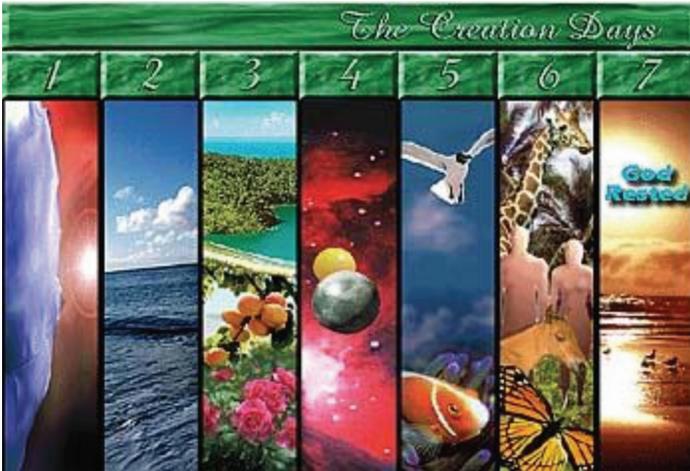
This "Word" is referring to Jesus Christ.

"Before the world began, there was the Word, The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through Him. Nothing was made without Him." (John 1:1-3)

Jesus Christ is "the Word of God" that created all things, judged the world and redeemed it. He became a man and lived among us (John 1:1-14). He not only created heaven, earth and all things therein, He also continues to sustain all of His creation by His Word. He is also our Jesus; our Saviour Who shed His blood on the cross to redeem us from our sins.

The Order of God's Creation

God's creation was divided into seven stages. By studying each stage of God's creation, we will learn more about God our Creator, and also glean some principles that are applicable today.



Stage 1 – the creation of light

Light was created first. It lit the chaotic and dark earth. Spiritual enlightenment can illuminate the undeveloped, void and dark world of today. The Bible teaches us that this light is Jesus Christ (John 1:9).

Therefore, when we received Jesus Christ into our hearts and are enlightened by His light, we also receive spiritual enlightenment in our lives. This light can dispel the darkness and voids of our lives and homes.

Stage 2 – the creation of the firmament

Firmament (AV) means the air or sky. When God divided the waters, the sky came into view. Likewise, when the sea of our insecurities and fears is divided, our faith will burst forth. Like the sky above that spreads boundlessly above us.

We too can have boundless faith in our hearts that can produce astounding miracles.

Stage 3 - the appearance of dry land

God spoke the Word and dry land appeared. Just as God created dry land which then produced all kinds of grass, herbs and trees in abundance, God's blessing is manifested through abundant fruit-bearing in our lives. When we receive direction from the Lord and walk in obedience to fulfill His plan for us, we become the bearers of fruit. Each fruit and vegetable grows from only one seed, yet each fruit and vegetable contains more than one seed, showing God's generosity and overflowing abundance to all of His children.

Stage 4 – the creation of the sun, moon and stars

God created the sun, moon and stars to indicate day and night, differentiate four seasons of the year and to give us the ability to create dates. This teaches us that God values time; holds it in high esteem. It shows us there is an eternity, and every day that passes brings us one day closer to that eternity. To discern and work out all matters and obstacles of life wisely and successfully we must fully understand that we only pass this way once. We must take advantage of every opportunity to walk with God and fulfill his plan for our lives.

Stage 5 – the creation of all animals and birds after their kind

God created all living creatures, blessing them with the miracle of multiplying in their own kind. We do not have to think twice to realize each creature mates with its own breed, giving reassurance of a God who has a divine plan for His infinite creation. We should be filled with a sense of awe when we look at God's riches: The sky, sea and earth all made for mankind. A gratefulness for God's abundant blessings is necessary for achieving a successful and creative life.

Stage 6 – the creation of man

After everything was made beautiful for man, God then made man and placed him in His beautiful world.

Man was made in God's image and likeness which suggests man has the miraculous ability to know who his Maker is. He will never have lasting peace and happiness until he is able to communicate with his Maker. Man also has an infinite potential. Man is a creature that can be successful in the Lord God. We were destined to become rulers, to rule over all things (Genesis 1:28). We are therefore blessed and should take an affirmative and positive attitude towards life.

Stage 7 - rest

The final stage of all creation was peace and rest. After creation, God rested. After a day of work, God gave us night to take time for rest. If any man does not possess true peace and rest in his heart, his life becomes meaningless. As we have discussed above, through application of the work of God's creation we can lead our daily lives experiencing the good will of our God.

The Results of God's Creation

Having reviewed God's creation in seven stages, we know there is nothing imperfect or incomplete in God's creation. God is perfect and good - His creation is the same. God saw it was good when He completed each stage of creation. By saying that His creation was good, God Himself thus witnessed His completeness and perfection of His creation.

Closing questions

1. Do you feel that Christians do enough to protect and look after God's creation?
2. Does God care about the plants and animals? Matthew 6:26-30
Proverbs 12:10
3. What is the order of importance of living things to the Lord: animals, plants and mankind? The verse in question 2 should be a clue. It would also be beneficial to look at Genesis 1:27.

Application in our daily lives

1. Share any personal experience which touched you when you saw the glory of God manifested in His creation.
2. Let's not forget that all the little pleasures of life like a pretty flower, a gentle sea breeze and the sense of taste , are all gifts from God. Let's give thanks to our Heavenly Father for each one of the "little" blessings of life

GOD'S CREATION III

THE CREATION OF MAN

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 1: 26-28, 2:18-25

2. Key Verse: Genesis 2:7

“Then the Lord God took dust from the ground and formed man from it. The Lord breathed the breath of life into the man's nose. And the man becomes a living person.”

3. Reference scripture: Psalm 8, James 3:8-10

4. Objectives

a. By studying the way God created man, we'll learn how man is made in the image and likeness of God.

b. We'll ponder the true meaning of the phrase “likeness of God” so that we can know the true value of a human being.

c. We'll learn some principles by comparing man's status before and after the fall.

Questions to answer before Connect Group:

1. Of what material did God form man? (Genesis 2:7)

2. What is the nature of God? (Genesis 1:27, Ephesians 4:24)

3. Who are “we” in Genesis 1:26?

Today's Message

“How did man come to exist in this world? What is the origin of the human race?”

