

GENESIS

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This is not an in depth commentary of the first book of the Bible but highlights some events showing examples of sins which are still with us.

When God made the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve, they were both adult and naked. But there was no embarrassment or shame. It was the age of innocence and sinlessness.

However, the woman was inquisitive and became wilful. The man was not like this. Eve was tempted by Satan because he knew that she was weaker. She did not resist the Devil and, as a consequence, became the first sinner, the first wrong-doer. As a result of her disobedience, she immediately realised that she was naked and her innocence was lost. Because of her newly-acquired sinful nature she resorted to enticing Adam to sin. Unlike Adam, she already knew the seductive power that she possessed consequent upon her disobedience to God, which is what sin is, and she persuaded Adam to copy her bad example and likewise sin was performed by man, although man retained his innocence longer. The result of Adam's subsequent sin meant that he also knew that he was naked and therefore his innocence was lost as well. Such was their discomfort that they made coverings to conceal their sexuality from God and from each other (Genesis 3.7). Modesty became necessary as a result of sin.

The Bible is clear. Original sin heralded in the vulnerability of nakedness, shame, sexual embarrassment and the need of clothes.

The fact that many women are dressmakers stems from Eve making the first garments which Genesis 3.7 describes as aprons. Apron is the word chagorah which really means a belt, a covering from the waist down which hides the genitals. In one sense these aprons were underwear. But these aprons were inadequate. The Bible is also equally clear, and emphatically so, that both the man and the woman even when dressed with their aprons were still naked in the sight of God (Genesis 3.10) and with each other. Yet they had previously been naked in God's presence and with each other and without shame.

A further result of sin was that the woman was punished and all women since have certain female problems including childbirth. This is a memorial in perpetuity as a result of sin which a woman brought into the world.

Man was also punished. As Paul says in 1 Timothy 2.14, Adam knew that what he was doing was wrong. His sin was that he listened to the voice of Eve and obeyed her and disobeyed God (Genesis 3.17).

Adam's sin is another matter in perpetuity namely that man has to work for a living (Genesis 3.17). Both Adam and Eve had the punishment of expulsion from Paradise, that is to say Eden.

Feminists object to all of this because they claim that the Bible is male orientated and anti women. God issued an edit which has not been rescinded that because woman was the first sinner, seductress and temptress, she has to submit to man and obey him and this teaching is maintained throughout both the Old and New Testaments (Genesis 3.17, 1 Corinthians 3.11, 14.34 Ephesians 5.22 and 1 Timothy 2.11).

In Ephesians 5 the word submit means to 'not resist the love and care that a husband bestows upon his wife' and Galatians 3.28 reminds us that there is neither male nor female but we are all one in Christ Jesus. Men and women have different roles but there is no inequality. When it comes to spiritual matters the man is to obey the Lord and be taught by Him and, as necessary, advise his wife accordingly, but in love. A husband is to love and care for his wife and protect her as, for

example, men have done for centuries when war and terrorism threatens family values. Many other examples could be given. Is it wrong for men to protect their wives and family and show his love for them ?

Eve, and later, Adam, disobeyed God's only law and spoiled God's fellowship with the man and the woman. Sin invokes Divine punishment. And, on another issue still relevant today, immodesty in dress creates sin and problems.

1 Timothy 2.9 directs women to dress modestly to prevent seduction and temptation and for her own protection.

In Genesis 4, we have the story of Cain and Abel. In simple terms, Abel offered a sacrifice of which the Lord approved whereas Cain did not offer a worthy sacrifice and this irritated him so that he killed his brother. Cain was the first murderer and Abel the first innocent victim. Cain's problem was largely due to envy and anger.

We are introduced to polygamy in 4.19 but that does not even suggest that God approved of this. But Lamech, a descendant of Cain, set a trend. By Genesis 6, evil had spread to such a degree that God regretted making man. The curious verse 2 states that the sons of God saw that the daughters of women were beautiful and took women of all that they chose. The sons of God cannot mean angels for the Lord said that angels do not marry (Matthew 22.30) and so we conclude that they were godly men lacking discrimination and being seduced, intentionally or not, by the seductive power of female beauty. And God calls all of this wickedness (Genesis 6. 5) and He destroyed the earth by a flood with the exception of Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. Also saved were living creatures able to mate. (Genesis 7.13).

Even a great man like Noah had his weaknesses and made mistakes. He became drunk and was uncovered in his tent (Genesis 9.21). The Hebrew word is *gulah* which means to strip, to be undressed. to reveal one's undergarments or nakedness. Nahum 3 speaks of the punishment of humiliated captives both men and women and history confirms that rough soldiers lifted the skirts of women so that their nakedness be seen by which is meant their thighs and underwear. This was both sin and shame.

It will not have escaped our notice of how sex, seduction and nakedness are certainly evils.

Ham saw the nakedness of his father as did his brothers, Shem and Japheth, and they walked with their backs to their father with a blanket to cover Noah. When Noah awoke and knew what had happened he blessed both Shem and Japheth and cursed Ham's son Canaan. No indication is given as to why Canaan was cursed rather than his father Ham. What is clear is that drunkenness is wrong and can lead to a loss of reason, decency and problems with inhibitions. But nakedness is shame and to view the nakedness of someone including someone of the same sex was shameful (Leviticus 18.7) Nakedness also means inadequately dressed such as showing one's underwear or that which serves the same purpose as underwear in covering the same areas.

Genesis 11 sets out the story of the tower of Babel. People dwelt in the plains of Shinar and there was only one language in the earth. A city was built in the plain with the desire to build a tower to reach into heaven and so that the people would make a name for themselves. Pride is a dangerous thing and this was disrespect for God who intervened and confused their language making new ones. We have skyscrapers today and, as we have seen, they can be death traps.

Despite Abraham being the great heroic patriarch, he was wayward at times. After God had given him wonderful promises in Genesis 12, including being the father of a great nation on the earth, he was tempted when there was a famine in the land and went into Egypt. His wife, Sarai, was very

beautiful and Abram, as he was then called, was concerned that he might be murdered in order that an Egyptian would possess her. Abram coerced Sarai into being his sister. She was eventually taken into Pharaoh's palace because she was both beautiful and seductive and, as a result, Abram was treated well. Abram's attitude was probably, " You can have my wife, but not my life. "

But Pharaoh's house was plagued mercilessly and the truth of Abram and Sarai's deception was eventually discovered. What has to be noted is that Abram used his wife's sexual beauty and, while his deceit may be understandable, he could hardly be being honourable of trusting in God's promises to him.

Lot was a son of Haran who was a brother of Abram. Abram took Sarai, Lot and his entourage into the new land God had called Abram to go to. When they got there, there were arguments between Abram and his servants and Lot and his servants about the best place to graze their flocks. Abram settled near Hebron and Lot went towards Sodom and Gomorrah. The people of Sodom captured Lot and, as a result, Abram raised an army of 318 to rescue him. This evil city was destroyed and Lot's wife perished.

A curious event happens in Genesis 16. Sarai is barren and she blames God (verse 2) and accordingly tells her husband to have sex and a child with her Egyptian maid, Hagar. Sarai, like Eve before her, was encouraging her husband to sin since, like Adam, Abram obeyed his wife. The result was similar, in some senses, to the Garden of Eden disaster.

Hagar became pregnant and Sarai hated this and blamed Hagar who became the mother of the first Arab who was called Ishmael (Genesis 16 15) and the problems between Arabs and Jews still exist to this day. Abraham was a Hebrew but destined to be the father of the Jews. With Sarah, he had a son Isaac (Genesis 21.3)

What Sarah did to her husband and to Hagar was wrong ;that Abraham, like Adam, obeyed his wife was wrong.

Abraham copied his earlier mistake by passing his wife off again as his sister (Genesis 20.2). On this occasion, it was not Pharaoh that took her but Abimelech, king of Gerar.

For the second time, Sarah is in another man's harem as D F Payne points out and trouble ensues.

We may not understand these unfaithful actions of either Abraham and Sarah. It has been noted that all these matters happened before the commandments were given.

The story of Abraham and Isaac in chapter 22 is well known. God was testing Abraham who had to build an altar and to slay Isaac and offer him up as a sacrifice. But God seeing that Abraham respected Him, intervened and there was a ram caught in the thicket which was to be the burnt offering. As verse 8 says, God will provide Himself a lamb for the burnt offering. This speaks of Calvary and the Lamb of God.

To me, one of the great mysteries of genesis is that God loved Jacob and hated his brother, Esau.

In Genesis 25, Abraham took another wife, Keturah, and had children with her but it appears that he married again because he was a widower. Between the death of Sarah and his second wife, there appears the character of Rebekah, another very beautiful woman who supplied Isaac's servant with water when he was on a quest to find a bride for his master. When she is about to meet Isaac, she makes sure that she is fully covered

(Genesis 24.65) and thus endorses the Divine principle of female modesty, a feature of the whole of the Bible and being one of God's requirements in perpetuity. Vashti is another example in Esther 1.12. As we have seen, this is further exemplified in 1 Timothy 2.9. Herbert Lockyer writes,

"Women had to avoid anything that would attract attention." Another has written, "Attention seeking and seduction by the woman is an expression of vanity and pride, insecurity or immaturity or both." Alan Nute writes that women's responsibility is not to be ostentatious and they are not to display themselves since that could lead to assault and worse. " In the age in which we live women and girls are violated many times often due to their immodest dress. Of course, the man who commits the assault is guilty and must be punished appropriately.

In Isaiah 47, we read that a woman showing her bare legs and thighs even in water was naked and this was a sin and shame.

It is a pity that Rebekah's exemplary virtue of modesty did not show in other exemplary virtues. When her husband, Isaac, could no longer see she deceived him by passing Jacob off as Esau (Genesis 27.15). The story of Esau seems at first to be very unfair on him but that is a different matter. Jacob was later deceived by his future father-in-law and had to work for Laban for seven years to secure Rachel to be his wife only to find that he was given her sister, Leah. A week later, Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel which was his second marriage in seven days (Genesis 29).

And, as it was with Sarah and Hagar, so it was with Rachel and Leah. A man with two, or more sexual partners, brings nothing but strife and jealousy. Jacob had a concubine, a mistress, one of his wife's maids whose name was Bilhah.

The story in Genesis 30.16ff is strange. In the days of the wheat harvest, Reuben, one of Leah's sons found mandrakes growing among the crop. Both his mother and Rachel wanted them and there was a quarrel over who really was Jacob's wife or his favourite. Mandrakes were a plant very popular as an aphrodisiac which aroused sexual desire.

The first recorded case of rape appears in Genesis 34. Dinah was one of the daughters of Leah and she was raped by Prince Shechem, a Canaanite and he demanded of his father, Hamor, to make Dinah his wife. Jacob's sons heard of the rape and there followed a slaughter of men in Shechem's city. The city was destroyed and looted by Jacob's sons and the women and children taken prisoners. Anger out of control is seen. To punish many for one man's sin is immoral. Rape is condemned.

Later, in Genesis 38, Tamar dresses sexily and she bargains with Judah, her father in law, who does not recognise her, for sex with him and a payment. Judah was the fourth son born to Jacob and Leah. This case in Genesis 38 is the first recorded case of prostitution and it was initiated by the woman. As a result of this sexual encounter, Tamar gives birth to twins. This is incest and against Leviticus 18.18.

Some feminists insist that prostitution is always the result of male dominance. It is men abusing women and, further, feminists insist that prostitutes are victims of men. Harlotry and whoredoms are condemned by God. In Jeremiah 3.1, God condemns any association with harlots which, in verse 6, are referred to as playing the harlot. It was immoral, defilement and pollution and God punishes prostitutes. In Ezekiel 16, God speaks about prostitutes using their beauty, seductiveness and how she dresses to entice men. God calls whoredoms an abomination and, in verse 22, refers to the sin of being inadequately dressed. naked and bare. It has been suggested by scholars that the use of two words here may not be just an emphasis but refer to the style of dress which displayed bare limbs such as thighs and being eventually completely nude and therefore the whole process from the enticement of dress to nudity formed prostitution.

Proverbs 7 10 speaks of the clothes prostitutes wore and by clear implication, a decent woman would not dress or even consider dressing in any way that could be similar either in fact or anyone's thoughts.

Joseph found favour in Egypt after his brothers had sold him into Egypt out of jealousy, But while he was employed by Potiphar

his wife flirted with Joseph and demanded that he sleep with her (Genesis 39.7). He refused but she persisted and, no doubt, used her feminine charm. She grappled with him and tore off his garment and he fled from her. She accused him of rape. He was arrested and put into prison. Even today there are women and girls who falsely accuse men of rape and sexual assault

and, consequently, some men end up in prison. We do not read of Mrs Potiphar having to account for her malicious act and one wonders if women like her have any conscience or morals.

That Joseph and his brothers settled in Egypt lead to multiplication of Hebrews in Egypt and major trouble resulting in plagues, the exodus and the destruction of Pharaoh's army.

There are many lessons to learn from Genesis. It was a woman who was the first sinner, temptress and seducer, and caused a man to sin. Nakedness or showing one's underwear or merely dressed in what is positionally the same as underwear is both sin and shame.. All sin is punishable and there are some perpetual memorials of sin for both man and woman. Women are to submit to man because woman was the first sinner. But to submit does not mean a woman is to be a doormat.. It is not a means of inferiority but realising that men and women are equal but have different roles. Christians are not to be sexist or misogynists. Bigamy does not have God's approval but both parties share responsibility for this offence. Men are weak when it comes to female beauty and charm and some women use this to their own advantage. Some can get men to do anything. Drunkenness is wrong as is seeing the nakedness of another unless it be your spouse. To see the nakedness of someone of the same sex is wrong. The misuse and abuse of any female is decidedly wrong.

Abraham's conduct was totally unacceptable as was Sarah's in giving her husband to a slave girl for sex. Her subsequent anger and jealousy was also wrong. Some people are adept at blaming others.

Both Adam and Abraham are examples of men obeying women and consequently sinning but they also sin of their own accord.

The Bible extols the modesty and privacy of women. It shows the disastrous effects of polygamy as shown in Sarah and Hagar and Rachel and Leah. Rape is condemned as is prostitution. Marriage of people of different faiths is not allowed by God. Lies, deception, hatred and jealousy is usually discovered and produces distress, trouble and damaged lives. Incest is immoral and when women and girls falsely accuse men of sexual abuse this is condemned. Since Eve, women have often had the power to sin and encourage others to follow suit.

It must be made clear that both men and women are sinners. Romans states that all have sinned and could short of the glory of God. Sin cannot be blamed on just one of the sexes but on both of them. The Eternal Word of God became flesh, became a person and died on the Cross in order that all who come to Him may be saved.

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