

## Jesus in Genesis

Last Sunday we began a new series entitled: *"Hero: Jesus in the Old Testament."* Jesus taught that the whole Bible is about Him; that He is the hero of the great story of how God rescues His creation from evil and from death: the theme which ties the whole Bible together and if we fail to see Jesus and the story of redemption in the Scriptures, we're not reading the Bible as God intended for it to be read. Last week we talked about how you can make the Bible say anything if you rip verses or chapters or book out of their context and to really understand the Bible and to have our faith strengthened by the Bible, we need to read it as God intended it to be read; as a seamless story about Jesus. You know, most of our favorite stories follow the same plot. Things are great; then disaster strikes; and a hero rises up to repair what was damaged and to make all that is wrong right once again. He or she faces insurmountable odds and seems to fail in their quest; only at the last minute rising to conquer, restoring everything to what it was before the disaster – and that is the plot of story of the Bible as well. The story of the Bible falls into four acts: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration; what we had, how we lost it, how Christ regained it, and how everything God created will be restored and made even better than before by Jesus. We're going to trace this story through the Old Testament this summer and this morning we're going to look at Jesus in Genesis. Genesis means "beginnings" and like any story, understanding the beginning of the story of the Bible is crucial if we're going to understand the rest of the story because the beginning of every story introduces the main characters and the great problem which needs to be solved by the hero. Genesis opens the story of the Bible with the Creation, the Fall and the first promises of eventual redemption and restoration.

The story of the Bible begins by introducing the main character of the story. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* The story of the Bible is God's story and the story begins with Him speaking creation into existence. "Let there be light and there was light." "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place and let the dry land appear," and it was so. "Let the earth sprout vegetation, each bearing fruit after their kind," and it was so. "Let there be lights in the heavens to separate the day from the night," and it was so. "Let the waters teem with swarms of living things and let birds fly above the earth," and it was so. "Let the earth bring forth living creatures; cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth," and it was so. And God saw it was good. *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; (What does God mean by "Us" and "Our?" Right from the beginning, God reveals that He is a trinity; three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; He is a community of fellowship and love) and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* God creates people – the next characters in the story – in His image. He makes people like Himself; with the ability to think and reason, to appreciate and value, to love and hate, and to create and to destroy. He creates us for a relationship with Him, to be a reflection of Him on earth; and to reproduce and to fill the earth and to reign over the earth as God's managers; working alongside of Him to develop the world He created. He creates people for work, for family and for faith. And God saw that it was very good. That's creation before the Fall; no death, no pain, no evil, no frustration, no disease, no decay. Life as it was meant to be and life as we think it should be. But in the story of the Bible, things didn't remain that way.

The second act of the story of the Bible begins in Genesis 3. Because God created people in His own image, He didn't create robots. He gave the man and the woman the power to choose and to make moral decisions between good and evil. And God didn't create Adam and Eve perfect. He created them innocent. You say, what's the difference? Perfect means being fully developed and mature; while innocent means sinless but not necessarily mature or wise yet. Adam and Eve were like children who had to learn how to obey God, how to align their wills with His, how to make good decisions. That's why God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. At this point, Adam and Eve had no knowledge of the difference between good and evil. They had never experienced anything but good. Now as every parent knows, there are two ways a child can learn the difference between what's good and what's bad. You can tell them and they can accept it on faith. (Don't run into the street.

You'll get hurt.) Or they can do evil and experience what happens. So God gives a single "don't" to Adam and Eve; one tree they were forbidden to eat from; one moral choice; and lesson number one in trusting and obeying their Creator. In order for them to exercise their free will, there had to be something they had to choose not to do because God commanded them. And it is at this point that we meet the next major character in the story of the Bible; God's great enemy and rebel, Satan who appears in the garden as a serpent and asks Eve if there are any trees she and Adam aren't supposed to eat from – because of he can't find something for Adam and Eve to rebel against God and to join him in his rebellion against God, he's out of luck. Eve replies that God has said they can eat from every tree in the garden but one; because if they eat from that one, they will die. The serpent replies, "That won't happen. You won't die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil; and you will be your own god. God lied. You can't trust what He says." So we have the first sign of conflict in this perfect creation. When the woman looks at the tree and sees that not only the fruit on it look exceptionally good but that it will make her wise and like God, she eats and gives some to Adam to eat. And that's when the wheels come off. By the way, the devil has used this same tactic ever since. "If God loved you, He wouldn't deny you anything. Look at what He's keeping from you. Better go get it for yourself. You can't trust God. Trust yourself instead." All our problems began when Adam and Eve chose not to trust God and that brings us to the second Act in the story of the Bible, the Fall; as people and the whole creation are distorted into something God never intended.

