

Notes on Genesis 2
Fall Up, Fall Down, or Fall Apart?
(Genesis 3:1-6:5)
Fretheim Explores Genesis,
Luther Productions, St. Paul, 2000

What Kind of Fall?

- 1. a fall down
 - stumbling, falling on face
- 2. a fall up
 - becoming like God, knowing good and evil like God
- 3. a fall apart
 - The effects of sin: relationships begin to fall apart. There is alienation, estrangement, distance between God's creatures and within selves (alienation within self = shame)

Sin is an Intrusion into God's World

- God did not intend sin to be part of the world, although God did create a world where his creatures could resist his will
- God created the world with a "moral order:" sin has consequences

Purpose of the Story of the Fall

- 1. story of the past
- 2. a story of what it is like to be tempted, to fall into sin on a regular basis

Who is the Serpent (or Snake)?

- the serpent is never identified as the devil or as evil.
- God made the snake (God made every animal, and it was good). The snake is a creature of God.
- Consider the snake not as a personification of the devil, but a neutral figure, a *truth-teller* who facilitates the options open to human beings
- a problem with the interpretation of the snake as the devil: shifts responsibility for sin, "the devil made me do it."

What Was the First Sin?

- Disobedience?
- On a deeper level, it was a mistrust of God and of God's word leading to the secondary sin of disobedience.
 - a mistrust engendered by the snake's saying "God knows . . ." (God has not told human beings everything.)

The Complicity of the Man in the First Sin

- Note that Adam was with Eve during her conversation with the snake, although he contributes nothing.

The Effects of Sin in the World

- For the Snake:
 - continuing presentations of tempting possibility / tempting potential to humanity
 - there is no clear sign who might win
- For the Woman:
 - Pain in childhood will be increased. Your desire will be for your husband. The man shall rule over you
 - Is this *descriptive* or *prescriptive*? God is *describing* here the effect of sin, not God's intentions
- For the Man:
 - increasing agricultural difficulties

The Cain and Abel Story

- shows the snowballing effect of sin
- note it begins at the core of human relationship: the family
 - we see increasing dysfunctionality in families as we read further in the Bible, showing the continuing and progressive effects of sin.

The Continuing Positive Effects of God's Work as Creator Despite Sin

- God gives human beings the same responsibility outside Eden as they had in Eden
- Humans still play a part in the continuing creation of the world, with new technological and artistic achievements
- Genealogies show God continues to relate to the world and provide life,
- Human intimacy continues as positive aspect of our relationship to each other

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The Long Life Spans of People in the Bible

- In those days, an extraordinary long life was common in stories of ancient times -- sometimes tens of thousands of years
 - longest life span in bible: 969 years
- successive genealogies in Genesis show life spans gradually decreasing over time: the progressive effect of sin

Original Sin versus the Originating Sin

- Original sin (Genesis 6:5):
 - wickedness of humankind great, every inclination of their hearts only evil continuing
 - Original sin is sin become pervasive, an inevitable part of everyone's life

- Originating Sin
 - the first sin of Adam and Eve
 - note even after that first sin, Adam and Eve are not presented as despicable people
 - this was the beginning of the process that led to Original Sin

References

- Video series: **Fretheim Explores Genesis**. Luther Productions. St. Paul. 2000.
(Available from: <http://www.lutherproductions.com/bibleseries.htm#bible2>)
- "The Book of Genesis. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Terence E. Fretheim. In: **The New Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume I**. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1994.