This has always been the fundamental query of man.

It is then almost always followed by “What am I living for?”

Man has always striven to find the answers but to this day, not one human being has been capable of receiving or supplying the answers.

We are given the answer only when God reveals it to us through His Word of truth. Let us therefore study the Word of God and find out from where man came.

Man was made in God's image and likeness

All things were created by the Word of God.

When He commanded, "Let there be light!" light came. When He spoke, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night," it was done.

All living creatures in the sea, sky, grass and trees were created by the Word of God. It was only man that God did not create by His Word. On the sixth day of His creation, God took the dust from the ground, formed man and breathed life into his nostrils to make him a living soul in the image and likeness of Himself.



In Hebrew, "to breathe" is "neshamah" meaning energy, breath, wind or spirit. When God used his own divine breath to make man, it meant man was distinguished from His other creations. The "living soul" refers specifically to the immaterial part of man. Man's spirit was born when God breathed life into his nostrils. It is significant to understand that the material body of dust became a body of flesh and blood that was very much alive. Man was made in this extraordinary manner, and was also made to reign over everything in the earth created by God.

How can we prove man is made after the image and likeness of God?

Let us now study briefly the five characteristics that prove man's likeness to God.

1. A spirit. Man can have communion with God because he has God's spirit. God is a spiritual being. Man is also a spiritual being, which proves he is made after the likeness of God.

2. A moral being. As a moral being, man was made in the likeness of God. Man discerns good from evil in the light of ethics and the sense of morality that was put into his conscience. But in the animal world morality does not exist. God is good (Psalm 119:68). God is right (Psalm 33:4).

God is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4). These scripture verses tell us much about God's moral attributes. And the fact that man is also a moral being proves that he is made in the likeness of god.

3. A rational being. Animals act on instinct while man acts on rationale. The fountain of man's rationale is called man's mind or soul which holds all of his intellectual faculties. Man without rationale is like an animal. God is also a God of knowledge and wisdom (Job 37:16, Romans 11:33). Because man was made in the likeness of God, he is able to develop God-given intellect and advance in the culture that he enjoys now.

4. An eternal being. Man is different from animals in that he will live eternally. That is why man's spirit is left with only one choice at the time of his physical death: whether he should live eternally in hell or in heaven. Man's eternal living is one likeness of God.

5. A being with power and dominion. God created all things and He puts them under His control (1 Corinthians 15:27). When God created Adam in His likeness He also gave Adam authority to govern all things (Genesis 1:26, Psalm 8:6).

As studied, man was made in the likeness of God by divine counsel (Genesis 1:27), but after Adam sinned he lost fellowship with God. To redeem him God had to send His only Son to pay the ransom that God demanded for Adam's sin – death. Jesus went to the cross to pay for the sins of all mankind. So one should consider - What was Adam like before he transgressed?

The status of man before the fall

1. He was sinless. Adam did not know sickness, death, shame or the power to do evil and be evil (Genesis 3:14-19, 23-24). Because of his sins and the sins of succeeding generations, he accumulated these and more. When we are born again through the blood of Jesus Christ, the stench of sickness and death will be removed for us.

2. He had power and dominion. Before his transgression, Adam ruled over the fish of the sea, fowl of the air, cattle of the earth, and every other living thing upon earth as well as all the earth (Genesis 1:26, 2:15, 20). Adam's power of dominion was a creative power. He was able to not only keep all things on earth but also to improve them. When we become "new creatures" by believing in Jesus Christ, we can be restored

to having dominion over our circumstances. We gain power in prayer to improve them too (Psalm 8:6; Ephesians 1:17).

3. He was harmonious. Before Adam rebelled against God, his life was a life of perfect harmony. . He was also one with nature and he had harmony and unity with Eve. However, most of all, he could speak directly with God.

When we are born again and become new creatures in Jesus Christ, we are declared righteous as if we had never sinned - like Adam (Isaiah 1:18). We will have control over all things on earth related to our lives and circumstances, (Psalm 8:6), as well as enjoy a beautiful life filled with harmony.

Closing questions

1. After whose likeness did the apostle James say we are made? (James 3:9)
2. Man is made in the likeness of God. What is the nature of God? (John 4:24)
3. In the garden Adam had face-to-face and close fellowship with the Lord. That privilege was lost after he and Eve sinned. This privilege has been made available again for all those who repent of being in control of their lives making Jesus their boss. Why do you think that many Christians settle on a distant relationship with the Lord when they can be much closer? Is it feelings of unworthiness, laziness, wanting to hold on to things they know are not pleasing to the Lord, not understanding that the Lord longs for that close relationship or something else?

Application in our daily lives

1. We are glorious creatures of God, made especially by His love. Therefore I urge you to confess to yourself every day, "To my Heavenly Father, I am an important person; therefore I am important."
2. We are made in God's image and likeness. Let us ask ourselves if we are living spiritual, moral and rational lives. Discuss with each other whether you are really enjoying your eternal life and your power of control over your circumstances.

GOD'S CREATION IV

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 2:8-15

2. Key Verse: Genesis 2:15

"The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden to care for it and work for it."

3. Reference scripture: Isaiah 51:3

4. Objectives

a. To discover what blessings God bestowed on man.

b. By studying the Garden of Eden - which was whole and perfect - we'll capture the true goal for our lives.

Questions to Answer before Connect Group

1. Who planted the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 2:8)

2. What kind of trees did God plant in the Garden? What were the two special trees? (Genesis 2:9)

3. What was the first responsibility of the first man, Adam? (Genesis 2:15)

Today's Message

What was the initial state of the Garden of Eden when God gave it to the first man, Adam? What was Adam's life like in the garden?

Why did God place the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden?

What should a non-Christian do to restore all the abundant blessings of the Garden in his own life?

The Meaning of the Four Rivers in Eden

The Garden of Eden was perfect in every respect. The trees were sights to behold and were good sources of food. Water was sufficient from rivers running in all four directions and the land was rich with natural resources. Nothing was lacking for man to live there. The Greek version translated Eden as "paradise", meaning "garden of joy". However, it is the literal meaning of the four rivers in Eden that show us how good and wholesome our God is.

The first river was “Pishon” which flowed around the entire land of Havilah. The land produced gold, bdellium and onyx stone. From the beginning, God provided abundant treasures in His garden because He wanted man to live a life of plenty.

The second river “Gihon” means “to rise above”. God wanted man - whom He had made especially in His likeness - to rise above all creatures and reign over them. Even in today’s world, God wants us to rise above any difficulty, remove ourselves from the bondage of sin and shake off the greed of the world through the grace of Jesus’ blood and life in the kingdom of God.

The third river was “Tigris”. When the people of Israel were captive in Babylon, Daniel - the great servant of God - fasted and prayed by the side of the Tigris. It is there that he received the great revelation from God about the last days (Daniel 10:1-9). Thus the Tigris may symbolize our meeting place with God for fellowship with Him. It was God’s intention to enjoy eternal fellowship with Adam and Eve.

The fourth river was “Euphrates” meaning “to be great”. Great civilizations have always risen in the vicinity of the Euphrates. God desired Adam and Eve to multiply and flourish to bring great worlds to Him.

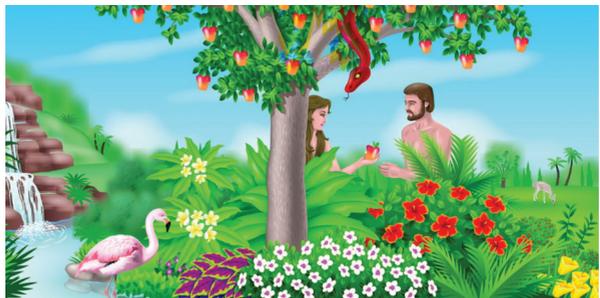
The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

God gave Adam all the abundance of the Garden of Eden and blessed him with intelligence to take care of it. Adam was given but one commandment:

“Do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

But why would God provide him a tree of such significance, then order him not to eat of it?

The tree was given as the “measure” of Adam’s obedience towards God. After God bestowed upon Adam this amazing blessing, He gave him the smallest commandment to not eat from it. It was



a request from God who had thus far, given Adam everything unconditionally. From this, we observe that God wants an obedient heart from man. It speaks more than any other magnificent offering (1 Samuel 15:22). God wanted faith and obedience from Adam and to measure this, the tree of knowledge of good and evil was placed in the Garden.

Likewise, today, the same 'yoke' and 'burden' that Jesus requires of us, is not a heavy load at all. It is as simple and light as this tree of knowledge of good and evil was to Adam – He merely wants our faith in and obedience to Him. Without obedience there is no faith and without faith there is no obedience. This is the law of God's creation from the days of the Garden of Eden.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil also shows us that God gave Adam a free will and wanted him to use it. God does not want mechanical obedience or faith from man because He is a very personal God. God wants us to seek Him with all our heart and with all our soul. The tree of knowledge of good and evil and the command to not eat from it, gave God a path for Adam to utilize his own free will. If Adam were to obey Him, it was because he wanted to, not because he had to.

This free will given to Adam was so absolute he could choose to obey or disobey God's word. The gift of free will and choice shows God's love for man. God desired Adam's willing obedience and love towards him, wanted it to spring truly out of Adam's heart. In the same way, He desires the same of all mankind to give him the faith and obedience that comes only from our hearts.

The Restoration of the Garden of Eden

Today, through the cross of Jesus Christ, we can, in a metaphorical sense restore the Garden of Eden in our hearts! To repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ is to fill our hearts and our daily living with the first blessings of Eden. As our inner man is made alive we are given life in the Lord more abundantly.

From the four rivers that flowed out of Eden, we learn that there should be springs of living water flowing out of our lives. These are the rivers of living water that Jesus promised (John 7:38). Whomsoever believes in Jesus will experience the overflowing of the river Pishon or natural

blessings, the river Nile or continuous spiritual growth, the river Tigris or communion and fellowship with God and the river Euphrates, a deeper and wider more meaningful life. Today, God invites us back to the Garden of Eden through the powerful blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

By fulfilling our duty of obeying and following only Jesus Christ, we may restore the abundant blessings of the Garden of Eden and enjoy an ever more blessed life in the Lord.

Closing questions

1. Was it necessary for God to give Adam and Eve a “thou shalt not”?
2. It has been said that after our conversion to Jesus we immediately enter a probationary period similar to what Adam and Eve experienced. Our probation is not to determine our entrance into heaven but to determine what role in ruling and reigning we’ll have with Him in eternity. How can we get through this probationary period successfully?
3. Reflect on the meaning of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What is today’s equivalent of Adam and Eve’s eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Application in our daily lives

1. Search your heart. Are you living in Eden, with its full and rich blessings?

GOD'S CREATION V

THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 3:1-7

2. Key Verse: 1 John 2:16

"These are the evil things in the world; wanting things to please our sinful selves, wanting the sinful things we see, being too proud of the things we have. But none of these things come from the Father. All of them come from the world."

3. Reference scripture: 1 John 3:14

4. Objectives

a. To remind ourselves of the nature of Satan and how he tempted Adam and Eve, remembering to always resist the devil in Jesus' name.

b. To learn from Jesus' example on how to combat temptation when it comes our way.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. Of all the animals made by God, which animal was the most clever? (Genesis 3:1)

2. What was Eve's answer to the snake's question? (Genesis 3:3)

3. What were the consequences of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

Today's Message

God established a covenant with man whom He made in His likeness. God gave him the words of both blessings and warnings simultaneously: If he obeyed, God would bless him, but if he disobeyed, God would punish him. Adam, tempted by Satan, chose not to keep the command. In doing so, he broke the covenant.

Today's message will help us understand Satan's temptation and how Adam fell.

Satan's Cunning Temptation

Satan was originally an angel in heaven. However, he disobeyed and rebelled against God, and he was then cast out of heaven. When Satan saw Adam and Eve enjoying communion and fellowship with God, he decided to use the snake to tempt Eve. He wanted to separate Adam

and Eve from God and there are reasons why Satan cunningly and specifically targeted Eve instead of Adam.

