**East of Eden**

Quick recap:

* ‘Paradise Created’ – Gen 1-2 reveals the perfection of the original creation made by God. Shows human being as the pinnacle of all this, made to be 2nd only to God, made in a special relationship with him and made to look after the earth for him
* ‘Paradise lost’ – Gen 3 records how Adam and Eve’s sad and selfish decision messed it all up.

Once paradise was lost A & E are banished and head East of Eden. Going east things unravel remarkably quickly. The physical and spiritual effects of their sin spread like a vicious virus, affecting every single one of their offspring – with things like anger, jealousy, selfishness, misery and godlessness coming to dominate humankind. Up to Ch 11 the Bible traces this spread and some of the initial ways God responded to it. Some key events:

**Cain and Abel** – [Crime scene] who’d have thought that one of the first siblings would end up murdering his brother? But that’s what happens when the *vertical* relationship with God is broken - the *horizontal* relationship with others is affected. We saw it of course with Adam and Eve, how they were ashamed and covered themselves up. We see the same with their son. Further, we see Cains response was exacty the same as his parents - denying responsibility and excuse making. The dye was cast right back then – here is the origin of what we see today!

As a result of his crime Cain is sent away, settling down (as much as he could) even further east, even further away from God’s paradise – v17. You see where this is going!

Two things stand out in Ch 5 –

* the incredible ages people lived to. [Old person – 146yrs old – but just a boy cp to these guys in Gen 5!] What was going on? Couple of theories: a) starting from a place of perfection with Adam and eve it would take a while for viruses, mutations and genetic concerns to corrupt the DNA or people. The longer the time the more it decayed – thermodynamics! b) water canopy gave a greenhouse effect, perfect for life. Part of the reason for the incredible deluge of the great flood is that this canopy collapsed and afterwards ages declined dramatically
* ‘And he died’! [RIP] the image of God remained, though seriously marred. We bear the mark of sin – the greatest of which is death, and that is the refrain over and over again. Regardless of how long they lived they all (with just one exception) died. And he died, then he died, and he died, then he died …. . People sometimes talk about the death rate in hospitals – truth is that the death rate is exactly the same as it’s always been 100%; no one avoids it, however hard we try, whatever lotions and potions and tablets and exercises we do. We all die and will all meet our maker. Better be ready!

**The Flood – Ch6: [Noahs Ark]**

Many generations come and go but with each generation things just got worse – to the tragic point where God decides he has to do something. The result is the flood – not some whim of temper judgement and angry justice, but the response of a grieving heart from the world he’s made. 6:6 says that God was grieved, broken hearted by what he saw. 6:5 says everything, everywhere all the time was just bad. God decides to reset things – not to destroy, but reset, reboot. The flood represents a sort of reversal of creation – in the flood everything is brought back to chaos, the world was at the start of recorded creation in Gen 1. Once again water covered the earth. Once again God starts with one man and his family – Noah.

Noah, like a second Adam, starts again in a pristine world – a chance to start again and get it right. He’s told by God to go and be fruitful, multiply and repopulate the world. It’s all there for him to enjoy, to use, to master – just as it had been for Adam.

And yet, within a few verses and probably a few months in time, we’re back to the same old, same old! The events of Ch 9 have a horrible symmetry. Adam fell by eating the fruit of the tree, Noah sinned and fell by drinking the fruit of the vine; both were humiliated by the exposure of their nakedness – both had to be covered. Both sinned and the result in both cases was a curse coming into the world.

And so the same sad decline set in and continued unabated for many hundreds more years until we come to Ch 11

**The Tower of Babel.**

The sin that infected humans affected not only the way they treated each other, but increasingly the way they treated God. All kinds of religions, and none, now proliferated. Perhaps none was so big and so dangerous as the cult of Man. This finds its peak in Ch 11 at Babel where people decide to make a great tower to ‘make a name for ourselves’ – 11:4. Babel was a vivid symbol of mankind’s desire to exalt and elevate yourself, to create our own kingdom and live independently of God.

God could not and would not ignore this, not just because it defied God, but because doing this apart from God was just dangerous for himself – he would not be able to handle the position. So God moves not in judgement but in mercy to frustrate mans plans. He confuses the languages and scatters them over the earth. This would slow down, though not eliminate mans propensity to rpide and scheming without God. It would both save mankind from itself and leave the way open for his own better plan.

