

Introduction

Last week, in [Genesis 15](#), we read of how animals were brought to Abram and how he was put into a deep sleep as God made His covenant with Abram. But [Genesis 15](#) is not the first time that a man has dealt with animals and then fallen into a deep sleep. This is exactly what happens in [Genesis 2](#) when God brought the animals to Adam before making Eve from his side.

Genesis 2:19-22 ESV

Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

With [Genesis 15](#) ending with Abram dealing with animals and being put into a deep sleep by God, it is not surprising that the first thing we find in [Genesis 16](#) is Abram's wife, Sarai. Just as Adam was put into a deep sleep and presented with his wife, so too was Abram put into a deep sleep and now we have Sarai entering into the picture.

If you know your Bible well you might be catching on to what is going to happen next in the story. [Genesis 2](#) ends with Adam being presented with his wife and [Genesis 3](#) begins with the story of the Fall. Much the same thing goes on in our passage in [Genesis 16](#). Abram is presented with his wife after he awakes from his deep sleep and we have another fall narrative.

The Fall narrative of [Genesis 16](#) breaks down into three parts:

1. Verses 1-4 present man's sin.
2. Verses 5-6 present man's judgement.

3. Verses 7-16 present God's judgement.

Man's Sin (vv. 1-4)

In these three verses there are all sorts of parallels to the account of the Fall in [Genesis 3](#). In this account, Hagar stands in for the forbidden fruit. Just as Eve brought the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to Adam and Adam listened to her. So too here Sarai brings Hagar to Abram and Abram listens to her. Just as Adam took the fruit from Eve, Abram takes Hagar from Sarai's hand.

Verse 4 is the turning point in the opening section. Hagar conceives, "***And when [Sarai] saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.***"

This verse is filled with references to vision and sight (Sarai **saw**, Sarai **looked**). This theme of sight references back to [Genesis 3](#) where the **eyes** of Adam and Eve were opened after they sinned. Adam and Eve realized the great folly of their ways and they were ashamed and they hid from God.

While there are certainly many big picture things occurring in this account, what is clear here and in [Genesis 3](#) is how deceptive the ways of sin are. Temptation is often shrouded in the guise of pursuing some good. Eve saw that the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was desirable to make one wise. Sarai, knew that it was God's plan to give Abram and her offspring, thus perhaps she could obtain this according to the flesh.

Sometimes your temptations are base appeals to the sinful desires of your flesh. Lust, pride, envy, gluttony, gossip, disobedience. Our flesh is weak and often we are tempted in accordance with our weaknesses. These temptations are strong but they are less subtle. When you are tempted along these lines you are rarely fooled to thinking you are pursuing some great purpose.

But Satan and the world are subtle. They often disguise their plans in righteous language in order to carry their victims off to hell.

But the end result of sin is always the same. Shame, fear, and our eyes being opened to the death that was festering within the white-washed tomb.

As [James 1:15](#) states, “desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

The eyes of Sarai were opened and “***she looked with contempt on her mistress.***”

Man’s Judgement (vv. 5-6)

What comes next in verses 5-6 is the judgement of man in response to their sin. In the garden, Adam and Eve hid from God and covered themselves in leaves to hid their nakedness. In these actions we see a breakdown in man’s relationship with God and man’s relationship with one another were breaking down.

Here in [Genesis 16](#) we see a similar breakdown occurring. Sarai blames Abram, Abram gives in to his wife, and Sarai deals harshly with Hagar. They blame one another and give into one another’s sins. Moreover, the weakest party involved, Hagar, bears the brunt of the schemes of Sarai and Abram.

When you sin, you experience shame and fear. You should go straight to God asking for forgiveness and strength to make things right. Then you should go to the parties involved and try to bring restoration.

But we are often tempted to fall directly into another sin after our eyes have been opened to our sin. You hide from God and you begin to blame others and offload the consequences of your sins on those who are weak around you. You sin against your spouse and then you are tempted to take it out on your children.

Without God’s gracious intervention, this is how man deals with the reality and consequences of their own sin. But thanks be to God, we are not left without God’s gracious intervention.

God’s Judgement (vv. 7-16)

In this final larger section we are told of how Hagar flees from Sarai and how the angel of the LORD comes to her.

Again, the language is just like that of God approach Adam and Eve after the Fall. In [Gen 3:9](#) “God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”” here the

angel of the LORD says, “***where have you come from and where are you going?***”

The angel of the LORD comes to Hagar just God came to Adam and Eve in the Garden in [Gen 3](#). Moreover, there are judgements here just as there are in [Genesis 3](#). But in both cases God’s judgements are, as one scholar puts it, tinged with grace.

The judgements of the angle of the LORD to Hagar, resemble those that God gave to Eve. God told Eve that her pain would be multiplied in childbirth and that her husband would rule over her. However, God also made it known that Eve’s offspring would crush the head of the serpent.

Hagar is told to return to her mistress and to submit to Sarai. But Hagar is also told that she will have a multiplying in childbearing. But the angel of the LORD promises to multiple her offspring and tells her she is bearing a son who shall be called Ishmael.

Hagar confesses that God saw her affliction and looks after her and she returned to Abram and bore him Ishmael.

Conclusion

To conclude I want to circle back to the beginning and trace a theme that is present throughout this account. Hagar is an Egyptian servant. She likely came up out of Egypt with Abram and Sarai back in [Genesis 12](#).

This story is an inversion of the account of the Exodus. In the beginning chapters of Exodus, it is the Hebrew people who are servants and Egypt and who are oppressed. Here it is an Egyptian who is a servant of Abram who is oppressed.

In Exodus it was the Hebrews who were bearing sons and here it is the Egyptian who is bearing a son.

In [Genesis 15](#) God told Abram that his descendents would be strangers in a foreign land. The name “Hagar” is associated with being a stranger.

This theme of inversion is a common one throughout the Bible and that is important. It is important because the gospel is ultimately a kind of inversion. We are the ones who are in need and yet the Son of God takes on our neediness

in the incarnation. We are the sinners and Jesus lives a sinless life in our place. We are the ones worthy of judgement and yet Jesus suffers under the judgement of God on the cross.

We are given hints of this great inversion all throughout the Bible, including in [Genesis 16](#).

Our God is the great story teller and in His story, there is grace and mercy for those who have fallen. Thanks be to God!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!