Look at the results of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God. *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."* (3:7) As soon as Adam and Eve disobey God, they go from happy innocence to self-conscious shame. For the first time, they feel insecure, like something is wrong with them, and they hide from each other, trying to cover up their nakedness which before they ate from the tree, they were completely comfortable with. The shame we feel when we are discovered doing something wrong, they experience for the first time and they try to cover up. They hide from each other and they hide from God. When He comes looking for them in the garden, the man and the woman hide and when God asks them why they're hiding, the man says, *"I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."* (3:10) Of course God knows what they've done but He wants them to know. *"And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'"* And we see the second effect of their sin on the first humans; refusal to take responsibility for their actions. *"The man said, 'The woman whom You gave {to be} with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.'" It's not my fault; the woman You gave me told me to eat it (even though God had told Adam not to.) Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'* (12-13) It's not my fault. The serpent fooled me." We can already see the image of God being corrupted in the first humans. Adam and Eve's faith turns to fear, their relationship with one another moves from compliment to conflict as God tells Eve that her desire will be to control her husband but that he will dominate her; and Adam learns that his work will now be laborious and painful because the earth is now cursed because of him. Work, family and faith are all impacted. This brings us to the first mention of Christ in the Bible as God pronounces judgment on the serpent in one of the most important promises in the Bible, Genesis 3:15. *"The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.'" In the sad story of the fall, there is one note of hope; a promise of eventual restoration and reversal of all the effects of the fall. Adam and Eve expect to die immediately because that is what God said would happen and they do die spiritually as they are separated from God, the source of their life by sin. However, it is evident that they are going to go on living physically because God says there will be ongoing enmity and hostility between the woman and the devil and between the woman's seed and the devil's seed. Seed means descendants here and so it is evident that God is not going to kill Adam and Eve and start over but that His plan is for them to live and to have children – which is why later in this chapter Adam names his wife Eve because he says she is the mother of all; which means Adam believes God for a change. Most importantly, God promises that one of Eve's descendants will crush Satan's head even though Satan will bruise His heel; that the devil and all his schemes will not only be defeated but will be defeated in individual combat by a human being; a son of Eve. This is the first mention of Christ in the Bible, the first foreshadowing of a man who will not only defeat the great enemy of God but will undo the damage which Adam has done. Satan's wounding of Christ's heel refers to the crucifixion where the devil dealt*

the Son of God a seemingly mortal blow but from which God raised Him and Jesus crushed Satan's head at the cross and the resurrection as He defeated Satan's schemes and made it possible for people to live eternally and to escape their sin and eternal death which they inherited from Adam. The story of the seed of the woman and who this descendant of Eve will be is the great theme of the book of Genesis and the story line of the Bible as we will learn more and more about Him as we follow His line through the generations. But who is the seed of the serpent? Obviously the devil cannot have physical children but he does have spiritual ones and one of the great themes of the Bible is the ongoing enmity between those who follow God and those who follow Satan and how the seed of the serpent persecutes the seed of the woman. We will see this theme of the two opposing lines of descendants develop throughout Genesis – which is why there are so many genealogies in Genesis. So verse 15 is our first indication that there is a hero coming in this story who will make all that is wrong right. At this point, there is certainly a lot that's gone wrong. For the first time, there is pain, frustration, disease, sadness, decay and corruption in the world because as Paul writes in Romans 5, "Through one man, sin entered the world and death through sin." Yet through one man, victory over sin and death will come as well.

The story of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent continues in Genesis 4. Adam and Eve have their first child whom they name Cain and whom Eve probably expected to be the promised descendant who would undo the damage Adam and she had done. Then they have a second son whom they name Abel and even though they have the same mom and dad, we can immediately see they are from different families because when both men have grown and offer a sacrifice to God, God accepts Abel's sacrifice but rejects Cain's and Hebrews 11 tells us why. Abel offered his sacrifice to God by faith; his older brother did not. Cain gets mad and kills Abel, beginning a long tradition of the seed of the serpent persecuting and slaying the seed of the woman as Satan – knowing what God said in the garden - continues to attempt to kill any man who might be a threat to him. That's how Jesus read this passage because in John 8:44 He says, "*You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning (meaning the beginning of the world) and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks for his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*" Whom did the devil murder at the beginning of the world? Jesus sees him as responsible for Abel's murder; meaning Cain was of the seed of the serpent and persecuted his brother who was of the seed of the woman. So does the writer to the Hebrews who writes in Hebrews 12:24, [You have come] "*to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*" Abel's death is the first of many pictures of Christ and what He will do in the members of His line. Abel's blood was shed by his brother and Jesus' blood will be shed by his brothers – meaning the Jews. But what does the writer mean when he says that Jesus' blood speaks better than Abel's? In Genesis 4, after Cain kills Abel, he buries his body in the ground and when God asks Cain where his brother is and Cain pretends that he doesn't know, God tells him that Abel's blood is crying to Him from the ground for judgment and vengeance. Jesus' blood also cries to God but His blood cries for mercy – "*which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*" What I want you to see is that the writers of the New Testament fully embraced Jesus' claim that the entire Bible is about Him and read it in that light. After Abel's death, Eve has another boy whom she names Seth and she says that God gave him to her in place of Abel; so Seth continues the line of the seed of the woman and chapter 5 follows his line from Seth to Noah who lives 10 generations after Adam. In the days of Noah, there is yet another threat to the seed of the woman who will one day defeat the devil and save the creation and people from his rule. Sin in people has grown over the generations like a cancer and the law of the jungle now prevails on earth. There is no government or restraint of evil; it is purely an eat or be eaten barbarism and humanity is in imminent danger of wiping itself out. Gen 6:5-8 tells us, "*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" Can you imagine a world where there are no good people, where no one fears God, and where every person only thinks about how they can do more evil? It would be hell on earth. "*The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*" If we rip the story of the flood out of the story of the Bible, it looks like God gets frustrated with people and in His anger, wipes them out. But when we read it as part of the larger story of how God saves the world through Jesus, the flood is an act of mercy to preserve the line of the seed of the woman. If God hadn't sent the flood, we wouldn't be here today. God warns Noah about what He's going to do and because Noah believes God, for the next 100 years, Noah works on an ark for the salvation of his family and his descendants. That ark, by the way is another foreshadowing of Christ.

Just as God remembered Noah and saved Him and His family from judgment by putting them inside the ark, so God remembers us and saves us from judgment by putting us in Christ. So God reboots creation and the human race with Noah and his sons. Everybody here this morning is a descendant of Noah and once again we see the line of the seed of the woman continuing through Noah and then through his son Shem. We also see the line of the serpent continuing in Noah's son Ham – who is obviously the weakest morally of Noah's sons - because Ham's grandson is named Nimrod whose name means "rebel" and who becomes one of the great rebels against God of all history. Nimrod becomes a tyrant and the founder of the two great empires – Assyria and Babylon - which will oppose and attempt to destroy Israel in the future and which symbolize human rebellion against God in the book of Revelation. And Nimrod is behind the building of tower of Babel from which we get the name Babylon. God had given Noah and his sons the same command he gave Adam and Eve: be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth; but the generations following Noah had stayed together rather than scattering and had not become so numerous that they thought they could accomplish anything. They build the tower so they won't be scattered; because Nimrod probably forced everybody is to live within sight of the tower. But God confuses their language and the people gather together with those who speak the same language and scatter throughout the earth, thus forming different human cultures.