Which now has to happen. Man has proven beyond reasonable doubt that he cannot and will not reform himself. Human beings were no longer the people He created them to be, no longer really his people in any meaningful way. Yes he was/is father in the sense of creation, but not in a relationship way. We still lived in his world, but not as his people. He still reigned, but now it was a reign of restraint, restriction and judgement rather than loving, willing relationship. As a result the joy and blessing we were made for was lost. Instead of God’s smile mankind lived with a frown at best and a curse at worst – and ultimately with inescapable judgement to come at some point.

**It was all so sad; a perfect world, paradise, God’s kingdom had been, has been, destroyed by human rebellion. The paradise, the kingdom God planned and set up had been set aside by the sinful, selfish, wilful ways of mankind.**

That could have been the end of the story. God could have *said ‘Well I tried – I made it perfect, they messed it up; I hit the reboot button, they messed it up again; I’ve confused and scattered them – I’ve had it with them, they’ll just have to make the best of a bad job’*. He could have said – *‘Let’s leave them to it and start again somewhere else – it’s a big and growing universe, we’ve other options’*. Or he could have hit the big red button and destroyed it all. It was his world, he could have done it and been perfectly fair and just.

Had he have done this much would have been revealed and known about God – his power, his creativity, his wisdom, his patience, even fairness (he didn’t and wouldn’t force people to do anything – gave them dignity of a free will). We know he’s not a dictator. But this is not all God is, he is this, and much, much more! He is all those things but he’s also wonderfully, ridiculously gracious; and so we now see that instead of destroying and starting from scratch again he decides to put things right. But not through force. No, this is not God’s way.

What he wanted from the beginning was to have a people who willingly submit to his rule, who gladly and freely let him be king. What he wanted was to have a kingdom where he rules, but where his rule is accepted willingly and gladly.

**And this brings us to Ch 12 where everything changes.** It is a hinge point in the Bible. Up to now everything has been heading east; heading away from God and his rule. But now in Gen 12 we find that God calls a man from the east to head west. This is a hugely symbolic moment and will lead all the way to Jesus. This is the beginning of God’s rescue plan [Helicopter]

**God’s call of Abraham – 12:1-3**

Through Ab’s family, living in the East, God is going to build a new kingdom, not limited to a geographical land, but a kingdom of people from all over the world that will willingly and freely follow God’s rule.This is the big story – **this is the Master plan,** and this is now where the Bible focusses in on. It largely leaves the rest of mankind and focusses in on this one man and his family. The rest of humanity gets a mention, but only in as much as they intersect and interact (and usually interrupt) Abs family – who God purposes to be the root stock of this new and ever- growing kingdom. It will find its climax in the coming of the ‘*serpent crusher’*. Remember what God had promised Satan in Genesis 3:15? ‘*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspringand hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*’ That was a hint of what was to come; it was a reminder, regardless of what was about to happen, that God was in control, that this was his world and that Satan, for all his power and malevolent influence, would never ultimately succeed.

And here in Genesis 12 with God’s calling of Abraham the journey East away from God is at last reversed. From the east God calls Abraham westward. The rescue plan has started – ‘The Lord had said to Abram, ‘*Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.* ***2****‘I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.* ***3****I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*’ The rest of the Bible traces the story of Abs family, and how through them God brought about his plan, his promises, until we get to Jesus himself who would change everything – but that’s for later.

*Why did he do it this way? Why didn’t he act as soon as it started to God wrong? Why did he even make the world with the potential to god wrong? Why, if he knows all things didn’t he set it up so that it didn’t? so that death and pain and suffering never entered time and space?*

*The simple answer is that we’re just not told! We can deduce things like this reveals things about |God that we’d not otherwise know – but much more than that we don’t know. One day we will – but till then we must settle for the facts we do know. This is God’s world; he’s in control; there is hope because he has acted. This is God’s world, in which despite the odds, God is working – saving, rescuing, controlling, restraining. A world where one day the awful consequences of our rebellion against him will be undone, a world where one day he will be honoured and respected and followed and unrivalled king, a world where purity and perfection and well being will be the experience of all who live in it forever and ever. No pain, no suffering, no regrets, no sadness; no fear, no torment, no abuse, no bad memories, no guilt, no shame, no blame.*

*This is God’s world, he’s in control and the serpent crusher has come. Let us trust him, let us follow him, let us now, in our time, join this kingdom by bowing to the king, following the king and welcoming his rule in our lives.*

You see, to understand the Bible, you need to know Gen 1-2, Gen 3 and Genesis 12. These set the scene for everything that follows. Without them it is difficult to make sense.

Questions?

Prayer

Sing: