

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

The Scarlet Thread through the Bible

INTRODUCTION: You have probably noted that already in our considerations of great principles of the Scripture that begin in Genesis but continue through the rest of the Bible, we have touched Genesis chapter 3, three times.

- I identified the disobedience of Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit as the beginning of the pitfalls of their stewardship, in the same way that disobedience to the Lord prevents us from being the faithful stewards God has created us to be.
- Bro. Mark noted that this disobedience led to the beginning of slavery to sin for the first man and woman and ultimately for us all. Christ can break this bondage to sin for us and free us to become slaves of God in love and service.
- Last week, Bro. Rick again started at this point and walked through the Scriptures to see the consequences of sin.

Now I come back to Genesis 3 one more time, but I get the good part. In **Genesis 3:15** we have the first promise of God's provision of a Savior, One Who will provide victory over sin and death and offer both abundant and eternal life to all. It **is the very first reference to** the story that flows throughout the pages of the Scripture, **the story of God's atoning grace: the forgiveness of sin by the shedding of blood.**

W.A. Criswell, the well-known pastor of First Baptist Church Dallas, then the largest Southern Baptist Church in the nation, **described this story as "The Scarlet Thread through the Bible."** When Dr. Criswell first preached his sermon by that title, he preached for 5 hours – to a packed auditorium. Later as an anniversary gift, the church said he could preach as long as he liked. He preached the scarlet thread: morning, afternoon, evening, and still the subject could not be exhausted.

I attempt nothing so grand as to try to reveal that scarlet thread that runs through the entirety of Scripture in each place it surfaces. But acknowledging my debt to Dr. Criswell for his inspirational work in this area, I want to share briefly with you glimpses of that scarlet thread, the story of God's atoning grace, the forgiveness of sin through the shedding of blood that began before creation and continues beyond time into eternity.

The story begins in eternity past, before creation marked the beginning of time as we count it. There was God, manifest in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. There was nothing else.

Then God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them. Among the creatures that God made were the celestial spiritual beings: angels, cherubim, seraphim, archangels. Among the archangels was one who was the most beautiful and wise. He

was called, "The Son of the Morning," and he led the worship of the One True and Living God around the Throne of Heaven. His name was Lucifer.

Sometime after the six days of creation when God pronounced His benediction upon all that He created, declaring it to be "very good," **Lucifer yielded his heart to pride and desired to be a god himself, one to make his own rules, be his own boss, and be worshipped and revered by others.** This is the ultimate origin of sin in the universe. The prophet Isaiah later offered a description of what happened.

Is. 14:12-15

12 "How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
13 For you have said in your heart:
'I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.'
15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.

So for his sin, Lucifer was cast down and with him one-third of the angels, who followed him in rebellion against the Most High God and were given the name of "demons."

My friend, I shudder when I consider what happened in the heart of this exalted angel of God who has become known as Satan, the Adversary, the opponent of God, who shall be imprisoned in the very lowest portion of the fiery abyss in the midst of the earth.

- I shudder because **I see how much my sin is like the sin of Lucifer.**
- **I get prideful, think I am wise, that I am right, and I know best.**
- **I want to call the shots and determine my own way, even when it is in conflict with God's way.**
- Seeing the origin of my personal sin as like the beginning of sin in Satan frightens me.
- But it also makes me see how very, very much **I need the story of God's atoning grace and forgiveness of sin to be played out in my own life.**

So, continue with me in remembering that story. The physical universe God had created continued to operate in perfect harmony. The celestial bodies moved in sync with one another in their orbits. The earth rotated evenly at just the right tilt on its axis as it revolved around the sun. It was a haven of life, beauty, and joy. In it lived a man and woman, Adam and Eve, who exercised dominion over all of God's creation as they enjoyed a luscious garden filled with food called the Garden of Eden. For a time, they lived in this sinless, sickless, deathless paradise with God.

1. Genesis 3 tells of the end of that perfect state as Lucifer, now called Satan, enters the body of the serpent and tempts Eve to sin. He began where sin usually begins, by questioning God's Word, "Has God said?"

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and ate the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their eyes were opened, and they beheld their nakedness, and they were ashamed.

Soon God came to the garden and called for them, but they hid. When God summoned them Adam explained, "I was afraid, ashamed, for I was naked." Lucifer had infiltrated. Adam and Eve had chosen to sin. Immediately God announced that Satan would not win the war he waged for the souls of men.

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."

God was saying that One would be born of the Seed of woman who, though He would be hurt and suffer, yet He would win the final victory over the fallen one.