Eve was not given the direct command from God forbidding them to eat the fruit: "... but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:17)

Eve was instead told of God's commandment indirectly by Adam. Therefore it was easier for Satan to convince her, making her doubt God's command. It is the same with our faith in God. If we have no direct personal experience with God we'll reluctantly attend church under pressure from family members or neighbours. Thus like Eve, we may easily succumb to Satan's temptation.

Satan also realized that Eve was taking possession of Adam's heart. On this account, Satan approached and lured Eve whom Adam loved most, knowing Adam would be more likely to forsake God in his love for Eve. Today, it is still not uncommon for Satan to tempt us into sin through the people or things we love most.

Three Doubts that Satan Imparted

In God's eyes, it was a grave sin for man to talk with Satan about God's command to not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God's absolute authority should never become the object of man's disputes. As far as our faith is concerned, there is and should be no place for argument on our part. In God, there is only absolute obedience or absolute disobedience to any of His commands. But Satan raised three doubts in Eve.

Satan made Eve doubt God's righteousness. Satan said (AV), "... your eyes shall be opened." Eve was made to think God was hiding something better from both Adam and her. Dissatisfaction arose in Eve's mind, and that led to her disobedience to God.

Secondly, Satan caused Eve to doubt God's truthfulness: "Did God really say that you must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)

Satan deviated from God's word by saying "You will not die", but God had clearly stated, "You will die". Eve began to believe that God had

refrained from telling Adam and her, the truth. She began to think that God had deceived both of them.

Finally, Satan made Eve think that God had forbidden the fruit because of His jealousy that man would become like God if he ate the fruit. Through this, Satan instilled doubt into Eve regarding the holiness of God.

Once these doubts formed in Eve's heart, the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (the symbol of God's absolute authority) began to be an object she lusted for. When doubt took hold, the fruit began to look much more appetizing and enticing. Eve began to believe that the fruit could give her wisdom. Eve's heart had been full of obedience, faith, orderliness and harmony, but when doubt entered her heart, she began to see the fruit as an object of her lust of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16 (AV)). Eve eventually gave in to her doubt, touched the fruit, picked and ate it. In this one action, she lost the blessing of obedience.

Satan whom so cunningly deceived Eve continues to tempt us all daily by whispering, "Did God really say that?" Henceforth, when Satan slyly comes and asks the same question of you and me, let us recognize it is Satan. Let us bind him in the name of Jesus Christ and preserve our soul by crucifying our lust of the flesh.

Man, After Eating and Forbidden Fruit

The moment Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil against God's sovereign command, they not only lost their spiritual life but they also lost their normal and rational power. They fell under judgment in the midst of fear and disgrace. What were the consequences of their disobedience?

A sense of guilt, shame and fear began to smolder within them. When sin came and their spirits were darkened, they were separated from God eternally. Destruction followed in their human relationship and also in the relation between man and nature. Where this is sin, there is separation.

The fall of Adam and Eve was a complete one. Their spiritual, mental and moral characters were wholly and totally altered and polluted. They lost all faculty of discerning good and evil (Isaiah 5:20) and because of this total fall, they became separated from God.

This fall then exercised its influence over every aspect of man. All men are guilty of sin through Adam's transgression (Romans 3:9). No one can save himself through his own effort or any other virtuous acts. For mankind, the fall of Adam brought absolute despair.

It must be remembered that all mankind's miseries were caused by our first parents' disobedience to God. Because of their hurried engrossment in seeking self interest instead of God's interest, they lost the glory of God.



Because of their greed, they gained only the opposite of what they originally and actually wanted. They fell into degradation, guilt and punishment. Until mankind accepts salvation through the grace of Jesus' cross, it is doomed to remain in absolute despair.

Closing questions

1. Many years after Adam lived on the earth, the second Adam - Jesus - had to go through the devil's temptation as well. How can we apply His method in our lives? (Matthew 4:1-11) This is the perfect time to apply WWJD!
2. What was the fallout of Adam's transgression on the human race? (Romans 5:12, 6:23)
3. What did Satan plant in Eve's mind? (Find answer from today's message.)

Application in our daily lives

1. Satan attacks us through our weak areas. By inwardly digesting the Word of God and praying diligently we can hold fast against his plots and plans.

GOD'S CREATION VI

THE JUDGEMENT

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 3:8-24

2. Key Verse: Romans 6:23

“When someone sins, he earns what sin pays – death. But God gives us a free gift – life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. Reference scripture: Romans 5:16, 1 Timothy 5:24

4. Objectives

a. Learning that sin brings judgment. Let's avoid sin at all cost.

b. Appreciating that the wages of sin can only be paid by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Let's always give thanks to Jesus Christ who paid this debt on our behalf.

c. To understand what God's righteous punishment is for sin.

Questions to answer before Connect Group:

1. What did God ask Adam after he sinned? (Genesis 3:9)

2. What was God's punishment for the snake, Satan? (Genesis 3:14-15)

3. What will happen to the flesh of man when he dies? (Genesis 3:19)

Today's Message

We have learned in the previous lesson how our first parents Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, broke God's command and transgressed. Every transgression will inevitably be punished. (1 Timothy 5:24) Adam and Eve were judged for their transgression. The snake which tempted Eve was judged too.

Man's Responsibility for Sin

Many people ask why man should be accountable for sin when Satan actually induced man to fall into sin. However the Bible clearly shows that the liability for sin lies in man (Romans 3:26, 6:23).



Adam and Eve, by misusing their God-given free will, obeyed Satan instead of God. God did not tempt them but they left God of their own free will and were tempted. God, according to His goodwill, allows us to be tested for our growth but He never tempts us with evil (James 1:13).

The Bible makes a distinction between temptations and tests: Temptation, in the Greek language “peirazo”, is given by Satan, and the other, “dokimazo”, is the test from God through which our faith in Him grows one step further. While the test of “dokimazo” brings us more abundant grace and blessing from God, “peirazo” from the devil only hurts and seriously mauls us.

Adam and Eve gave birth to humanities sin when they were tempted with evil (peirazo), and dragged along improper desires. All sin inevitably demands that man pay its price - eternal damnation. In no way is man free from the consequences – the burden of punishment.

However, our merciful God provided the way of redemption for us, as is evident through the animal sacrifices for sin in the Old Testament. As for us today, we can receive the grace of redemption by repenting our sins and accepting Jesus because He died on the cross bearing all the sins of mankind.

