

## 241 In the Image of God ....

Last time we considered with dismay some “crazy priorities” now prevalent in our society, including what now amounts to a widespread acceptance of mass abortion – a practice that surely has few equals in terms of national sinfulness. In Genesis 9.5-6 the Lord gives us very clear instruction over the shedding of blood, a passage that is a God-given “creation ordinance” which applies to the whole of humanity irrespective of era or place.

We are reminded from these words that Man is no mere super-ape, just the latest development in a long line of evolutionary wonders, with Bigger and Better yet to evolve. Uniquely, God made man in His own image (9.6b). As such, the shedding of blood, and especially human blood, has great spiritual significance, whatever the staff in the abortion clinics and genetics laboratories may affirm these days.

We read in Genesis 9 that God would require satisfaction from any man who deliberately shed human blood, and that satisfaction would be nothing less than the shedding of the slayer’s own blood. The Hebrew word translated for us here as “require” or “demand” is a judicial term, God thus acting as a Judge with the responsibility to punish the breaking of a sacred law. He has therefore placed upon humanity the duty to administer divinely-appointed justice in obedience to God’s instruction. In this case this means “capital punishment” for murder, a sentence which firmly proclaims the central truth that each human being is made “in God’s image” and is thus deeply precious.

But the shedding of the blood of the guilty has a wider application than murder alone: it is symbolised by death itself as a consequence of human sin. The Lord God had commanded Adam not to eat of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” for such a deed would lead to death (Genesis 2.16-17). Disobedience to God our Creator is sin; and the subsequent sinful disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) led first to their immediate spiritual death, demonstrated by the various consequences of their sin including banishment from the garden of Eden (3.8-24), and also to their eventual physical death (5.5) - in both cases, a spiritual “shedding of their blood” in death because of sin. As a result of the sinfulness of Adam and Eve, our first parents, all of us who have come after them are born into this same state of spiritual death before God and thus face His righteous judgement - the spiritual “shedding of our blood” in death (Romans 3.23, 6.23, 5.6-12 / Hebrews 9.22).

Now this is all rather grim! – but it is only by our understanding the bleak spiritual state that humanity is in in our natural state that the subsequent Good News can make sense. That Good News came very quickly for Adam and Eve at the hands of their, and our, loving, merciful God: the “seed of the woman” was promised (3.15), and then the Lord God made “coats of skins” for them and clothed them (3.21). He covered their literal and spiritual nakedness, not with their pathetic fig-leaved aprons (3.7, a “type” of human efforts to cancel out our sins by self-righteousness), but with skins – skins which involved the shedding of the blood of innocent animals. In that tiny deed the scene was set.

Later on God gave to His covenant people, the children of Israel, the meticulous system of sacrifices for use in the tabernacle and temple (eg., Exodus 12 and 20-40 / Leviticus 1-10 / ff), by which God in His mercy chose to accept the shedding of all that animal blood as a substitute for the Israelites' own blood, in token-payment for their own sins and thereby meeting the demands of His righteous justice in response to human sin.

But all the time He was pointing forward to Calvary (eg, Hebrews 10.1-4). Finally and fully God gave His own Son, the perfect, sinless, innocent Lamb of God, "who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1.29), and who duly shed His own sinless blood in our place and on our behalf in total obedience to His Father's gracious will (Luke 22.42 / Hebrews 10.10-14 / Hebrews 4.14-16 / Revelation 1.5-6).

Now, by the shed blood of Christ alone, the way back into spiritual Eden, into fellowship, hope, love and joy, into the life with God and with each other as God always intended it to be, is wide open for any who will humbly accept that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God and hence their own Saviour, Lord and Master (eg., John 3.16-18, 35-36 / John 6. 37-40 / Romans 5.1-8 and 8.1-39 / Hebrews 10.19ff).

As individuals, churches and even nations accept this glorious message of the Christian Gospel, then the Holy Spirit gets to work, steadily replacing those sinful, "crazy priorities" with Kingdom-of-God priorities, so that once more, all may be blessed.

Psalm 33.8-12.

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