In Genesis 12, we see the next step toward the seed of the woman. God speaks to Abram, one of Shem's descendants. *"Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation,- implying that God is giving Abraham and his descendants the land He will show him - And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* The story of the seed of the woman narrows now from the story of the world to a story of a family. God promises Abram that if he will leave all that is familiar and go to the land God will show him, God will make him a great nation. This is the beginning of the nation of Israel. And God will bless him and make his name great and make him a blessing to others. And God will bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him; and in him, all the families of the earth will be blessed, referring to the seed of the woman who will deliver all nations from sin and from death. The rest of the story of the Old Testament is the story of Abraham and his descendants from whom will come the Messiah, the seed of the woman destined to crush the serpent's head. Like Abel and Noah before him, Abram is called to trust God. He is 75 when God speaks to him and has no children and his wife Sarah is unable to conceive. Yet God promises to make him a great nation which means that for the line of the seed to continue, Abram and Sarah must have a child. They wait for 10 more years but when they still don't have a child, Sarah suggests Abram sleep with her servant, Hagar to get a son that way and Ishmael is born. 14 more years pass and then God announces to Abram or Abraham as God has renamed him that he and Sarah will have a son within the year. Abraham asks that Ishmael might be his heir but God replies that while He will take care of Ishmael, His covenant and the line of the seed of the woman will be through Isaac, the miracle child whom God will give this old, barren couple; and that is what comes to pass. And just as Cain persecuted Abel, Ishmael persecutes Isaac, once again demonstrating the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. One day after Isaac is grown, God tests Abraham's faith, telling him to sacrifice Isaac. By this time Abraham's faith in God has grown to such an extent that he knows that God cannot fail to keep His promises and since God has promised Abraham descendants through Isaac, Abe figures that if God commands him to kill Isaac, then God will have to raise Isaac from the dead. He takes Isaac s to Mount Moriah but just before he kills his son laying on an alter, God commands him to stop because now He sees that Abraham does indeed fear Him and God provides a ram in Isaac's place, foreshadowing the fact that God will provide the sacrifice for us and that unlike Abraham who didn't have to sacrifice his son, God would sacrifice His in our place on the same mountain where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac marries Rebekah and they have two twins, Esau and Jacob; and once again Esau persecutes his brother, demonstrating the ongoing enmity between the two seeds. Jacob cheats Esau out of his birthright and flees to his mother's brother, Laban where he falls in love with Laban's daughter, Rachel, but like he cheated Esau, Jacob is cheated by Laban and ends up marrying both of his daughters, Leah and Rachel and has 12 sons and a daughter from them and from their two maids. Jacob and his family return to the land God promised to Abraham and make peace with his brother Esau. The next link in the line of the seed of the woman is Jacob's son, Joseph who foreshadows Jesus in some remarkable ways. First, both Joseph and Jesus were beloved by their fathers and hated by their brothers. Second, both Joseph and Jesus are sold for silver, betrayed, falsely accused and imprisoned. Joseph's jealous brothers sell him for a bag of silver to some Midianite

slavers who take him to Egypt where Joseph spends the next 13 years as a servant and a prisoner. He is purchased by the captain of Pharaoh's guard, falsely accused of rape when he rejects his master's wife's advances, and spends several years in prison. Third, both Joseph and Jesus are exalted after their suffering. Joseph meets two of Pharaoh's former servants in prison whose dreams he correctly interprets. Two years later when the Pharaoh has two disturbing dreams, his servant remembers Joseph who interpreted his dream when he was in prison and Joseph is brought out of prison and tells Pharaoh that his dreams mean a great famine is coming and what to do to prepare. And in an hour, Joseph goes from the bottom of the kingdom to the top, second only to Pharaoh in authority and seated at Pharaoh's right hand - just as following Jesus' suffering, God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Finally, both Joseph and Jesus became a savior and a ruler over the Gentiles as well as over their own people. Joseph supervises a 20% tax on every harvest during 7 years of plenty, storing tons of grain throughout Egypt; and when the famine comes and the people of Egypt and the surrounding nations have nothing to eat, they come to Joseph who sells them the food they need. Thousands are saved from starvation as a result. Even Joseph's brothers journey to Egypt because they hear the Egyptians have grain and to their surprise, discover their little brother Joseph in charge. God uses Joseph to save his own family and to preserve the line of the seed of the woman. In the same way, Jesus - as a result of His death and resurrection becomes both Savior and Lord over the Gentiles and will one day be Savior and Lord of all Israel who one day will recognize that the Jesus whom they rejected and crucified is ruler over both the Gentiles and Israel and will come to Him for salvation. And just as Joseph forgave His brothers, Jesus will forgive His, saying as Joseph said, "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good." The story of Joseph is just one of many foreshadows in the Old Testament of what the Messiah would experience and accomplish.

