

# Creation (Genesis 1)

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012

## Intro

- We are only just beginning to explore the wonders of this universe, as images beam back to us from Curiosity which is on Mars we are just scratching the surface, and yet, as the Hubble telescope has shown us, space is far deeper and more colourful and more spectacular than we had ever previously dreamt.
- What is even more incredible is that the God who created all this universe, and holds it in the palm of His hand, should be even remotely interested in a relationship with us, and yet He is.
- This morning we are going to look at creation and see aspects of our creator God that will inspire us to live lives pleasing to Him. We will see that knowing Him really is the key to living our lives effectively.

## Read Gen 1:1-2:3

### God is the source of family- v1'God (plural) created (singular)'

- Elohim= plural (literally 'gods') but takes singular verb i.e. 'He (singular) created', therefore we see the Trinity in this first statement. So God is revealed as family- later in v26 'let us make man in our image'. Some say God speaking to the heavenly host here, but this can't be as v27 says 'so God created man in His image' (i.e. God, not the angels).
- John's gospel recognises the Trinity here when it opens with 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.' (John 1:1-3) At the time of Jesus people spoke Aramaic, but the Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew, so when it was read in Synagogue it would be translated into Aramaic. Some of these translations were eventually written down. The interesting thing is that they would also paraphrase the text, putting an interpretation on what was read. Whenever God did something that humans might do (anthropomorphisms) like speak, see, hear, laugh etc. it would be changed to 'the Word of the Lord' did such and such so that God did not appear to have human attributes. So here in Genesis when God said 'let there be light' it was changed to 'The Word of the Lord said 'Let there be light''. John speaks into this and says the 'Word' they are speaking about is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- So we have the Trinity here in the first few lines of the Bible- God the Father creating the Heavens and the earth through His Word (Jesus) by His Spirit (brooding over the waters). So we have God revealed as family.
- Some people believe in a God who is aloof, Deism- an unknown cosmic force. When I spoke once to a Rabbi in Jerusalem he did not believe in a God who was close to His creation or in whom we could have a personal relationship with, but this is the crux of Christianity, and it is also what we see in this Genesis account of Creation. The Spirit of God is hovering over the waters- brooding, flapping (onomatopoeic feminine word merakepheth)- the nurturing aspect of God here, like a bird brooding over it's young. Used of a description of the Lord being to Israel like an eagle in:

"But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters (merakepheth) over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions" (Deut 32:11)

God is prepared to get close- dip His feet in the water, go into the darkness for a purpose. Intimate with His creation- coming close like a kiss. He had creation of humans in mind (v26) ultimately as He did this- relationship.

'..even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world' (Eph 1:3-4)

- The incarnation- God becomes a human being- lives amongst us, up close to us.
- The Spirit of God came down in the form of a dove at the waters of Jesus' baptism and settled on His head (just like when He hovered over the waters at creation). In Eph 3:14-15 Paul says that family comes from God the Father- he makes the point that the Greek word for family 'patria' comes from the Greek word Father 'patera'. He is not just playing at words here but making the statement that family has its source in God.
- **Application-**
- 3 ways we need to apply this
- **Our adoption by God the Father-** whatever upbringing we have had, whether we had good parents or not obviously does have an effect on us. However, what has more of an effect is how we choose to see God right at this present moment. Do we see Him as our loving Father, interested in relationship with us? Do we choose to believe the truth of His word or are we relying on our changing feelings and experiences in life?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8).

God loved us even when there was very little it would appear to love in our lives- even when we were God-haters by our actions He still loved us- enough to die for us- that is some love!

God is the source of family- we look to Him to learn how to love in reality. He is gentle and will teach us if we are willing to learn. His example, His grace to us and His Holy Spirit are all keys to us to excel in family life. God gave His Son in love to save us, Christ laid down His life sacrificially for us, God reveals Himself as Father and adopts us into His family even though we don't deserve it and He fills us with His Spirit (just as He hovered over the waters at creation and rested on Christ at His baptism) as a sign that we are His children, by which we cry 'Abba', 'daddy'. A slave would fear the wrath of his master if he ever dared to be over-familiar as if he were a member of the family- they were forbidden to use the word 'Abba', 'daddy' or 'Imma'- 'Mummy'. However, under Roman adoption all this would change and an adopted slave would have more inheritance rights than a natural child who had gone astray. We are not slaves forbidden to use the word 'Abba', no, our master has chosen to adopt us and we can now call Him 'dad' (Rom 8:15-17). These truths will revolutionise the way we do family, just as they did the early Church.

- **Our physical families-** We have a responsibility for our immediate family. How 'pro-family' are you/we? Are we investing into our families? Time, patience, love. Spiritual truths are fleshed out into their practical outworking within the family unit in the epistles.

**-Husbands** are urged to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25), not to be harsh with them (Col 3:19), and to be considerate and treat them with respect as heirs with them of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder their prayers (1Pet 3:7). Wives should, therefore, be ideally able to describe us as loving, sacrificial, gentle, and respectful. Are we?

**-Wives** are urged to submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph 5:22), as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18) so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives (1Pet 3:1). Husbands should be ideally able, therefore, to describe their wives also as respectful, as well as supportive, trusting and having a quiet, submissive spirit. Is that true of you?

**-Children** are urged to submit to their parents, for this is right (Eph 6:1) and to obey

them in everything, for this pleases the Lord (Col 3:20). The world should look to us for the model in how to bring up children. Are they? If they are still alive, what is our attitude to our own parents? Are we thankful for them, whether they are believers or not, and whether they have done a good job or not? Are we being good children to them, and caring as they get older?

**-Siblings-** often there is sibling rivalry in families, trying to outdo each other for the parent's affection. As Christians we need to rise above this in love. It broke my heart when I heard a tribute on the news of a boy who had lost his brother when he was hit by a car and said 'although we were always fighting I really loved you'- we need to express love whilst we still can.