So in order to cover the shame of the sinners, God took an innocent animal and before the eyes of Adam and Eve, He slew it. As it quivered and died, its blood dripped upon the thirsty ground, and man beheld that the wages of sin is death. **Adam saw that blood had to be shed for the result of his sin, his shame, to be covered.**

Heb. 9:22 And according to the law almost **all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.**

Thus begins the scarlet thread through the Bible.

The descendants of Adam and Eve continued to live in the way of sin. One day, God chose a man named Abraham through whom to send the One who would gain the victory over Satan. The promise continued through Abraham's descendants, Isaac and then Jacob. Ultimately God sent the family of Abraham by the help of Joseph into a protective slavery in Egypt for 430 years. When God was ready to release them, the scarlet thread surfaces again.

2. The stubborn Pharaoh refused nine times to obey God's Word and release the Israelites. So God made a way of escape for His people. **God promised to send death to the firstborn of every household except those who would put the**

blood of an unblemished lamb upon the doorposts and lintel of their houses.
He said,

Ex. 12:13 **Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.**

The Lord came, the firstborn died, except in the houses of God's people where God passed over them because on the doorposts was the blood. **Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.**

Thus the scarlet thread continues through the Bible as God brings His people to the mountain of God and there gives His law.

3. Leviticus records much of the ceremonial law and specifies what Israel was to do about their sin so they would not be estranged from a Holy and Righteous God.

Lev. 16:29 **"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, ...**

Lev. 17:5, 6, 11 **to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices ... to the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, ... and offer them as peace offerings to the LORD. ... And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD ... For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'**

Thus did Israel do, continually slaying bulls and lambs and sprinkling blood on the altar of God.

"For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

And the scarlet thread weaves through the Bible.

The sin of the people and sacrifices to atone continue through the time of the conquest of Joshua, the period of the judges, and the beginning of the kings. The scarlet thread can be seen many times but is especially brilliant at the end of 2 Samuel.

4. **King David sinned against God and brought the punishment of pestilence upon the nation of Israel that he ruled.**

2 Sam. 24:15, 17-18 **So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. ... seventy thousand ... people died. ... Then David spoke to the LORD ... and said, "Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly;**

And the prophet Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.”

And David did. **When David slew the oxen and made the sacrifices, God saw the blood, and “the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.”**

“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.”

That sacrifice was made on Mt. Moriah. **The temple was later built there and blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat yearly on the Day of Atonement.** But prophets had begun to declare that God’s plan of redemption would soon reach a new level of completion.

5. **Isaiah graphically described the blood sacrifice to be made by the Coming Savior 800 years in advance.**

Isaiah 53:4–6, 12 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... **He poured out His soul unto death,** ... And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.”

6. **Jeremiah foretold the fruit of the Savior’s sacrifice.**

Jer. 31:31, 33-34 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ... For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The prophets were explaining that one day, man would no longer need a year old lamb to shed its blood for his sins, another Lamb would be provided.

And so the scarlet thread passes from the Old Testament, or covenant, to the New.

7. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, **God identifies His appointed sacrifice, Jesus,** the One whose blood would be shed.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! **The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

The scarlet thread becomes more evident now in the words of Jesus as He talks about His death and resurrection.

8. All three of the other gospels pick up the thread at the Last Supper.

Matt. 26:27-28 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is **My blood of the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

It surfaces in the last words of John's record of the crucifixion

John 19:34-36 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. 36 For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ...

"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

Still the scarlet thread continues through the Bible.

9. Soon the apostles were spreading the news of forgiveness by way of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The newest apostle, Paul, was preaching it and writing it throughout the world.

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Eph. 1:7 In Him **we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Col. 1:20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **having made peace through the blood of His cross.**

So **the church witnesses of the culmination of the scarlet thread became proclaimers of God's atoning grace through the shedding of the blood of His Son upon the cross.**

10. Finally we come to the last book of the Bible where the aged apostle John, exiled to the Isle of Patmos received the Revelation of what was, what is, and is to come. And what was it that he saw and heard, but the glorious and future climax of the scarlet thread.

He saw

Rev. 1:5-6 ... Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and **washed us from**

our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying:
"You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood ...

He saw the saved.

Rev. 7:13-14 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ... "These are the ones who ... **washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

He saw the crucified and resurrected Savior returning to vanquish sin and death forever.

Revelation 19:11, 13, 16 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ... **He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood**, and His name is called The Word of God. ... And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**

CONCLUSION: Oh dear friend do you say with me today, "Oh how much my sin is like that first sin of the evil one and how desperately I need the story of the scarlet thread through the Bible to be the story of my life.

How can you make this story of God's atoning grace, given to us through the shed blood of His Son Jesus, your story? The same way I did. The only way any man or woman can – by believing, by trusting in the One Who shed His blood for us that we might have forgiveness of sin, Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Romans 10:9 ... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.