

OT Essentials: Adam & Eve

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Look on the screen and take a peek at the phrases you see.

- “As it is written”
- “As was spoken by the prophet”
- “According to the scriptures”

The NT is filled with these phrases. It’s a way for the authors of the NT books to say to us, “Hey, check it out for yourself in the OT. Look how God has already said this.” Our NT and new covenant faith in Jesus Christ is rooted, structured, and built on the OT. Just saying *new covenant faith* requires me to borrow OT themes and ideas. In our day and age, you might hear us talking about having a personal relationship with God. But do you know what? You won’t find that phrase in the Bible. The phrase *having a personal relationship with God* is our modern way of talking about being a part of God’s covenantal people. A relationship between God and his people that’s based on covenants of promise. If you want to know what this covenantal relationship with God is like you need to understand what the OT says about it. And that’s just an example of many other things we take for granted that we will talk about in this new series I’m calling *OT Essentials*. The main goal or purpose of this summer series is to help you see and understand some very important themes, people, and events from the OT so you understand who God is and your new covenant faith in him.

We are starting at the very beginning (and we’ll actually be moving rather sequentially throughout the series). Our focus today is going to be on Adam and Eve, the first humans recorded in the scriptures. It’s been almost two years since I preached about another OT teaching that is essential - that God is our Creator. You can’t really talk about Adam and Eve without presuming that God is the Creator of Adam and Eve and everything else in this world. But since we talked about God as Creator two short preaching years ago I’m not going to spend a ton of time on that; I’m going to trust you to go back and listen to those sermons if you need to be convinced that God is Creator or assume you believe that already. Something else before we get into the meat of things, anytime Adam and Eve come up many are curious about the science of it all. Were Adam and Eve really the first humans? When did they walk on the earth? How does that fit with archeological and biological science? Those are good questions and are fodder for good discussions. But that’s something I’m really going to get into this morning. The Bible treats Adam and Eve as historical figures, meaning, there really was a first couple made by God. So, while there are various ways we can hypothesize how it fits together with scientific knowledge and discoveries, I’m going to leave it up to you to pursue that on your own if you’re interested in them. And, of course, I’m happy to help.

There are three ways that Adam and Eve are very important to our NT faith. It’s an absolute shame I only have one sermon for this and not three, but my hope is that by me introducing you to some of these things you will have a firm foundation for some important

matters of faith and also have a desire to learn more. The three themes or topics Adam and Eve serve as a foundation are:

- Nature of humanity
- Nature of marriage/sexuality
- Nature of sin

Our convictions on these three, fundamental aspects of life and faith are found in the words, stories, and teachings about Adam and Eve, so let's begin.

A few weeks ago, a former manager of Stan Lee (PIC), the creator of the mega-popular comic empire Marvel Comics, was arrested for elderly abuse. Before Stan Lee's death, this manager apparently stole hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of memorabilia and abused Stan Lee in his old age. Like some others in their 90s, Lee was struggling with issues related to dementia and this manager took advantage of his weakness. Sadly, we see this playing out every day in the lives of aging people all around us. On the one hand, it's not too surprising. Some people will do anything to get an easy buck. But looking at this from another angle, it's so disturbing and shocking that some would be so cruel and hurtful to people in their most vulnerable moments.

The Bible links this poor treatment to others as a failure to know and appreciate the nature of humanity. Who are we? At our very core, what is our nature? What's essentially true and the same about an unborn baby, a young victim of human trafficking, a career criminal in the pen, and a person struggling with dementia? These people (and us, too) are all so very different in so many ways. But yet, there's something the same about all of them that's more important than their differences. What is that? What's common among us that is greater than our differences? Turn with me to Gen. 1:26-27 (READ).

When you compare God's creation of humanity to his creation of everything else in Genesis 1 you notice a big difference. Only with humanity does God say, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." Humanity alone bear his image; nothing else has this unique fingerprint of God. That's what links every human being together; it's something true of every person no matter their socio-economic status, skills, disabilities, sex, sins, or age.

God connects our creation in his image to a certain kind of treatment we are to give to others. I think that treatment is best described by the word *dignity*. Dignity is about respect and honor by virtue of one's humanity. It doesn't matter that this person is disabled; it doesn't matter if she's made mistakes, or that he's in prison, or that she's unborn, or that he's addicted to drugs. Every person is made in the image of God and because of that is due your respect as a person. Not all views or beliefs need to be respected; certainly some lifestyles are not to be honored. But every person is to be treated with dignity because he or she is created in the image of God. Now, that's not my idea, that's God. Look how God connects being made in his image should impact our behavior or treatment of others.

- Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” Notice how highly God values human life because we are made in his image.
- James 3:9-10, “With it [our tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” These people you are cursing are made in the image of God. That can’t happen.

You are one of about 7 billion other people on the face of this earth, all of them like you - created in the image of God. I hate that we have to move on so quickly, but imagine how this should impact your view and treatment of others. Think how this should change your view of the person with Alzhiemers, for example. She can’t think the way she used to think. She can’t feed herself. She even needs to be helped in the bathroom. But she’s still a person made in the image of God just like the refugee, the convicted criminal, the unborn, and the toddler.