**-Parents** (the father is addressed but also applies to mothers) are urged to not embitter their children or they will become discouraged (Col 3:21) and not to exasperate their children; but instead, to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Parents should be able to be seen by their children as encouraging, fair, giving them recognisable boundaries as well as a foundation of instruction in the Christian life. Is this true?

-We are urged to live in harmony with one another. Let's sow into our marriages and family lives.

- **Our Church family-** Jesus said that as He has loved us we should love one another (John 15:12)- He then said the greatest sign of love is to lay down your life for your friends, and those who obey His commands are His friends. We know that Jesus laid down His life for us. John goes on in his letter to interpret all this for us: he says that what all this means in reality is that we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another (1John 3:16). For many, this became a reality as they sought to see new Churches being planted across the Roman Empire, it is also the same today throughout the world as people seek to Church plant. How about us? Have we caught Jesus' love for His Church? Paul said 'I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church' (Col 1:24). Paul was willing to both suffer and die for His love for Christ and His Church. Legalism will only get us so far regarding sacrifice, but when love gets a hold of us, the love of Christ, we are willing to sacrifice for that which is dear to us. How do you feel about God's Church? Do you miss your brothers and sisters when you are away? Is there a longing to be with the family of God? Do you have an earnest desire to see your brothers and sisters flourish and reach their full potential? Is there a strong desire to see others come to know Christ and be adopted into His family?
- As we come to know God relationships are restored because He is the source of family. We must forgive because we have been forgiven etc.

### **God is the source of order- v2 'the earth was without form' (until God got hold of it!)**

- Not only is God the source of family, He is the source of healthy order and He brings order into our lives.
- 3 days of forming followed by 3 days of filling. In the forming God is tidying what is there, putting everything in the place it should go and setting boundaries for it that it cannot cross so that chaos does not return. In this way he separates day and night, clouds and sea (may have been a water canopy at the time, as 2:6 says there was no rain, just a mist vapour), sea and land. Are the days literal 24-hour period's? It would appear so from the fact that
  - There is 'evening' and 'morning' each day
  - The Hebrew word for day ('yom' always means a 24-hour period if accompanied by a numeral as it is here each day)
  - There is a literal period of 1 day after 6 that God commands Israel to keep in

- memory of the time He rested after working for 6 days in creation (Ex 20:11).
- God creates the first week of 7 days, and this cycle has continued to this day- He is the author of routine. Healthy routine versus unhealthy routine. Psychiatric nursing saw people locked into unhelpful routines due to guilt or fear, overly cleaning their houses, whilst others who were depressed losing sense of their normal routines, sleeping at the wrong times, not eating, neglecting personal hygiene etc.
- Are your routines healthy? Do you have a balance in your life? Are you sensible in your sleep routine/diet/exercise/hygiene/budgeting/devotions to God? Some need to have more routine in certain areas, others need to be released from bondage to routine. God will guide us and bring us into helpful liberty. Sometimes we need prayer, good teaching & accountability to help us. A healthy routine allows God to break in and mould according to His leading. An unhealthy routine rules us.
- God worked for 6 days and then rested for 1 day. He established this as a healthy pattern for us. We need to work and we need to rest. If we don't work we become depressed- that's why people need Occupational therapy when they become ill- we have self-esteem needs that God designed to be met through a healthy level of work. If we over-work we burn out. Either extreme is not glorifying to God.

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1Thess 5:14)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you..." (2Thess 3:6-8)

...For even ..when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. (2Thess 3:11-15)

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28)

And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (Mark 6:31)

If we are unemployed then we still work hard- applying for jobs, helping others, voluntary work and god will bless us in this. We are to learn what it is to work hard as Paul did, but making sure we take our rest and work in His strength and everything we do should come from a place of rest- a realisation that we are more than conquerors, that we are accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:6 KJV), we are righteous in Him etc. We don't work for His favour, we already have it, but we work hard because we appreciate it- our whole motivation and work ethic comes from an appreciation of His grace and by seeing that God initiated work even before the fall- God worked and He commanded Adam to work.

- Made in his image (v27) to rule- i.e. govern and bring order- our bodies, our families, society etc. Starts with us- have we subdued our bodies and brought them into God's order or are there areas our bodies are dictating to us in? God who brought order to the chaos in creation will also help us. Let's learn to rely on Him.
- In Church life we are all to find our place of service- in Eph 4 it says the saints are equipped for works of service- have we found a place to serve and are we doing it diligently to God's glory?

### **God is the source of life- v3 'God said 'Let there be Light'**

- God is the source of light and He is the source of life. It is interesting that the sun,

moon and stars were not made until the fourth day, but light was made on the first day and plants were made on the third day. This flags up some questions. How is there light without the sun or stars? How do plants grow without light?

- The answer to these questions lies in God as the source of light, not the sun as the true source of light. God was hovering over the dark deep and said 'let there be Light' so the light was His glory shining on the globe of the world as it rotated- The plants then on day three photosynthesise using God's light! We often say 'what a glorious day!' but what a glorious day that must have been- the first Sun-rise as the earth rotated to face the Sun! I bet you wish you were there to see that? We shall see it- in the new Jerusalem- there will again be no need for the sun as the glory of God will illuminate it- the Lamb is it's light (Rev 21:23, 22:5).  
The Rabbis were aware of this issue of light before the sun and they said it was the light of the Messiah and that when the Messiah appeared this light would again be seen as it predicted in Isaiah 60:1-2:  
"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.
- We know that when Jesus was born this light shone out to the shepherds. When Jesus was on the Mount of transfiguration it was seen on Him and also when He appeared to Saul. John, again aware of this belief about the Messiah says 'In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not comprehended it'.
- As Christians this light has shone into our lives- Paul says:  
'For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. (2Cor 4:6)  
We have the understanding of the gospel- like switching on a light- it is God who brings revelation, understanding and illuminates things for us. As we read His Word earnestly seeking Him it will be a light to our path:  
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Ps 119:105)  
Jesus is the Living Word- as we entrust our way to Him in prayer He will guide us in the right path. As we spread his Word and tell others about Him he will open their understanding too.
- After the 3 days of ordering there are 3 days of filling each region with wonderful things- the 3 realms- day and night/ sea and sky/ dry ground God now fills with things in the same order. Day and Night are filled with Sun and Moon & stars, sea and sky are filled with fish and birds, and dry land is filled with animals and humans.
- God wants the void in verse 2 to be filled with wonderful things, so again and again toward the end of this account you read words like 'increase', 'multiply', 'fruitful', 'fill' depending on our versions. God is a God of abundance, variety and creativity.
- Jesus didn't just come to barely give us life, he came to give us life in abundance (John 10:10). This doesn't necessarily mean we will be financially rich in the world's eyes- this isn't a gospel of greed, but it does mean that we see God's wonderful provision in every area of life as we trust in Him. It means we know abundant grace to go through tough situations we face in life, walking through victorious. It means we are secure in Him, always able to rejoice in His goodness, despite at times being sad and weeping- we do not despair or give up our hope, because He is faithful to us.
- God is creative – we see it in the diversity of kinds He has made. Creation is God's masterpiece- for we are God's masterpiece (Eph 2:10). Master painter- nebulae (hubble telescope google earth), master sculptor- design of man and animals and nature. Fibonacci sequence & Golden mean- 1:1.618. Found in seashells, pinecones, sunflowers, hurricanes, embryos in the womb, spiral galaxies, DNA, human body (see examples).
- Learn to gaze in wonder at God's creation & praise Him -'what is this life if full of care..'. Words of How Great Thou Art or George Robinson:

*Heav'n above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green!  
Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen;  
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow, flowers with deeper beauties shine,  
Since I know, as now I know, I am His, and He is mine.  
Since I know, as now I know, I am His, and He is mine.*

- Train your senses to appreciate what is before them and give God praise- the colour of shadows, the smell after the rain, the feel of grass, the taste of spices.
- God has made you in His image to be creative Gen 1:26. Church=harmony of diversity- Eph 3:10- manifold (multicoloured, much-varied) wisdom of God
- Children- imaginative (Simeon's play), but we can lose it as we get older- learn to imagine again. God saw (imagined) something which wasn't there (Hebrews 11, verse 3), believe it could be done ('by faith'), desired it ('saw that it was good') and spoke it into being ('let there be'). We can apply this same principle to any area in life.- "I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."- Albert Einstein (1879-1955), physicist
- Deal with discouragements- criticism or people laughing at you- "Creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom, while discouragement often nips it in the bud. Any of us will put out more and better ideas if our efforts are appreciated."- Alexander F. Osborn (1888 - 1966), advertising executive. Faith- exercise it. By faith God made the world- creativity takes faith- believe beliefs, doubt doubts

### **Summary**

- God is the source of family
- God is the source of order
- God is the source of life

### **Song**

He changed me

# Creation (Genesis 1) part 2

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012

## Intro

- Last time Gen 1: God **source of family, order, life**
- Now Creation vs Evolution- on TV evolution is presented as fact and taught as fact in schools & colleges. Foundations important= Genesis= 'beginnings' contains foundations of Gospel.

"If the **foundations** are destroyed, What can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3, NKJV)

- *How old is the universe?*  
*Can creatures evolve?*  
What relevance does this creation account have to our lives today?

## Read Gen 1:1-2:3

### How old is the universe?- (1:31 & 2:1)

- Wikipedia article which is critical Young Earth beliefs:  

"The scientific consensus, supported by a 2006 statement by 68 national and international science academies, is that it is evidence-based fact derived from observations and experiments in multiple scientific disciplines that the universe has existed for around 13 billion years, that the Earth was formed about 4.5 billion years ago with life first appearing at least 2.5 billion years ago."
- Where did these views come from, as a young earth was the prevailing view until 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Cent. This is seen in a quote from Shakespeare's play 'As you like it' in 1599 (IV, 1:90) "the poor world is almost 6,000 years old" - this was seen an unquestioned truth in the sixteenth century.
- It was in 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries there was a shift as people such as Abraham Werner (1749-1817) of Germany and James Hutton (1726-1797) of Scotland (now considered by many to be the father of modern geology) postulated that the rock layers of the earth were laid down over vast periods of time rather than as a result of a global flood. Hutton's ideas were later championed by Charles Lyell (1797-1875) in his book *Principles of Geology in* 1830-1833.
- Evolutionists=position of faith. Science deals with provable by experimental observation. Can't go back in time- just look at evidence and draw conclusions. Our lenses we look through mean we look at same evidence and draw different conclusions.
- Universe & earth billions of years old or not? How do you fit billions of years into this passage? 3 ways some Christians try:

**1. Theistic ('of God') Evolution-** Evolution is all true, God is the author of it. Creation account in Genesis =Myth. Historical fact begins with Abraham. Sometimes added to this is the documentary hypothesis- different editors for Gen 1 & 2 (used diff. Names 'Elohim' 'Yahweh') and at least 4 editors who tampered with Genesis and O.T as Jews up their history from Babylon captivity (Julius Wellhausen, German biblical scholar 1844-918).

### Problems:

- Genesis is presented as history, not myth or fable. Jews divided their writings into three groups: history, poetry and prophecy. Genesis included in their list of historical writings.

- At least 165 passages in Genesis are quoted or referred to in N.T, including over 100 from Genesis chaps 1-11. All the N.T authors refer in some way to Genesis chaps 1-11 & every one of the first 11 chaps is alluded to in certain sections throughout the N.T.
- In O.T & N.T. Genesis is quoted from or referred to more than any other book in the entire Bible.
- Jesus believed it. On at least six occasions, Jesus Christ either quoted from, or referred to, some aspects of Genesis 1 to 11. Moses wrote the book of Genesis, either through divine revelation or by compiling existing historical documents (see P.J.Wiseman- New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis). Jesus believed that Moses' writings were factual and historical, so to doubt them is also to doubt Jesus:

"If you really **believed Moses**, you would **believe me**, because Moses wrote about me. But **if you don't believe what Moses wrote, how can you believe what I say?**" (John 5:46-47)

"But Abraham said to him, 'If they will **not listen to Moses** and the prophets, they will **not listen to someone who comes back from the dead.**'" (Luke 16:31)

"Some Pharisees came to Jesus and tried to trick him. They asked, "Is it right for a man to divorce his wife for any reason he chooses?" Jesus answered, "**Surely you have read in the Scriptures: When God made the world, he made them male and female.**" And God said, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' So there are not two, but one. God has joined the two together, so no one should separate them." The Pharisees asked, "Why then did Moses give a command for a man to divorce his wife by giving her divorce papers?" Jesus answered, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because you refused to accept God's teaching, but divorce was not allowed in the beginning." (Matthew 19:3-8)

- NT theology including the gospel is based on it.
- Jesus' genealogy went back to Adam and Adam is named as the son of God in Luke. At what point does it become fable?
- Contrast with creation epics from around the world which are highly stylised and not very credible.
- Documentary hypothesis is nonsense. End up with a cut up Bible. But has been taught in many Bible colleges so therefore these ideas are often presented on T.V documentaries. Views the Bible as literature from many different sources. One of reasons for this is a disbelief in the supernatural (e.g disbelief in predictive prophecy such as found in Isaiah and Daniel). Dead Sea scrolls disproved a lot of this (e.g 1 scroll of Isaiah by 1 author 1000 yrs older than previously had with only few differences), but the theories are still popular and dangerous.

**2. Gap Theory-** Millions of years in gap between Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 1:2. Then earth then 'became' void (a possible translation of the Heb.). God then re-created life on the earth, and also created mankind.

#### *Problems:*

- For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex 20:11, also Ex 31:17)
- **No death before Adam:**

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12, NKJV)

Even animals were vegetarian because no death:

"God said, "Look, I have given you **all the plants** that have grain for seeds and **all the trees** whose fruits have seeds in them. **They will be food for you.** I have given **all the green plants as food for every wild animal, every bird of the air, and every small crawling animal.**" And it happened." (Genesis 1:29-30)

How can God look and say it is 'good' and 'very good' if there are millions of years of death in the ground Adam and Eve are walking on? Rather it was Adam's sin that affected all of creation- the ground he was made from and the animals he had jurisdiction over (hence parasites today and the viciousness of 'nature'). Also thorns and thistles are not created until the fall of man and these are found in the fossil library, so the fossil library came after, not before Adam fell.

**3. Progressive Creation- Day-Age theory.** The belief that while life was developing through the vast ages imagined by evolutionists God stepped in at various times along the way. At each point He created something new which the evolutionary process could not accomplish without this help from God

*Problems:*

- Hebrew word used for day ('yom') really does mean a 24-hour period when it is used in scripture with a number as it is in Genesis 1 'day 1' etc. Also in Genesis 1 each day has an 'evening' and 'morning'- these words become meaningless if they are being used to describe millions of years.
- The Bible teaches clearly that God **finished** His work of creating and making things on the sixth day of creation:

"So the sky, the earth, and all that filled them were **finished**. By the seventh day **God finished the work he had been doing, so he rested from all his work**. God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day, because on that day **he rested from all the work he had done in creating the world.**" (Genesis 2:1-3)

- Adam was created on day six. He lived through day six, and day seven, and died when he was 930 years old. If each day were a million years, there are big problems.
- If you have to fit in the thousands of years after the creation of Adam you have a problem with the genealogies. Genealogies in Genesis 5:Adam to Noah no gaps. Gen 11 Noah's son Shem to Abraham. No gaps:

*"When V was W years old he begat Z."*

This formula makes sure there are no gaps. This means you can literally count up the number of years to determine the date of events. Abraham can be dated to about 2000 years BC. The timespan from Adam to Abraham is about 2000 years, putting Adam to about 4000 BC (or 6000 years ago).

**Application:**

- Easier to believe 6 days. Literal reading= best for Genesis creation account and there are many reasons from all the sciences to believe in a young earth- see <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v7/n4/ten-best-evidences> .
- Have faith in the Bible. Trustworthy. Do studies. Hold tensions without throwing away faith.
- Check out places of help on Net- Answers in Genesis. Institute for Creation Research. (Intelligent design arguments are also useful but they do not commit to actually saying it is the God of the Bible who is the designer).
- Answer those who dispute, but do so in love- just as Paul did in Athens in Acts 17 (I see you are very religious). Use as part of gospel-sharing training- see Acts 17:26, Acts 14:15,17. Young people especially need to know.
- Face objections- e.g. light from stars reaching us- surely God is able to make it shine that far on the day He made it- after all He is God! A God who is unable to

create really is no God at all. If we doubt God's abilities, or methods, or order of creating we are really doubting that His power or authority over nature:

"Oh, Lord God, you made the skies and the earth with your very great power. **There is nothing too hard for you to do.**" (Jeremiah 32:17)

### **Can creatures evolve?- (1:24)**

#### *Animals:*

- God has set the limits to His Creation- v24 'each according to it's kind'
- Word 'species' has changed- originally =biblical 'kind' e.g the dog 'kind' or 'species', the cat 'kind' or 'species'. But in 1700's Carl Linnaeus, Swedish Christian our modern classifications. He used the term 'species' in his classifications. Today the term 'species'=different types of dogs, different types of cats etc. rather than the species called 'dogs'.
- Micro-evolution, not macro-evolution. There is huge variation within the kind- many breeds of dogs and cats but one kind does not become another- a dog will never become a cat & vice-versa.
- Complex gene-pool to simple gene pool is the way- all the variety was within the original dog (probably a wolf for dogs). Poodle is a long way down the chain.
- Genetic info is lost rather than gaining new info. Mutations are not beneficial. Genetic problems more likely to occur in close relatives having kids with each other because more likelihood of genetic errors because similar gene pool and so less of the original gene pool because less genetic variation.
- Certain types within a 'kind' will do better in a certain environment. A dog with more fur is better protected in a cold environment that a dog with little fur and vice versa. 'survival of the fittest' true to a certain extent within the kind.
- This means that within a few generations the animals with characteristics suited to their environment will thrive and those less suited will die out- this is logical and does not go against scripture or common sense.
- We know that dogs and other animals are bred for specific characteristics. This happens quickly, not slowly. The changes are apparent within a few generations, it doesn't take millions of years. The changes happen this quickly and yet dogs are still dogs- they haven't and will not become anything other than dogs. Humans are pioneering at amazing rates- we have seen huge changes in our lifetimes, yet our bodies are still the same as they were thousands of years ago- our bodies are not evolving into a different 'kind'. Crocodiles still appear the same today as they do in the fossil record. The Caelocanth fish was an index fossil thought to have become extinct anything from 70 million -400 million years ago as it disappeared from the upper strata of rock layers. That means that other fossils found in the same strata were dated to the same period. It was postulated to have had lungs, a large brain and that the 4 bottom fins were the precursors to legs. This fish was thought to have crawled out of the sea, filled it's lungs with air and became the first 4-legged land animal. Millions of students were incorrectly taught this fish was the ancestor of amphibians, birds, reptiles, mammals and people. However, from 1938 to the present day it has been found to be alive and well in the waters of Madagascar and has been caught and filmed on numerous occasions looking exactly like it's fossil- why didn't it evolve? There are many other so-called 'living fossils' today which are strong proof against macro-evolution.

#### *Man:*

- Adam was the first man created according to the Bible. This is the plainest reading of Genesis 1 and 2 and it is stated in the New Testament that Adam was the first man. There is no mention in the Bible of pre-Adamic man. This clearly rules out ape-like ancestors:

"It is written in the Scriptures: "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam became a spirit that gives life." (1 Corinthians 15:45)

"God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world. God decided exactly when and where they must live. God wanted them to look for him and perhaps search all around for him and find him, though he is not far from any of us:" (Acts 17:26-27)

- **Adam not a primitive ape:**

"The man gave names to all the tame animals, to the birds in the sky, and to all the wild animals. But Adam did not find a helper that was right for him." (Genesis 2:20)

"The man named his wife Eve, because she is the mother of everyone who has ever lived." (Genesis 3:20)

- In Genesis 5:1 we read that: "This is the book of the generations of Adam." This hints at the likelihood that Adam actually wrote down his history and passed it on through his family line. Also Adam's descendants made musical instruments and worked with brass and iron:

"Jabal's brother was Jubal, the first person to play the harp and flute. Zillah gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who made tools out of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah." (Genesis 4:21-22)

- The few so-called 'transitional' forms for humans have been seen to be either apes or humans or forgeries.
- People groups have always lived in caves- they still do today in certain parts of the world.
- Man made in the image of God (1:26). Not true of the animals- for man to become a living soul it took the breath of God:

'the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.' (Gen 2:7)

### **Application:**

- We have a responsibility to act in a non-animalistic fashion- we reflect the image of God.
- We are given government over the earth so we are accountable to God for how we have looked after it. Green and environmental application. Within limits as this world is passing away- i.e. It is important, but not more important than people's salvation as that is eternal.
- All humans made in the image of God, therefore we must love all people. Guard the tongue- James'epistle. Love your enemies.
- Sanctity of life- abortion and euthanasia.
- Humanism has it's limits- we are dependant on God and only reach our full potential in a living relationship with our maker- it is what we were created for.

### **What relevance does this creation account have to our lives today?**

*The fact that things aren't just co-incidence and chance (evolution and Big Bang) means God deserves:*

- **Our worship-** We are to worship God as our creator- the sun and moon are not named in 1:16 . Monotheistic. The work of one God- compare to other creation myths of other countries- multiple Gods. Deal with idols in our lives.
- **Our trust-** Anti-superstition- God is still involved in the universe- He has not wound up the clock and left it to it's own devices- He holds all things together- Colossians. God is resting, but still holds all things together. We are not left to fate, but rather God is in charge of history and works all things together for His purposes.

*Also it means that we are not just drifting through life- just as God purposed creation so He gives us a purpose:*

- **Our mission-** The overall purpose of God in creation is to bring all things together under one head- Christ- Ephesians. God wants to reconcile His creation to Himself through Christ, forming one body. That body is the body of Christ, the Church.
- We have an exciting part to play in the wonderful panorama of history. Let's keep focussed on our vision- to fulfil the Great Commission of Matt 28 that all may hear that the God who created the universe loves each and every soul on this planet and desires that they come to a saving faith in Him and know Him as their own Father.

"and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20-21)

### **Summary**

- How old is the universe?
- Can creatures evolve?
- What relevance does this creation account have to our lives today?

### **Song**

We could try to count the stars

## Temptation (Genesis 3)

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2012

### Intro

- This week we will look at the nature of temptation and see how Satan tempted mankind in the Garden of Eden and how he tries to tempt us in a similar way.
- We will look at how we overcome the enemy.

### Read Gen 2:15-17, 3:1-24

**Background-** Satan either speaking through the serpent or is in the form of a serpent- referred to in Rev as that ancient serpent Rev 12:9. Originally must have had legs as the curse was to crawl on it's belly- around the gates of ancient Babylon were demons in the form of snakes with legs on the brickwork, there were also cherubim type creatures guarding gates in ancient Babylonia, Egypt and Assyria reflecting (distortedly by multiple gods) perhaps memories of the fall here. Here we have the origin of the fall of mankind, Adam & Eve are in paradise, they have all good things, eternal life, sinless, great communion with God, all provision in the garden but how does Satan get mankind to mess up, how does it compare with us today and how can we overcome?

#### 1. Doubting God's word

- **v1 'Has God really said'**
- If Satan can get mankind to doubt God's words then he has a foot in the door to deceive. He tries the same thing today- getting people to doubt the validity and truth of the Bible. Satan uses mockery, disbelieving tones, sarcasm to undermine the Word. He also brings in false teaching, conflict and confusion over what God says to undermine it, however Satan truly does believe the Word of God and every demon.
- *'You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free'- John 8:32.* Hebrew concept of 'knowing' far deeper than ours- used of sexual union- knowing intimately, trustingly knowing, knowing by experience, knowing by means of a loving relationship.
- Jesus overcame the evil one with a scripture each time when tempted in the wilderness (from Deuteronomy). Satan also knows scripture and tried to get Jesus to misapply it, but Jesus KNEW experientially the scriptures and was able to counter the attack, do we?
- **Application-** know that scripture is truth- this is our sword, the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). Learn the scriptures, read them, meditate on them. Believe and trust what God says about you & situations over what Satan would say. Learn to think biblically.
- Satan tries to get us to think that God is being too harsh with us- bends the truth 'every tree in the garden', exaggerates to make God look unfair and prohibitive.
- Satan pretends to be helping us, our best friend. He will try and target us when we are vulnerable. God only wants to bless us- He warns us for our own good as a loving parent would
- *God cannot lie- Heb 6:18- God is light and in Him there is no darkness- 1John 1:5.*
- **Application-** know that God loves you and has your best interests at heart. Eve knew what God had said, she just chose to believe what Satan had said over what God had said- we need to do the opposite and believe what God says.

## 2. Denial of consequences

- **v4 'You will surely not die'**
- Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Wages of sin is death.
- In Heb 'dying you will not die'='you most certainly will NOT die'.
- 'Come on just once won't hurt', 'one more time won't hurt', 'you've started now, might as well finish it', 'once more is neither here nor there', 'who will know?', 'who is it hurting?', 'everyone's doing it'
- Sin affects our emotions- it brings misery, depression, shame, guilt, feelings of condemnation, desire to hide from God and others, just as Adam and Eve experienced.
- Sin is addictive- it brings us into bondage. We never have enough and it robs us of true satisfaction.
- Sin affects others- Adam's sin affected all of us. Solidarity of sin- he became our federal head- we became sinners due to him. Our sin affects our families, our friends. Satan wants to spoil our relationships, break up families and churches.
- *Jesus warns about Pharisaical hypocrisy saying 'There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed'- Lk 12:2.* Revelations about Jimmy Saville have shocked, but he hasn't got away with it- it would have been better for him if it had come out before he died so he could have repented, now he has to face God.
- Satan is a thief- he wants to steal your rewards. We are not saved by our works, however, our works will be rewarded. There is a reward for righteousness here and now and in glory, there is a reward for forgiveness here and now and in eternity. There is a confidence that comes from walking in the light and having a clear conscience- a confidence in prayer, a boldness, an assurance of salvation, a great peace, overflowing joy. However, when a Christian is pursuing sin there is a grating, a disease, a conviction until the situation is sorted.
- What is God flagging up in your life now? What has Satan minimised, but God is right now putting His finger on? Are there blessings you are forfeiting in your life by holding onto something that is only bringing misery to you? Let it go, surrender to God and receive His peace and joy afresh this morning.

## 3. Distortion of desire

- **v5 'your eyes will be opened, you will be like God'**
- Adam and Eve were expecting great things out of the deal. Grass is greener complex. Hopping the cues in road traffic and in Home Bargains.
- Adam and Eve had everything before they lost it all. The most precious things we have in life are often the things we already have and take for granted until we lose them. Let's learn to cherish the things God has given us, to be thankful for our families and possessions, not craving after what we do not have all the time as the world does. Praise lifestyle.
- In London breakfast TV were shocked that in a survey an increasing number of people valued possessions more than people & had a guest that would only date people with millions, but then followed it with a 'get rich quick' plug for a competition, promising amazing possessions.
- *'Delight yourselves in the Lord & He will give you the desires of your heart' (Ps 37:4). 'Seek first His Kingdom & His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you' (Matt 6:33).*
- Delayed gratification- our society instant gratification- Heb- *'you have need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promise (Heb 10:36).* Faith endures and receives the promise- Abraham given as example in Heb 6- believed that God would bless him and endured- Heb 11 whole list of OT

saints believed and persevered for the promise that comes in eternity- Opening our presents early not good- me & Jon.

- Rope illustration Francis Chan.
- What is Satan tempting you to rush into? What are you living your life for? Is God's kingdom your first priority? What areas are you tempted to feel hard-done in? Give these things to God.

### **Our action: We overcome through Christ**

- **v15 'He shall bruise your head', v21'God made tunics of skin and clothed them'**
- First Messianic prophecy. Jesus is the promised seed of the woman, later the promise would come to Abraham and his seed (singular). Paul in Gal 3:16 says this 'seed' who was promised is Christ. In Lk 1:55 Mary recognised the seed of Abraham was Christ whom she was carrying.
- *'They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony' Rev 12:11.* It is through the cross of Christ we are victorious over Satan.
- The striking of the heel speaks of Jesus' death for us and the striking of the head speak of Christ's death-blow to Satan on the cross. 'It is finished'- Satan was defeated by Christ on the cross and His victory is our victory. The clothing with skin is a picture of being 'In Christ'- it took the death of an animal for this to happen, but the death of God's Son for our salvation.
- We are either 'in Adam' and defeated or 'In Christ' and victorious- the truth is that when we place our trust in Christ He becomes our federal head- we are 'In Christ' and we are already victorious over the evil one. All of our sin- past, present, future has been laid on Christ and punished in Him- our bill is paid- it's all 'under the blood'.
- Jesus took the curse away from us- even the ground which was cursed – Adam literally means 'red earth'- the ground was cursed with thorns in verse 18, but Jesus took the curse on His brow in the crown of thorns. Refuse the lie that you are a loser, cursed by situation- Jesus took your curse- you are a winner, a champion, an overcomer, victorious in Christ.
- Also the power of sin has been broken- our sinful body was nailed to the cross and is now dead- let's accept this and not resurrect it. All sin is able to be overcome, we are no longer slaves to it.
- *'For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under GRACE.'* – Romans 6:11-14
- *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1Cor 10:13*
- *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 2Pet 1:3*
- *in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:4*
- *For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Rom 6:9-11*

i.e. when Jesus died it was as if He was married to sin (our sin) resulting in the death penalty- i.e. death had mastery over Him due to our sins, however now that He has paid the death penalty He is no longer under sin's sway- He belongs to

another- God; in the same way we are to regard ourselves as severed from that relationship with sin and married to another- God. Sin no longer has any authority in our lives- we've been released from that marriage by dying and now we are raised from the dead and married to another- God- so we are to live believing this and not allowing sin to dictate to us anymore, our relationship with sin is severed by death.

### **Summary**

Satan's methods:

- Doubting God's word
- Denial of consequences
- Distortion of desire

Our action:

- We overcome through Christ

### **Song**

Who is there like You?

# Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)

Valleys Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2012

## Intro

- What were things like in your family if you had brothers and sisters? Was there any sibling rivalry going on? This morning we are going to look at two brothers who turned out completely different and we are going to learn some valuable lessons from their lives- the lives of Cain and Abel.

## Read Gen 4

### 1. The importance of fulfilling our potential

- **v1 'acquired a man'**- Cain's name means 'acquired, gotten, bought'- Eve was amazed at the grace of the Lord that, despite the fall of mankind and death coming into the world God would bless them with a child.
- Cain was their firstborn and had great potential to bring blessing- he was a blessing to them and they expected him to be a blessing, but Cain did not live out his potential.
- Cain's descendants would follow in his footsteps- Lamech in v 19 had two wives- the first to start polygamy- he was violent like Cain and killed someone for hurting him (v23). All of Cain's descendants would later end with the flood, whereas Adam & Eve's next son after Abel, Seth's descendants, continued through Noah. How different things may have been if Cain had not given in to sin.
- When Cain sinned he lost the abilities he once had- he was born to be involved in agriculture and yet his sin meant the land would no longer yield its crop for him. Sin can affect ministry and gifting- we can end up disqualifying ourselves from things that God had planned for us- just as king Saul sinned and the anointing that he once had was no longer effective, and yet God anointed someone else with a heart after God- David. When Samson broke his Nazarite vow to God by having his hair cut the anointing left him.
- Sin promises so much but delivers so little- ruins our destiny.
- The Amalekites later in history would set an ambush on the Israelites when they came out from being slaves in Egypt. God remembered this and later when Saul became king God commanded that they be destroyed. King Saul didn't finish off the Amalekites as God had commanded him, but gave in to temptation and kept the best of the plunder (1Sam 15:9). As a result he was rejected as king. When he later died an Amalekite came and took his crown from his head (2Sam 1:13)- this is what the enemy wants to do to each of us- take away that which God has called us to be.
- What do you want to achieve in God before you die? Are you focussed on it? Are you living out your calling? Using your gifts to serve God and His people?
- Keep focussed on goals and deal with Satan's temptations which will steal the blessings God has for you.

### 2. The need for true worship

- **v4 'firstborn of his flock and of their fat' vs v3 'the fruit of the ground'**
- Abel gave the best offering he could to the Lord. We get the impression from reading these verses that Abel put a lot into his worship of God and yet Cain only brought 'the fruit of the ground'.
- The difference between the two offerings was that of sacrifice- Abel's offering was a true sacrifice- it cost him something. King David, like Abel, was a true worshipper of

God- when he was offered land free of charge to be the place where God's temple would later be build David insisted on paying for it, saying; *'...No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.'* (1Chron 21:24).

- What cost do we put into our worship of God. When we come before the Lord is our worship like that of Cain or that of Abel?
- Abel=Hebel, derived from hevel (breath or vapour). Abel's sacrifice of worship literally would cost him his life. His life was like a breath or mist which appears and quickly vanishes- he was the first martyr. All around the world today believers are following Abel's example and their worship is costing them their lives.
- Although Abel only lived a short time he achieved his destiny and is now being blessed by God- his deeds are recorded in the New Testament as being righteous (1John 3:12). The righteous are not exempt from suffering- e.g. what Renee and Philip and family are experiencing right now. Sometimes the life of the righteous here on earth is not long and sometimes bad people can seem to live longer and sometimes prosper- one of the psalmists Asaph, struggled with this Ps 73:17 when he questioned it, but went to the sanctuary of God and then understood their end- although there may be apparent blessings in this life for the wicked it shall not last and the tables will truly be turned on the Day of Judgement. There is much blessing to come for the righteous. Cain lived a lot longer in this life than Abel, but who would you rather be on the coming Day of Judgement, Cain or Abel?
- We give Christ our all because He gave us His all and laid down His life in His devotion to us- this is a powerful motivator for us to worship Him sacrificially, being grateful for His generosity to us.
- True giving takes faith- our faith is that if we give sacrificially God will repay us abundantly- true worship involves faith. This is recognised in the New Testament when the writer to the Hebrews says 'By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did' (Heb 11:4). A key area is our finances- it takes faith to give God sacrificially of our finances, trusting that He will make sure that we are provided for.
- Cain's offering has been said to be one of works as it is not a blood sacrifice- similar to Adam and Eve trying to cover their own nakedness with leaves and yet God provided coverings of skin for them. It is through receiving the blessings of Calvary that we are able to worship God aright. Have you come to an understanding of the cross? When was the last time you truly were in awe of what He has done for you?
- True worship springs out of a position of realising just how loved and blessed we are- it is a response of thankfulness- Cain was blessed but he hadn't comprehended it and as a result was not overflowing with thankfulness. Let's meditate on the goodness of God to us, His grace in His sacrifice on our behalf to work salvation for us- as we do this we, like Abel, will give of our best in thankfulness.

