

From Creation to Corruption

Genesis 2:4b-8; 15-25

1) What would your response be today, if I were to go out in the parking lot and bring in the newest and shiniest model I could find. It would probably be a Rolls Royce, a company car driven by someone who works for Rolls Royce. It would be the kind of car most of us just dream about while driving our trusty Ford Falcons and Honda Civics.

Now, suppose I'd tell you a story about how many people think this great automobile is the product of someone's design, but I know better. Many centuries ago, all this steel, glass, rubber, plastic, fabric, leather, and wires came up out of the ground, began to fashion into just the right shapes, weave itself together, and, finally, after millions of years out came this automobile. It was just recently found under a tree with the keys in it and a full tank of gas.

You would probably think that I had a bigger problem than an inner ear infection and call for Dr. Core again. And, you'd be right. I'd be a first class lunatic if I believed that automobiles evolved. There is a philosophical axiom right on target that goes like this:

Wherever there is a thing, there must have been a preceding thought.. .and where there is a thought, there must have been a thinker.

The automobile is in the category of a thing, and it reflects thought. And for there to have been thought given to the design of the automobile, there must have been a thinker. . .a designer.

2) Why is it that what is so unmistakably clear about the automobile isn't just as obviously true about our world and the universe we live in? God tells us in the first sentence of the Bible that He created the heavens and the earth. Yet some otherwise smart people have come up with the theory that the world wasn't really created; it evolved, as has all mankind.

- Why would people with bright minds, who are competent and rational in every other area of their lives embrace the theories of man rather than the statement of God when it comes to the creation of the world and the origin of humankind?
- To complicate matters, many believers sitting in the pews fear that the theories of evolutionists may be right and the Bible wrong. So, they speak of Genesis as a treasure house of early mankind's myths and legends, but not possibly true.

a. Perhaps the truth is just too simple for the sophisticated. But, I think the problem lies deeper than that. Belief in creation requires a belief in a thinker, a supreme being greater than ourselves. If God made this world, and it did not just evolve by blind chance, then this world belongs to Him. And, we belong to Him since He made us, too. There is one greater than ourselves to whom we owe our allegiance. Some people would rather be their own god, and live life on their own terms, rather than bow and surrender their lives to God.

b. My purpose here today is not to defend creation. We'll save that for another day. My purpose is to simply show you what the Bible says about those earliest hours of time. If you will take a fresh look at the Genesis account, you will find that the Bible is remarkably candid and insightful in understanding how we got to where we are today.

3) The Bible opens with a God who creates lavishly out of a heart of love. He fashions a world perfect in every way. Then He creates man and places him in the garden at the center of a perfect environment.

a. The Bible says Adam was the first created human being. Nothing before him fell into the category of his species. In Adam, we find a fully developed adult human being, equipped with intelligence and godlike capabilities from the very beginning: intelligence, emotions, will. No other living thing or living being was like *anthropos* – man. No animal or fowl or fish or plant could know God or love and respond to God or obey God.

Look at Genesis 1:26:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; 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.'"

b. Then verse 27 tells us,

"God created man in his own image. . ."

It is as if God said, "The man will be unlike anything I have created. No other created being has a mind to know me. No other created being has a heart to love me. No other created being has a will to obey me. Therefore, no other creation has an eternal destiny like this created being has. We'll make him distinct. Only humans will have the image of God stamped on them." What a privileged position!

c. Listen to Genesis 1:28:

"And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

4) Man was given only one negative command. It had to do with the tree in the garden called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." That tree is mentioned in Genesis 2:17:

"But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was no way Adam could have misunderstood. Most people are familiar with the story of the temptation in the Garden, which culminates in Genesis 3:6.

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

5) Our first parents rebelled against God and disobeyed His command. The original story of innocence and beauty now becomes a study in selfishness and tragedy. Up until then, nothing but innocence was flowing through the bloodstream of mankind. There was uninterrupted communion with the living God. They delighted in walking with God, the joy of His presence, and the relationship of unguarded friendship.

All of that changed in that awful moment they yielded to temptation. Sin and depravity entered and contaminated the human bloodstream leaving them alienated from God. And this disease of sin and depravity continues and has been passed down from generation to generation to us.

- Instead of adoring God, we fight with Him.
- Instead of believing what He says, we reject His truth.
- Instead of wanting to do what He would have us do, we delight in doing what we want to do.

6) Why is this so? It all goes back to this original moment of rebellion. The Bible is very clear about this. Remember how we are told that God created man "in his own image." In Genesis chapter 5 we read:

"This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. . .When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image. . ." (verses 1 and 3)

Look! Verse 1: ". . .in the likeness of God," that's when God made Adam. A little later, ". . .in his own likeness," that's when Adam and Eve had a child. When Eve gave birth, it was in Adam's likeness, not God's. Why? Sin and depravity have flooded humanity and polluted our innocence. This disease has spread to all mankind everywhere.

7) This is what it says in the New Testament book of Romans:

"There is no one who is righteous, no one who is wise or who worships God. All have turned away from God; they have all gone wrong; no one does what is right, not even one." (Romans 3:11-13)

This is how the Bible from the beginning to the end deals with the tragic twist that makes rebellion against God as real and natural (and for the most part unnoticed) as breathing.

- We do not and cannot know the core of our personal being, which the Jewish atheist Freud conceived of as the blind and restless *id*, and which the Bible speaks of, non-physically, as our *heart*.
- Pascal said, "The heart has its reasons, which the reason knows nothing about."
- Woody Allen joined hands with Pascal in court in 1993 when he tried to explain his affair with Mia Farrow's daughter: "The heart wants what it wants."

The Bible explains this:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

8) No doubt all of this sounds pretty depressing to you. Maybe you are thinking, "This would have been a good Sunday to have slept in. I was already down, and Jim is only making matters worse." But, I can't be telling you anything of which you aren't already instinctively aware. It's obvious every time we read the newspaper or listen to the news that something major is wrong with our world.

- If an alien dropped into our world from outer space knowing nothing about us, and never having read our Bible – he would know that something has gone tragically wrong.

And, it's not getting better. In fact it is getting worse.

- The 20th century was the most violent in history. Governments killed more of their own people than were killed in war.
- Mindless random violence has spread like the plague. Tell me how four men entering a house to rob it could end up killing two mothers and two children? Who could kill babies? Yet it happened, not in the jungles of Borneo or the ghetto of Detroit, but in a neighborhood just a few miles from here this very year.

9) Original sin is no laughing matter, but here is a story that may help and also show us how it effects us all.

- In many high liturgical congregations, it is customary for the people to respond when the preacher says, "The Lord be with you" with "And also with you." An Anglican clergyman mounted the pulpit to preach, tapped the microphone, heard nothing, and thinking it wasn't working – addressed the microphone by muttering, "Oh Lord, something's wrong with you." But the microphone was working and the congregation responded on cue, "And also with you."

This lighthearted story points up the heavy truth that in God's sight there is something wrong with all of us, clergy and laypeople alike, and unbelievers, too. Our fallen hearts are self-asserting, God-defying, self-aggrandizing, God-marginalizing, and self-deifying. The cancer called original sin that brings death has invaded us.

- About 30 years ago there was a book on transactional analysis titled, "*I'm Ok, You're Ok.*" Someone asked, "If I'm okay and you're okay, who's causing all the problems?"

10) If that sounds overly pessimistic, I can only say – it is what it is. Original sin is real, and guilt is real. But, I'm not finished yet. The bad news of sin is followed by the good news of the Gospel that says, in spite of my sin, God loves me and has sent Jesus Christ to save me. God cares so much for you and me that His Son Jesus Christ was willing to lay down His life for us. In Christ, sin is cancelled, and we are made new creatures.

What may have sounded to you terribly pessimistic a moment ago turns out to be the most optimistic news imaginable. Facing and understanding sin realistically sets the stage so that the drama of God's grace might be revealed in all its glory. When we recognize that the real problem in our lives and world is sin, then we can be led to the real solution, which is Jesus Christ.

No matter how pervasive or how original sin is, it can be overcome and persons can become new creatures in Christ. And if individuals can be changed, there is no reason why our world cannot be changed. Now, that is good news. That's exciting.