Let’s move onto our second theme, the nature of marriage & sexuality. Turn with me to Mark 10. Here’s where we are at. Jesus’ opponents are trying to trick him; they want to see if they can trip him up. And their question is about marriage and divorce; a subject that’s really complicated and hard for a variety of reasons. I know many of you have struggled with this yourself. Maybe you feel the biggest failure of your life is related to your sexuality or marriage. You wanted to stay married, but your spouse didn’t and you were heart broken. Maybe you regret the way you handled yourself in your marriage and wonder if God forgives you for it. Maybe you gave yourself to someone prematurely and now you’ve been mysteriously linked to them that has been painful. Before we get into what Jesus says and how Adam and Eve help us understand marriage for us today, please know that whoever you are and whatever you’ve struggled through, God’s grace is for you. There is grace for forgiveness. There is grace for your healing. There is grace for reconciliation. There is grace for a bright future. So, what did Jesus say about marriage and sexuality? (READ vs. 2-9)

The key verses start in vs. 6 where Jesus defines the pinnacle of God’s plan for marriage and sexuality. Notice how he says in vs. 6, “from the beginning of creation,” which is kind of like God saying, “This was the original plan from the start. This is how I drew it up in the first place.” Notice a few things.

1. God made them male and female. Two sexes. Two genders. We are meant to go together, but we are different in our biology, in our sexuality, and in our gender. I gave a more detailed treatment of this and what our response should be to a culture drifting away from God’s play for sex and gender as followers of Jesus in a sermon during the *The Lord our Maker* series back in the fall of 2017.
2. Here is Jesus’ definition of marriage: “A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife (that’s the commitment of marriage - a covenant of holding each other fast) and the two shall be one flesh (which is an allusion to the sexual union between a husband and his wife). Now, if you have trouble believing this is a reference to sexual union, Paul tells the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 6 to stay away from prostitutes for this

exact reason; don't you know that you will become one flesh with her? God said, "the two shall be one."

3. This union, this marriage, is meant to be permanent for life. God has brought them together; "let not man separate."

What Jesus says in this Mark 10 account is incredibly significant and weighty. In a few short sentences, he pretty much affirms the OT teaching on marriage and sexuality as I briefly laid it out for you. And here's what I want you to see: Adam and Eve, how God created them, set the standard, set the framework for all of us. This is the nature of marriage and sexuality. Maybe the most important implication I want to share with you is this: to go against God's order, to go against God's pattern of marriage and sexuality given to us in Adam and Eve is to go against what God established in the beginning. It's to abandon the very nature of marriage and sexuality as God has given. Your best attempts, in faith, to follow God's original plan is worth it.

There's one more aspect I just can't leave out when it comes to the significance of Adam and Eve to our understanding of faith: the nature of sin. Turn with me Romans 5. This passage is really important in trying to help us understand both the nature of sin and the nature of our redemption and salvation. And what we see from the Apostle Paul is that our own sin problem as individuals starts at the very beginning with the sin of Adam. Look at vs. 12, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." What Paul does in this entire section of Romans 5 is connect our own sinfulness not only to our own individual sins we commit ourselves, but also to the first sin of Adam. We are sinners because we are a part of the human race - we are offspring of Adam. It's in our very nature. That's why in Eph. 2 Paul calls us children of wrath by our very nature, like the rest of mankind. That's how bad it is; we knew we sinned when we didn't obey our mom when she told us to clean our room. It's worse than that: we disobeyed mom (and more importantly God) to clean our room because we are sinners by our very nature.

The reason this is so important is because the cultural current about who we are does not agree with God's teaching. We are not bad people (sinners) by nature; we're good people who sometimes do bad things. Let me share two brief stories to illustrate this. First, it's all around us in our culture. (I told this story many years ago so some of you may remember this). I remember picking up my oldest boy from elementary school when he was just a 1st or 2nd grader. I bumped into a gal who was a new, family friend from the community. Sweet person. In our conversation I had mentioned how our son was really struggling with lying. She started to ask why. Was he scared? Was he nervous? Why was he lying? Without even thinking about how it might be received I said, "No, it's because he a little sinner, that's why." The look on our friends face said it all. She was shocked. She gave me a joking, but stern rebuke. Don't say that about him! He's a good boy and his lies come from fear or insecurity. No. He's a sinner.

This failure to accept our nature as sinners is even in the church. I remember many years ago being at my mom's watching one of her favorite TV preachers (I hate to say this, but most likely the preaching you are hearing on the TV is dangerous - not bad, dangerous). And

the preacher was talking about Adam and Eve and the first sin just like we are talking about today. And then he said with all his self-righteousness, "When I get to heaven, when I see Adam, I'm going to kick him in the butt and tell him, 'What the heck were you doing!'" If you read the Bible and conclude that your sin is really the fault of someone else you're not getting out of it what you're supposed to get from it. The point isn't: too bad our first parent was a loser who ate the fruit. The point is: you would have eaten the fruit, too, if you were the first parents. Because, like him, you are a sinner by nature.

Can I finish with some good news? While Adam's sin is our sin and by his sin and our sin death reigns, Jesus' act of sacrifice and love on the cross brought a new day. And Jesus' act of obedience is more powerful than Adam's act of sin. And we can know peace, love, joy, hope, and grace because of Jesus.

Do you see how important Adam and Eve are? Do you see how essential they are to our life and faith? I hate how I had to move so quickly through this, but I pray you have a better grasp on some very important matters of faith and why we believe them.

Key vs. Genesis 1:26-27

Questions for the week

- From 1 to 5, how would you rate your knowledge and understanding of the important OT stories, people, and themes? Would you like to grow in this knowledge and understanding?
- What was the most important thing you heard today about Adam and Eve? Why was that the most important thing you heard?
- How is your faith going to change because of what you heard today?