### **3. The importance of receiving a loving rebuke**

- **v6 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?'**
- What are you like when you are rebuked? Do you respond well to it?
- It is interesting the way that Cain receives the disappointment that his sacrifice has not been accepted by God- it should have been no surprise to him and led to an apology on his part to God and a change of actions in the future, but Cain doesn't seem to be able to deal with disappointment or loving rebuke- he lets his feelings get the better of him and nurses self-pity.  
Not only does God not accept the sacrifice, but God challenges Cain on his attitude towards Him not accepting the sacrifice- he is exhibiting anger and depression- God challenges both of these responses to the situation and warns Cain that sin is

crouching at the door- God describes sin in terms of a demon waiting for him to open the door to allow it in- it wants to overpower Cain, but Cain must overpower it.

**1Cor 10:13** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

- Our mind is like a doorway which we can choose to open to God or the enemy. The battle for the mind is a key area of spiritual warfare- how often have you been having a perfectly harmless conversation with someone and they have said something and it has stuck in your mind and Satan has tried to use it to stir up all sorts of feelings in you? Satan is a master at twisting things and bringing accusation and condemnation. We can't stop thoughts coming into our minds but we can choose not to reinforce them and ruminate on them. Rumination is negatively going over the past again and again, worry is doing the same about the future.

**Wikipedia:** Not only are habitual ruminators more likely to become depressed, but experimental studies have demonstrated that people who...ruminate experience greater depressed mood. There is also evidence that rumination is linked to general anxiety, post traumatic stress, binge drinking, eating disorders, and self-injurious behavior.

- What is the answer to rumination? Choosing to renew our minds by focussing on and believing what God says rather than the enemy:

**Romans 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**2 Corinthians 10:5** We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

- We need to learn that a loving rebuke does not mean we are rejected- it is our behaviour which is being kept in check for our own benefit- love will rebuke where needed:

**Prov 3:11-12 (quoted in Heb 12:5-6)** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

**Revelation 3:19** Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

- Are you secure in God's love? Do you know Him as your loving father? He gave His all for you, he couldn't love you any more than He does already- the cross speaks of the depths of His love- someone asked 'Lord how much do you love me', He replied 'This much' and stretched out His arms and died. When you are secure in someone's love you understand their loving motives in what they say to you- they want your best.

#### **4. The need to love our brethren**

- To say that Cain did not display the love he should have for his brother is an understatement. He sarcastically says to God 'Am I my brother's keeper?' (v9). The answer to this is an emphatic 'yes!'
- Keeper=shamar='guard, protect, attend, regard'
- **1John 3:12** Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

**1John 3:14-16** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to

lay down our lives for our brothers.

- These seem like strong words, equating hating someone with murder, but John is quoting Jesus. The point that Jesus is making is that murder is hatred of someone fully carried out- it is a sliding scale, as seen by Cain murdering his brother- we are all capable of it under the right circumstances but for the grace of God. Usually our 'murder' of people we despise is in more subtle ways- gossiping about them behind their backs- we need to keep our tongues in check.
- Do you hate anyone at the moment? Then you are kindling similar feelings to Cain regarding Abel. Nip it in the bud today- hate the actions rather than the person. Pray for the person to repent and get right with God and you if need be. Resentment and bitterness will eat us away if we allow it to take root in our lives. Forgiveness is a process, but let's make steps towards forgiving certain people rather than staying bitter- if you cannot forgive yet pray that God would do a work in your heart and help you. Remind yourself of the debt you have been forgiven by God. We don't have to deny the pain to forgive- acknowledge the pain but still forgive.
- The antidote for hatred? Love. Love is a choice rather than a feeling. Cain may not have felt like loving Abel at this point but that should not have stopped him.
- Are you reconciled to all people as far as it depends on you today? Ask God what steps you need to make today.

## 5. Belonging comes from the cross

- The punishment for Cain was that the land would no longer receive him and he had to move away, becoming a wanderer. He had to leave the place of his home in shame. His descendants are known for great inventions, but it is almost like they are busying themselves restlessly because there is a hole in their lives.
- If God is not first in our lives, like Cain, we seek satisfaction in all sorts of areas, but ultimately they do not fulfil.

Augustine the Church Theologian said "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

Pascal the great Mathematician said "There is a god-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man, and only God can fill it."

- Legalism- not realising Christ has done it all on our behalf. Sometimes even Christians can be restless like Cain, forever striving and working- sometimes this is because we all can struggle for acceptance and belonging. It is as we realise that we are already accepted and belong in Christ that we are able to relax again and enter into God's true rest- there is a Sabbath day's rest for the people of God (Heb 4:9).
- Even in God's judgement on Cain we still see His mercy coming in- protecting him from harm by placing a sign on him. God loves us, even when we are rebellious His love remains constant.
- Sin alienates us from God and man, but the cross of Jesus reconciles us to God and others. We truly experience the fullness of being family, belonging and coming home.
- The blood of murdered Abel was crying out to God for justice to happen- he had been wrongly murdered by his brother, and yet the blood of Jesus cries out, not for justice but for mercy- 'Father forgive them'. His blood speaks forgiveness-

**Heb 12:24** You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel. (NLT)

- God is just and hates sin and must punish it, however He Himself took our punishment on the cross and so we have peace with God- He is no longer angry with us- this is called 'propitiation' -something which takes away wrath. By the blood

of Christ, His death, God's full anger against our sin was displayed. God wants us to come home.

- The parable of the prodigal son- wasted his father's estate, messed up big time just as Cain does and yet the father was there with open arms to receive him when he chose to turn back. Let's choose today to turn back to our loving Father.

Jude v11 'They have followed the way of Cain' – which way are you walking today?

### **Summary**

In the lives of Cain and Abel we see:

1. The importance of fulfilling our potential
2. The need for true worship
3. The importance of receiving a loving rebuke
4. The need to love our brethren
5. Belonging comes from the cross

### **Song**

*Your blood speaks a better word*