

BIB103 OT1: Creation and Covenants

Unit 1d Sin Enters the World

Presented by the



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When we talk about doctrines in the Pentateuch, or that at least are stated or foundational, one that you have to spend some time on is the doctrine of sin and the way that relates to those, especially again Genesis. But even obviously through, we see the doctrine of sin in the whole Bible. But in those first five books, share a little bit about where the specifics are about the doctrine of sin in the Pentateuch.

George: Right. So in Genesis 1 and 2, God creates this perfect world. There's nothing wrong with it. There's nothing in the world that's opposing God.

John: Right.

George: Mankind is completely provided for. They have everything that they need. Even as God forbids them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the emphasis in the text is not the one tree they can't eat from, right?

John: Yep.

George: The emphasis in the text is "I've given you everything you need."

John: Right.

George: "And you don't need to go here. That's reserved for something else for some other reason."

John: Right.

George: "But you have everything else you need."

John: Right.

George: And toward the end of chapter 2, it says that the man and woman were naked and not ashamed.

John: Right.

George: And I know it's uncomfortable to talk about, but the idea there was everything was exposed, quite literally.

John: Absolutely.

George: And there was no shame. There was no fallenness. So Genesis 3, everything gets ruined in one small episode between the serpent and then Eve, and depending on your view of the text there, Adam who is said to be with her. So Adam and Eve together allow Satan in the form of the serpent to come in

and to cause them to doubt God. They doubt his word. They are led to doubt his goodness. They are led to doubt his motives, his character, and what he wants them to have or not have. And so sin is introduced to us in Genesis 3. It's the famous passage on the fall of man.

John: Right.

George: And that's where the doctrine of sin, so to speak, takes off.

John: Right.

George: And we see the text there in the early part of chapter 3, it talks about Eve, how she saw the fruit was good with her eyes. She felt that it would be pleasing to her flesh and she was welled up with the desire to be like God, to know the difference between good and evil. And much, much later in the Bible, in 1 John [1Jo 2:16], we find John saying, "All that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, of the eyes, the pride of life," that's kind of the definition of sin there in terms of its manifestations. And so Genesis 3 sets that out for us, this thing sin now. Now there's a rift. There's a brokenness in relationship. Man has transgressed God's righteous standards, and now he and she are held to account.

John: Right.

George: And so God comes and visits them in the garden, and this is unlike any other visit. They don't want him there.

John: Right.

George: It's just like the child at home who has done something naughty and the mom has said, "Well, wait until your father comes home and we'll deal with this." Adam and Eve are like the little kids. They want to hide. They're ashamed now. They realize their nakedness. And it's interesting. God, before he even confronts the sin directly, he says, "Well, who told you, you were naked?"

John: Right.

George: Innocence lost.

John: Right.

George: The fall of man.

John: Yeah.

George: Tragic. And God metes out some of the consequences of sin. But right in meting out some of the judgments that he does in chapter 3, he has this little statement in verse 15. Very famous verse for us, especially in the theological area, because we get the first hint at what we call the gospel, where God promises that the seed of the woman would ultimately crush the head of the serpent.

John: Right.

George: And so even in the midst of our doctrine of sin, we have to be careful to not just allow the doctrine of sin to stand by itself.

John: Yeah.

George: Right? It is always in the context of the fact that God still loves us.

John: Amen.

George: He pursues us even in our sinfulness, right?

John: Yeah.

George: Romans 5:8. God demonstrates his love for us in that...

John: Sinners.

George: ...while we're, yeah, sinners. Christ dies for us. So the doctrine of sin begins to unfold, starting in Genesis 3. But we are bad theologians, as it were, if we separate the doctrine of sin from God's grace.

John: Amen.

George: What we see then in our doctrine of sin is after Genesis 3, it begins to just spiral out of control. And in Genesis 4 to 11, you have this big picture of the cosmic effects of sin.

John: Right.

George: Certainly the story of the flood is one of the pivotal, most key demonstrations of how far sin had gone. The text in Genesis 6 right there in verse 3, [sic] [Genesis 6:5] I believe it is, where the Bible tells us that all of mankind's thoughts and actions were only sin all the time.

John: Yeah.

George: The text has such an emphasis on that.

John: Right.

George: And that's really what happens when sin sort of goes unchecked for so long. So God judges and then he redeems. And then fast forward to Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel, God judges universally again. And then yet in Genesis 12, we find God coming to Abraham quite redemptively.

John: Yes.

George: But for the doctrine of sin, it doesn't end there, unfortunately, even though God calls out a particular man and a particular people for his name.

John: Right.

George: And that's really what the rest of the Pentateuch is about. It's this chosen people of God living in relationship with God. God, through his own sovereign choice, has chosen them to be his vehicle of righteousness in the world. And really the Pentateuch is all about this people of God continually fighting against their own desires, rebelling against God, complaining against God, questioning God, and yet God continuing to grace them.

John: Yeah. And when you look at the whole Pentateuch, a question I get a lot of times is "Why did God have so many rules and laws for those people that were separate from the rest of the world around them?" Speak to that a little bit.

George: Yeah. Well, I think God, when he gave his law to his people, there was really a two or even threefold purpose. First, I think he wanted his people to understand that righteousness was never going to come from the works of their own flesh.

John: Yeah.

George: As much as we, as created in the image of God, are able to relate to God and able to please God, because of the fall and because of what sin has done, we cannot do it in and of ourselves.

John: Yeah.

George: And so I think the law was given to God's people for the people to understand and experience really the fact that they can't do this on their own.

John: Right.

George: Without God initiating and sustaining the relationship between themselves and God, they are going to continue to cycle through all kinds of sinfulness and sinful choices.

John: Yeah.

George: God also gives the law to his people to show that they're different, to show that they are, in fact, separate, that they are not to be like the culture around them. They are not to practice the same kinds of things that people around them were practicing.

John: Right.

George: A lot of ancient Near Eastern practices within the so-called Gentile or pagan nations had everything to do with the gods that they worshipped.

John: Right.

George: And so God gives his law so that his people would know that he is their one only unique God.

John: Right. And you think about just the way that affects our whole Christian worldview, because although we obviously are not Jews, God opened up that door to all mankind for redemption. There's a lot in the Pentateuch that really does relate, that spurns off of the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of man and the doctrine of God that really helps us to understand we live in a world that I think even a lot of times, you think "Wow, Noah's time was bad. Abraham's time was bad. Tower of Babel and all that." I look around in my world. I watch the news. I live in a bad place. How do I glean from the Pentateuch some really powerful things that can help direct the worldview that we really should have today as believers?"

George: Yeah. Well, I think in our churches and in our classrooms, we need to do a much better job of using the foundational truths in the Pentateuch, specifically Genesis here, and set forth for our people, for our young people, for our old people, whatever it might be set forth a true Christian worldview.

John: Right.

George: Most theologians and philosophers would agree that a worldview is primarily comprised of three questions. What is real? In other words, what exists? What do I make of the reality around me?

John: Right.

George: What is true, or where is truth to be found, so to speak? And then the third question is what is good? And by the time you get through the first three chapters of Genesis, and certainly in the rest of the Pentateuch as God continues to reveal himself and man unfortunately continues to reveal himself in light of who God is and God's law, you get the foundation for a Christian worldview right there.

John: Right. Yeah.

George: First, what is real? Well, God is real. He's real in a completely different way than everything else that is not God.

John: Right.

George: And so you have this creator/creature distinction that is the basis for all of our view of reality. Well, why is that important in our culture today? So what? Big deal. What does it matter? Well, it matters everything.

John: Right.

George: Because in our secular humanistic culture, we want to define reality outside of God. We want to live in a reality that either doesn't need God, or at the very least, is not accountable to God.

John: True. Yeah.

George: And either one of those choices in the secular humanist perspective leads to disaster.

John: Right.

George: They don't want to say that, but it does.

John: Yeah.

George: It leads to what we have today.

John: Yeah.

George: So what is real? That question is answered for the believer in the beginning of Genesis, and it sets forth the view of reality that we are to have. And that is, God made all there is.

John: Right.

George: God and God alone transcends all there is. Therefore, if I'm a part of what God has made, I'm actually accountable to him.

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John: Yeah.

George: I actually will answer to him. And this is true whether we want to believe it or not.

John: Yeah.

George: I may wake up tomorrow and feel particularly spiritual and say, “Yeah, I have no problem answering to God.” And in the very next day, I could wake up in the morning and not feel so particularly spiritual and say, “I would rather not have anything to do with answering to God.”

John: Right.

George: So that’s one aspect of the worldview that’s so foundational here. It’s just our view of reality.

John: Yeah.

George: Our view of reality gained from Scripture also flies in the face of different kinds of theories of evolution or naturalism where our existence can be described in terms of natural phenomenon or random events.

John: Right.

George: The Christian worldview flies completely in the face of all of that.

John: Right.

George: And we need to teach our children, particularly our young people, but really all the people that God has given us to care for spiritually. We need to teach them that we don’t need to be ashamed of how the Bible sets forth our view of reality.

John: Right.

George: It’s just as good and so much better than any other view of reality that’s out there because it leaves us with a God who cares and relates to us.

John: His love. I mean, again, it comes down to that. It’s so easy when we see, and even children a lot of times, when they see rules. I mean, myself, if you see a speed limit sign or a “Do Not Touch” sign.

George: That’s a tough one.

John: Even as an adult, we’re challenged by that because there’s sin in us. But we oftentimes see the things even God lays out as restrictions of a God who is mad at us or doesn’t care rather than a loving

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action of a God that cares deeply about us and wants us to have the most amazing life that we can possibly have. But just like we know for our children, I'm setting up those parameters in their life because I want them to have the best quality of life that they could ever possibly have.

George: Right.

John: And if we could even place ourselves a little bit better, those of us that are parents, in particular, in that situation to go, "Do you really lay out rules, bedtimes and what our kids eat and the way they treat each other because we're trying to put them in a miserable state?" Absolutely not. We want them to have right relationships and healthy environments and safe environments and so on and so forth in there. So I think it's really vital to affect the worldview. And again, it goes back to big things we deal with nowadays, which is the way God defines family, the way God defines government, the way God defines the way that we interact with mankind, even the way he said on the Pentateuch, the way that the Israelites were to interact with the Gentile nations. So there are all these different things that really, in a huge way, let us know God's worldview started way back in the very beginning and continues on in the challenges if we would just obey what he lays out. How much different that would be in our lives.

George: We would be a lot better off.

John: Yeah.

George: And I think we would love God more if we could ever get to the place where we view his standards and his laws and his commandments to us and the way he has structured society. I think that's a great point, Jim.

John: Yeah.

George: If we could ever get to a point where we don't see that as restrictive...

John: Right.

George: ...and we see it as demonstrations of his love...

John: Right.

George: ...our relationship would be so much more natural, and it would be so much more a part of our daily lives.

John: Right.

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George: We wouldn't be so ridden with guilt every time when we do fail to live up to his holy standards.

John: Right.

George: And it all stems from whether or not we believe the Bible is true about what is real, what God has made, and as you said, the structures that he has set up in our society and culture for us to follow and obey his commands.

John: Yeah. At the end of the day, what we see it further and further pulling away from in the church and in our culture, and unfortunately, the church is the litmus is, we want to be culturally received and we're oftentimes willing to sacrifice the things at Scripture. So even a relational thing, I think as a pastor, how many times do you have a person who, rather than deal with the sin in their life or the struggles in their relationships, they go to another church? Well, that's completely against the way God established.

George: Right.

John: He didn't tell the Israelites to leave their tribes when they have problems. He said, "Here's how we work through things."

George: That's right.

John: So again, just that broad spectrum. Man, God has this amazing plan to stop humanity. View the way he's laid things out from the very beginning of the Pentateuch. Embrace that and you got this amazing full life that he wants you to live.

George: You do. And that leads us, I think, into really the second great question of worldview, which is what is true?

John: Right.

George: And you talk about people when they come under the realization that they've offended God or that there's sin in their life and you're trying to handle it within your church.

John: Yep.

George: And do all of this thing. They just pick up and leave. Really what they're saying is "I don't believe that any of this is true."

John: Right.

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George: "I feel guilty, but I really don't want to take responsibility that God is the truth."

John: Yeah.

George: You know? And again, early in the Pentateuch and all throughout, not only is God the definer of reality, but he is also the definer of what is true, of how we are to interpret reality.

John: Right.

George: That's what God does in revealing himself is he gives us truth. Not just facts. Not just a list of items to believe. That's there too. But it's more than that. It's really what is truth. Well, it's whatever God says is truth.

John: Yeah.

George: Because God transcends us and has made us.

John: Right.

George: And like you said perfectly, if humanity would just stop and allow God to be God, and if we would listen and trust in the truth of what he is saying, we would be so much better off. But it's difficult for us. Satan was able to get at Eve by questioning truth.

John: Yep.

George: And so the question of truth in worldview in general and in Christian worldview in particular is answered right here in the first five books of Scripture.

John: Yeah. And you had that third question you said that we need to tackle when we think of Christian worldview.

George: Right. The third great question of worldview is what is good?

John: Yeah.

George: So what is real? What is true? What is good?

John: Right.

George: Again, early on in the Pentateuch and all throughout, that question is answered. What is good? God.

John: Right. Yeah.

George: And then everything that God says is good.

John: Right.

George: We can be good. We are good. In a right relationship with God, creation was declared to be good. Man as created in God's image is very good.

John: Right.

George: And yet there's another answer to the question of what is good even behind our own experience, and that is just the person of God.

John: Right.

George: Who is God? That's good.

John: Right.

George: God does not aspire to a set of moral standards.

John: No.

George: And he just happens to be a little better at it than you and me, right? God defines the standard. And I think the law... And I understand you had made the comment earlier that some of this doesn't seem as relevant in the first five books of the Bible. Some of it doesn't seem as culturally relatable as other parts. And I certainly would agree with that in some respects.

John: Right. Sure.

George: And yet if we would take the time to read the Pentateuch deeply and understand what's really going on, it's that third major tenet of worldview. God is establishing himself as the judge, as the standard, as holiness, as righteousness. He's calling his people to live that. Why? Because he wants them to be miserable? No. Because he wants them to be in the most loving, gracious relationship they could possibly be in, and that is with him.

John: Yeah.

George: That's with him. And so the question of goodness, the question of truth, the question of reality is all laid out for us in that larger understanding of the Pentateuch in its theology.

John: Which again goes back to the heart of it all. The love of God is shown from the very beginning all the way to the very end.

George: That's right. Yes.