The Judgment of God

God loved man and established a covenant with him, but man broke the covenant and fell into sin. Accordingly, God Who is righteous had to judge the sinners – the snake, the woman, Adam and also the creatures on earth. We'll take a look to see how each one was judged by God.

a. Judgment for the snake

The snake, a vehicle used by Satan in tempting man, received the most severe punishment from God. Though the snake was merely used as a tool by Satan, it was judged most harshly because the snake symbolized all evil forces. Look at the verses in Genesis 3:14 – 15 about God's judgment for the snake:

“The Lord God said to the snake, “Because you did this, a curse will be put on you. You will be cursed more than any tame or wild animal. You will crawl on your stomach, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your descendants

and her descendant will be enemies. Her child will crush your head. And you will bite his heel.”

b. Judgment for the woman

“Then God said to the woman, “I will cause you to have much trouble when you are pregnant. And when you give birth to children, you will experience great pain. You will greatly desire your husband, but he will rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)

Through this verse, we perceive that originally, the pain of conception and delivery in childbirth was not meant to be severe for women. But after Eve’s sin, conception and delivery would be accompanied by pain, danger and even risk to life. Furthermore, as a consequence of her sin, women were sentenced to lead a life forever pining for affection.

c. Judgement for Adam

“Then God said to the man, “You listened to what your wife said. And you ate fruit from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from. So I will put a curse on the ground. You will have to work very hard for food. In pain you will eat its food all the days of your life. The ground will produce thorns and weeds for you. And you will eat the plants of the field; you will sweat and work hard for your food. Later you will return to the ground because you were taken from it. You are dust. And when you die, you will return to the dust.” (Genesis 3:17-19)

d. Judgment for nature

“Then God said to the man, “You listened to what your wife said. And you ate fruit from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from. So I will put a curse on the ground, you will have to work very hard for food. In pain you will eat its food all the days of your life. The ground will produce thorns and weeds for you. And you will eat the plants of the field.” (Genesis 3:17-18)

Before they fell, Adam and Eve had been masters of their own circumstances. When they fell, they lost the mastery over those circumstances and they were judged. All things under their rule were thus judged too. As a result, the fruitful soil of the earth changed and became a barren land. The land previously covered with beautiful fruit-bearing trees was now cloaked in thorns and thistles.

Through one man's sin, his circumstances and land were cursed and the entire world continues to suffer for it. As Paul summarized in Romans 8:18-23: Everything God made has since been waiting to be set free from that curse.

Our God judged the transgressors with His justice. The judgement was manifested as punishment. God not only judged man but also provided His redemptive plan to deliver him from transgression, judgement and death.

Closing questions

1. In just one word, what is the consequence of sin? (Romans 6:23)
2. When you live the way the world lives, whom are you trying to please? (Ephesians 2: 2-3)
3. What is the difference between a temptation and a test? How do we discern the distinction?

Application in our daily lives

1. God is good but He is also a God of righteousness. Let us share with each other how we were corrected by Him when we stubbornly insisted on walking our own way.
2. Let us seriously reflect – why should the sinless Jesus hang on the cross?

GOD'S CREATION VII

THE FORETELLING OF SALVATION

1. Today's scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

2. Key Verse: Genesis 3:15

"I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your descendants and her descendants will be enemies. Her child will crush your head. And you will bite his heel."

3. Reference scripture: Luke 1:69-71

4. Objectives

a. To remember our God is a God of love as well as a God of righteousness.

b. To understand the fact that when we believe in Jesus Christ we will be restored to enjoying the blessings of the Garden of Eden that were once lost by Adam and Eve's sin.

c. To bolster our trust in our God who promised redemption and fulfilled His promise.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. What kind of God is the one true God? (Ephesians 2:4-5)

2. How did we live before we believed in Jesus Christ? (Ephesians 2:2-3)

Today's Message

In the previous lessons, we studied the purpose of God's creation, the creation of the universe and of man, the blessings of the Garden of Eden, the temptation of Satan and man's fall followed by the judgement of God.

In this lesson, we'll examine the love of our God through the indication of His redemption plan to Adam and Eve, despite their transgressions and judgment.

God's Love is Eternal Love

God shared His love with Adam and Eve but they transgressed by disobeying and hiding themselves from His face.

But God, rich in mercy, sought them out and asked them, "Where are you?" Because of His love, God suffered too; He tolerated and called them again even though He could have destroyed them as the price for their sin (Genesis 3:7-12).

Today, God still visits us when we are still dead in sin and calls our names. God hates sin and He can destroy all of us sinners instantaneously. Yet, His love is an eternal and gracious love and He still calls us through Jesus Christ.

God also made coats from the skins of the animals, clothing Adam and Eve. The sinless animals, which were killed to provide a covering for the shame of the transgressors, provide a picture of the future death of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God:

“One man sinned, and so death ruled all people because of that one man. But now some people accept God’s full grace and the great gift of being made right with him. They will surely have true life and rule through the one man, Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17)

The Flaming Sword and The Tree of Life

When Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden, God stationed angels to guard the entrance with a flaming sword which flashed in every direction. It was put there to keep Adam and Eve away from the tree of life, rather than to destroy the garden.

This shows that God intended to return to us the blessings of the garden and the tree of life. In reality, God allowed us - through Jesus’ sacrificial death - to have eternal life.

Judgement always follows sin and in judgement there is always punishment. The sinner deserves judgement and should receive punishment. Yet God did not throw us away to the wrath of judgement and dire punishment, but rather He determined to save us from these. His redemption was fulfilled at the cross by His only Son, Jesus Christ. Anyone who believes in Him will be saved and will receive forgiveness and peace with God.

We should give thanks to God that we are able to be under the cross of Calvary. In Jesus who died, there is forgiveness of our sins, redemption from punishment.

The Prophecy about Christ’s Redemption

The Bible records the foretelling of God’s redemptive plan right after man fell and sinned. In Genesis 3:15 God said that the woman’s descendant,

or child, would bruise the snake's head. Here, the child means Jesus Christ, as He was conceived in a woman by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30-35).

As we have seen, God's covering of Adam and Eve with the animal skins symbolically shows the coming death of Jesus Christ - The innocent Lamb - to forgive our sins and cover our iniquities.