What I hope you can see is that the book of Genesis is not a random collection of stories but tells a single story about the seed of the woman; and a story which will continue through the rest of Scripture. So what does this reveal about Jesus? He is the seed of the woman Genesis 3:15 promises; the man who defeats the serpent and undoes all the damage of the first man. That is why Jesus is called the second Adam. Look at what Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:45, *So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam {became} a life-giving spirit.* The Son of God becomes a man to undo what the first man did and to restore creation to what God created it to be. He takes on all our human limitations but unlike Adam, as Hebrews 5:8-9 tells us He learns obedience through the things He suffers and having become perfect – meaning as we already saw, mature and fully developed – became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Jesus is the second and better Adam and begins the new creation; first by recreating people and one day recreating the heavens and the earth. That's why in Revelation Jesus says, "Behold, I am making all things new. That's why 2 Cor. 5:17 tells us that *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away and behold new things have come."* Becoming a Christian by putting our faith in Jesus is more than adding a little religion to your life or activities to your schedule; it is becoming a brand new person with a new family. The Bible says that when we trust Christ as our Savior and Lord, the person we used to be, the descendant of Adam, dies and a new person is born; a descendant of Christ. One second we are a son of the devil, the next a son of God. One second we're in Adam, the next in Christ. One second we're hostile toward God and enslaved to sin; the next we are a peace with God and freed from sin. The Christian life is not "Do this so that you can become something different." It is "You are different; you're a new person because of your relationship with Christ; so live like it." If you are a Christian, your relationship with Adam as your father has been terminated. You are no longer a member of this creation. And just as Adam's sin was attributed to you; which is why we die, so Christ's righteousness is attributed to you which is why you will live forever.

What does being in Christ, the second Adam, mean for us practically today? John takes us back to Genesis in 1 John 3:7-12. *"Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil;"* because He is the promised seed of the woman who will crush the serpent under His feet – which John is clearly referencing here. John warns the Christians in Ephesus to not be taken in by people who claim to be Christians but who are not. "Look at their normal day to day lifestyle," John says, "look at what they practice. Those who practice righteousness are righteous – that is, they are the true children of God; and those who practice sin are in Satan's family." Once again we see the seed or descendants of the woman and the seed of the serpent. John's point here is that we behave like our parents.

That's why he continues, *"No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."* Our normal behavior reveals our nature and our nature reveals our family. What's the proof that I'm really a member of God's family? I have a new relationship with sin. John doesn't say that if I'm born of God, I shouldn't practice sin, or even that I **won't** practice sin. He says I **can't** practice sin, because Christ's nature (His seed) is now in me because I'm born of God. According to the first chapter of 1 John, every Christian sins but according to the third chapter of 1 John, no Christian practices sin. Before we're born again, sin comes so naturally to us as children of Adam we're unaware that we're sinning. Sin is just our unconscious habit of life. But when Christ comes to live in us and we are born again as a child of God and our basic human nature is changed, we suddenly become conscious of things we were unconscious of before. Before I asked Jesus into my life, I was a habitual liar. I exaggerated and made up stuff just to make myself look good and I did it so often, I lost track of what was true and what was not. I lied so often I wasn't even aware when I was lying. But within a couple of weeks of asking Christ to come into my life, I became painfully conscious every time I lied. I still lied occasionally but it was no longer unconscious because God had changed my nature. I lied but I could no longer practice lying because lying caused conflict within me. That doesn't mean that we're now conscious of every time we sin because we're all growing in our knowledge of God's will. But when we know the will of God, we cannot violate His will without becoming very aware of it because of the seed of Jesus in us and in our new human nature. That's why John writes, *"No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God."* When I was born again, my basic human nature was changed and my relationship with sin was changed. Things that used to be natural for me became unnatural and things that used to be unnatural for me began to feel natural. God changed the tree and the fruit changed as well. Which is why John summarizes the entire chapter in vs. 10-12 with *"By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, {who} was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous."* Jesus, the seed of the woman and the second Adam, saves us from sin by establishing a new human race and changing our nature from that of Adam to His own. Here's what I want you to see. We're not born again because we attend church or because we're religious or because we know the Bible. The sign that we are new creations is a new relationship with sin. We all sin but if you can't pinpoint a time in your life when your attitude toward sin changed; when sin became distasteful to you and something that bothered you; if you are still living the way you have always lived, then according to the Bible, you haven't been born again. You don't need to try harder or pray more or read your Bible more often. You need a miracle; you need Christ to make you new; and He is in the renewal business. If you have any doubts about whether you are a true child of God, born of the seed of the woman, make sure today. Tell Jesus that you need Him to save you from the penalty of your sins and from the power of your sins; trust in His death and in His resurrection in your behalf and ask Him to come into your life and to make you the person He wants you to be.