God also hinted at the coming redemption through the blessing He bestowed upon Abraham. The blessing that flows to all believers through Abraham is above all the blessing of salvation – being justified through faith. This made Abraham the forefather and blessing of all believers.

God not only promised salvation to our first parents and Abraham, but also through the mouth of His servant-prophets. It's the main and oft repeated motif of the entire Bible. All of the prophets foretold that the promised redemption would be fulfilled through the Messiah (Isaiah 53:4-7). All the faithful servants of God in the Old Testament days longed for His coming.

As promised in His Word, God sent Jesus Christ into this earth, conceived by the Virgin Mary. Jesus became the sacrifice for the salvation of the entire human race by allowing Himself to pay the price of sin. His torn flesh became the bread of our eternal life. He shed His blood so that our sins would be forgiven, we could be declared righteous and rule with Jesus in eternity.

This salvation is open to all people by the grace of God. When anyone believes in Jesus he can receive salvation. The Bible shows God's redemptive plan and its fulfillment in precise detail. Therefore, whoever hears Christ's words, believes in them with his heart and confesses with his mouth, receives salvation and is led to the abundant blessings of God.



“They were shouting in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:10)

Closing questions

1. Before Adam and Eve sinned nothing had ever died. After they sinned God killed innocent animals to make a covering for their sins. How do you think it affected our first ancestors to see innocent life ended because of what they had done? Does this have any bearing on how we should feel about our sinfulness?
2. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Name Y hôshúa (Joshua) which means The LORD Saves. What did Jesus come to save us from: Sin? Satan? Or punishment in Hell? Explain your answer.

Application in our daily lives

1. When your heart is troubled and faced with many problems or when your body is sick, take time to think of the blood of Jesus on the cross, and be thankful that He paid the price for your redemption which includes your salvation from your sickness or problems.
2. Confess the following statement: “My being saved was ordained by God before the ages. I am a very important child to my Heavenly Father; He had chosen me and recognizes me as His child.”

MAN'S REBELLION I

ORIGINAL SIN AND SUBSEQUENT SIN

1. Today's scripture: 1 John 3:1-12

2. Key Verse: John 16:9

"He will prove to them about sin, because they don't believe in me."

3. Reference scripture: Romans 1:18-32

4. Objectives

a. Let us recognize that all of us are sinners before God.

b. Let us find out where sin originated, what its nature is and let us depart from sinful living.

c. Let us have a true knowledge of God. He is a holy God who hates sin.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. What did He do that shows the extent of His love for us? (1 John 3:1)

2. What hope should believers hold onto? (1 John 3:2-3)

3. What is sin? (1 John 3:4)

Today's Message

Is there anyone on earth who has no sin at all? Is it possible that somewhere exists a person who always thinks of good and does the right things all the time? The Bible steadfastly rejects this possibility. As the Scriptures say:

"There is no one without sin. None! There is no one who understands.

There is no one who looks to God for help. All have turned away.

Together, everyone has become evil. None of them does anything good."

(Romans 3:10-12)

Sin passed down from Adam

All people in this world are born sinners. Without exception, what made all of us become sinners?

Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and were cast out from the Garden of Eden. Since then, Adam became tainted with sin. Consequently, the sin of Adam's disobedience was handed down his lineage, ie the human race.

Perceiving this tragedy, the Psalmist lamented:

"I was brought into this world in sin. In sin my mother gave birth to me."

(Psalm 51:5)

This is what we call original sin. This original sin entered all of us through the first man Adam. Regardless of higher education, a rigorous discipline of the mind for virtuous and ethical living or even a fair and perfect social system, no one can escape the bondage of original sin:

“Sin came into the world because of what man did. And with sin came death. And this is why all men must die - because all men sinned.”
(Romans 5:12)

In particular, the original sin that came to this world through our forefather Adam was the sin of pride. It is this same pride that causes mankind to think that humans can be made to be good if we could only develop a perfect social system or better form of government. Being born of original sin like this, humanity has since been incessantly rebelling against God - always building the “Towers of Babel” of human pride.

Subsequent Sins

Sin is called “hamritia” in the Greek language, meaning “an arrow misses its target”. Likewise, by doing a deed that missed the Word of God, Adam transgressed - becoming self-centered. From then on all kinds of sins began to mushroom.

All sins have their roots in original sin. The once-missed arrows of obedience and faith are actually constantly planting small and big sins in our daily lives, it is kind of like a cancer!

When a person commits a sin in his daily living, he confirms that he is a servant of sin.

“Surely you know that when you give yourselves like slaves to obey someone, then you are really slaves of that person. The person you obey is your master. You can follow sin, or obey God. Sin brings spiritual death. But obeying God makes you right with Him.” (Romans 6:16)



Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we have been forgiven of original sin once and for all. We need only ask for God's forgiveness and receive His free gift of salvation! For those sins committed after our conversion to Jesus, the way of forgiveness is opened for us so that we can be forgiven when we come to him honestly confessing them to the Lord.

The Nature of Sin and Our Attitude Towards Sin

What is the nature of original sin and subsequent sins? How can we resist sin?

First, sin never leaves a sinner. Sin clings to a sinner, following him everywhere, never leaving him alone. Sin is only removed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Second, sin grows. There is an old Korean saying, "a thief of a needle becomes a thief of an ox." Small sins grow to become larger sins or increase on a bigger scale.

Third, sin separates man from God. Sin becomes a wall separating God and sinners. It cuts off man's communion and fellowship with God, and also the road which leads to blessings.

Fourth, sin eventually leads man to destruction. Sin makes man fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), finally leading him to death, the eternal punishment (Roman 6:23).

Sin is evil and miserable. For this reason we Christians struggle, at times, with great agony against it. (Hebrews 12:4). But if we sin we should immediately repent, confess our sins to our Heavenly Father and seek His forgiveness (1John 1:9).

Most of all, to keep ourselves from sin every day, we must always pray to our Lord, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name but deliver us from evil." If we meditate on our Father's holy name and obeying His Word fervently, His name will be hallowed through our daily lives, and we will sin less and less.

Closing questions

1. What do we make God to be if we say we don't sin anymore?
(1 John 1:8-10)
2. 1 John 1:8-10 seems to make forgiveness so easy. Is it that simple?
3. The Bible talks about after our salvation/conversion experience we Christians should be allowing Jesus to "clean us up" in a progressive manner. Have you been cooperating with Him? Are you becoming more like Him year by year?

Application in our daily lives

1. As far as Jesus is concerned His death at Calvary provided forgiveness for all our past, present and future sins as long as we come to Him, repent and receive that forgiveness. Therefore if we commit sins, let us repent immediately and seek forgiveness from the Lord God according to His Word. (1 John 1:9)
2. Mature Christians are acutely aware of their sins and are actively cooperating with the Holy Spirit to sin less and less. Search your heart to see if you have harboured any sins that you were negligent in confessing to the Lord.

MAN'S REBELLION II

CAIN, THE FIRST MURDERER AND ABEL, THE FIRST MARTYR

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 4:1-26

2. Key Verse: Genesis 4:7

"If you do good I will accept you. But if you do not do well, sin is ready to attack you. Sin wants you. But you must rule over it."

3. Reference scripture: Exodus 20:13

4. Objectives

a. To appreciate the tragic nature of sin through the crimes of Cain and Lamech. Let us exert our utmost effort to keep ourselves as far away from sin as possible.

b. To learn why Cain's altar of sacrifice was not accepted, and renew our right attitude towards God.

c. To understand the right attitude of worship towards God by studying Abel's altar.

Questions to be answered before Connect Group

1. What was Cain's offering and what was Abel's offering to God?

(Genesis 4:3-4)

a) _____ b) _____

2. How did Cain answer the Lord God when he was asked about Abel's whereabouts? (Genesis 4:9)

3. Whom did God give to Adam and Eve in the place of the murdered Abel? (Genesis 4:25-26)

Today's Message

So far, we have studied Adam and Eve and the curse that was placed on them when they were put out of the Garden of Eden as a result of their transgression. After that, Adam and Eve had to toil and sweat with many thorns and thistles to earn their meal. Our merciful Father allowed Adam and Eve to have children so that they could be fruitful and multiply. However, Cain born under Adam's curse murdered his brother Abel.

In this lesson, we'll study the first appearance of misery in the human race after Adam's fall from sin.

The First Murderer – Cain

Cain was the first son to Adam and Eve. Though Adam and Eve had been made perfect, Cain and Abel were born under the sin of their parents. Therefore, Cain and Abel were brought into this world with the blood of original sin already flowing through them. (Roman 5:12-14)

They would have known from their father - Adam - the sad story of mankind's failure. They would have also learned of the prophecy whereby man fallen from sin, would be redeemed by a woman's child crushing the head of the snake, Satan. (Genesis 3:1-21)

They were taught to build an altar before God, kill a lamb and shed its blood for a sacrificial offering. This was their confession of faith in God's redemptive plan. We see this clearly in God's actions by His killing animals to clothe Adam and Eve with the skins.

As time passed, Cain and Abel grew up and when they built their own households, they also built their own altars before God.

Cain offered God some food from the ground while Abel offered God the best parts of his best sheep. God accepted Abel's sacrifice but did not accept Cain's. (Leviticus 9:24, Judges 6:21, 1 Kings 18:38)

When Cain saw that God accepted only Abel's offering, he harbored a grudge and hatred against his younger brother. This led to Cain murdering him in the field. Abel's death became the first death of a human and also the first murder in human history. Cain became the first murderer and was cast out by God.

Cain's Altar Rejected

Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice but reject Cain's?

Cain's sacrifice was not accepted because firstly, he came to the Lord God with a disobedient heart.

Cain tried to force God to accept his own type of offering instead of following God's explicit instructions to bring a baby lamb. Cain's disregard for God's word is just like the religion of humanism today. Humanism carries an attitude of man-oriented worship with an overbearing attitude and action. It dares to use God merely as a vehicle for man's accomplishment.

Secondly, Cain's sacrifice was rejected because he denied being a sinner. Cain came before God with a mind filled with human pride. Instead of shedding the blood of a lamb as a token of his faith in God's promise, he brought what he thought was good wheat, grown out of the cursed ground. In other words, Cain thought that he could boldly stand before God with the fruit of his toil, instead of listening to the word of God and showing his faith in God's promise.

Finally, Cain's sacrifice was not accepted because he disregarded God's promise. He did not believe in Him when he promised to send the descendant of a woman, the baby "lamb" Jesus Christ, for the redemption of all men. He also showed disrespect towards God's command to bring a sacrificial lamb as a token of his faith in God's promise. His disbelief was made manifest through his behavior in the matter of sacrifice.

The Altar of the First Martyr, Abel

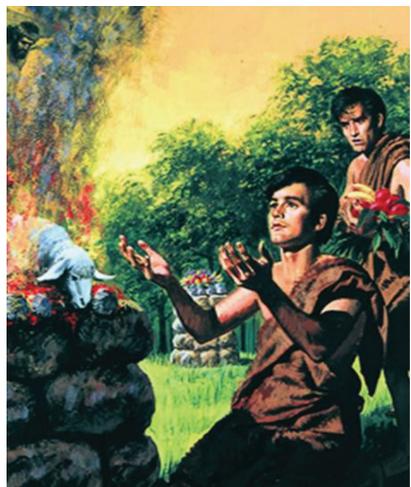
Why was God pleased with Abel's sacrifice?

Abel manifested a true faith in God with absolute obedience and trust in Him.

More importantly, Abel built the altar according to God's instructions to please God, not to please his own will. In other words, Abel offered a God-centered sacrifice, not a man or self-centered sacrifice.

By inference, Abel was confessing that he was a sinner and showed obedience and faith by offering a lamb on the altar. He believed that God would send someone, who would make right everything his parents had messed up.

Therefore God responded to Abel's offering and accepted it with pleasure.



Instead of seeing what Cain and Abel sacrificed on their altars, it is more important we examine the hearts of these altar builders. We need to see if their hearts were first set to do the will of God or to do their own will.

Are our actions according to God's or man's will, our own righteousness or Jesus' blood, disbelief in Jesus or believing in Him as our Saviour? We must carefully check our hearts and our faith because even today, the fire of the Holy Spirit of God will be present in our lives dependent upon our attitude and faith in God.

Therefore, remembering Jesus' warning, we should always take heed to have the right attitude toward our Heavenly Father.

“Not everyone who says that I am his Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. The only people who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the things that my Father in heaven wants.” (Matthew 7:21)

Closing questions

1. Are you a murderer?
2. Read Matthew 5:21-22 and 1 John 3:15 and answer the first question again. Why are you or are you not a murderer? Is there a little bit of Cain in all of us?
3. How does 1 Sam 15:22 relate to and add understanding to tonight's topic?

But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. (NIV)

Application in our daily lives

1. Hatred and anger incite crimes such as murder. If you are now harbouring even a small amount of jealousy or anger against anyone, you should repent and confess your sin to God. Pray and be patient before the Lord.
2. Look into your heart and see what your attitude is when you attend worship services. Learn from Abel's example and always build the altar that pleases God.

MAN'S REBELLION III

THE THREE SONS OF NOAH

1. Today's scripture: Genesis 9: 1-28

2. Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:12

“So anyone who thinks he is standing strong should be careful not to fall.”

3. Reference scripture: Genesis 6:1-22

4. Objectives

a. To comprehend the nature of sin that permeates the world widely day by day. Let us try our very best to avoid sin in our living.

b. Observing the consequence of the deeds of Noah's sons, we need to be watchful in our daily living. We should try not to slacken the due restraint that is essential for a faithful life.

Questions to answer before Connect Group

1. What was the situation of human beings in the days of Noah? (Genesis 6:5)

2. How many of Noah's family were saved? (Genesis 7:7)

3. What did Noah do after the judgement of the flood? What kind of shameful behaviour did Noah display then? (Genesis 9:20-21)

Today's Message

After their departure from God, people were getting more wicked. When Noah came on the scene, the world was filled to the brim with iniquity. Seeing all this, God was so grieved that He wanted to destroy man whom He had made, and erase him from the earth by a flood. But He chose Noah, a righteous man, to build an ark so that those who loved God could be saved. Through the example of the ark of Noah and the judgement of the flood, this lesson will present the state of the people from Noah's day that en masse, departed from God.

Mankind in Noah's Time

God created mankind so that He would receive glory. Yet far from returning the glory to God, people disobeyed His commands and even rebelled against Him. One man went further against God and even murdered his brother whom God made after His image and likeness. When all but a handful of people turned their back on God:

“The Lord saw that the human beings on the earth were very wicked. He also saw that their thoughts were only about evil all the time.”
(Genesis 6:5)

Seeing their wickedness, God was sorry that he had created man (Genesis 6:6) and sighed over the people of Noah’s days. These people did not comprehend their sinful nature nor try to find God. They did not know where they came from, what they were living for or where they were eventually going.

God determined to destroy the wicked world so He asked Noah to warn the people of coming judgement and to build the ark for safety.

Today, God is still warning the people of the world about His coming judgement and He is inviting them to come into the ark of Jesus Christ. The God we trust is a sin-judging God of righteousness but at the same time He is a God of love who wants to redeem the sinners.

The Ark of Noah and the Flood

God chose Noah because he was a righteous man, but also, the name “Noah” in Hebrew means “comfort” and “peace”. In the middle of rebellion of the people in his day, Noah was full of comfort and peace - not unlike the meaning of his name. He was a man of obedience, living in faith and he believed what God said. His faith enabled him to not only overcome, but to also provide comfort and peace within the ark, whilst waiting out the difficult forty days during the flood as well as the six months after.

So the first lesson we learn is that when we are facing tests and storms of life like the flood in Noah’s time, we too should try to maintain the same peace and comfort that Noah did.

Secondly, God told Noah to build the ark. This ark is symbolic of Christ. As Noah went into the ark, we should go into Jesus Christ and close tightly the door of our hearts so that the temptation and sin all around us cannot enter.



Thirdly, just as Noah looked up at the sky through the window that was opened above, we should look up only to our Heavenly Father through the window of prayer instead of looking down on the storms of our life.

Lastly, just as the flood of Noah's day caused those who rejected God to die without hope of a happy eternity, we too should come into the safety of Jesus Christ, making Him the boss of our lives so that we can spend eternity with Him and receive His power so that day by day we become more like Him in this life.

The Three Sons of Noah

After they had been given God's covenant promise that He would never again judge the world by flood to destroy all mankind, the family of Noah began to cultivate land and plant vineyards. One day Noah drank wine, became drunk and behaved in a disgraceful manner, sleeping naked in broad daylight.

Though Noah was a godly and righteous man, when he became careless he committed a shameful deed. When we are not filled with the Holy Spirit but become neglectful, Satan can plant a seed of sin, even in the minds of believers, which will take root and later grow and branch out into many sins.

By being drunk, Noah caused his second son to commit a sin. Ham saw his father naked and slandered him to his brothers. But Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth, covered their father's disgrace. Later Noah found out what his sons did, blessed Shem and Japheth but cursed Ham.

First he blessed Shem, "May the Lord, the God of Shem, be praised!" (Genesis 9:26). Shem, at Noah's command and blessing, became the leader of religious power. The Oriental people came from Shem and Christianity came through the lineage of Shem.

Second, Japheth was blessed to enjoy a share of Shem's blessing (Genesis 9:27).

Last, Ham was cursed and became a servant to his brethren (Genesis 9:25).

As long as we are living in this world we can never be perfect. Even the believers of Jesus occasionally committed sins reminiscent of Noah or Ham. However, with the Holy Spirit living inside of us we can be confident that as we yield ourselves to Him we will day-by-day, month-by-month and year-by-year sin less and less.

Closing questions

1. What spread to all men as the result of sin? (Roman 5:12)
2. In what ways can the Ark of Noah be likened to Jesus? How are we to be like Noah?
3. Why should we control ourselves and be careful? (1 Peter 5:8)

Application in our daily lives

1. Compare the trend in the days of Noah with the trends of today and share with each other what your common findings are.
2. The ark of Noah is symbolic of Jesus Christ. Share with each other the personal experiences of great comfort and peace you received by coming into the ark in Jesus Christ after you had suffered in sin.

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