

The central theme of the Bible is God's acts to fulfill His **Plan of Redemption** and **Everlasting Covenant** or **Gospel**. This work would be accomplished through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and mediation of His Son, Jesus Christ, called the **Mystery of Godliness** (1 Tim 3:16). A host of circumstances wrought by God's enemy, Satan, would challenge God's intentions and works. However, the Bible details the progressive and ultimate victory of God, manifested through Jesus Christ and in the lives of the faithful. Genesis 3:15, the **Everlasting Covenant**, identifies two classes of people upon the earth throughout time, namely: followers of the woman's Seed, followers of Jesus Christ; and the seed of the serpent, those who follow Satan. The Bible depicts these two contrasting groups by the following terms:

Followers of Christ	Followers of Satan
Sons of God	Sons/Daughters of men
Children of light	Children of this dark world
The righteous	The wicked
Sheep	Goats
Wheat (good seed)	Chaff or Tares (weeds)
Trees of Righteousness	Briars & Thorns

The followers of Christ, or **sons of God**, are they who call on the name of the Lord, abide in Him, embrace God's promises in the Everlasting Covenant, covet the blessings of the Plan of Redemption, and through God's indwelling Spirit (Rom 8:14), live to glorify Him. The plan was to be completed in God's strength, despite human frailty. First through Jesus Christ, the **Kinsman Redeemer**, Who exemplified the strength of God

while in man's fallen human nature. Jesus' life and death would bring man's **atonement**, payment for sin, and reconciliation with God. He would also break the power of sin in men's life, partially fulfilling the Plan and the Covenant (Rom 8:1-4). The Plan made provision for God's glory, His character, to be imparted to those who would receive it by faith while still on earth (Ex 33:17-34:8; 2Pet 1:1-4). Those who receive God's glory would enjoy the blessings of the portions of His Plan that had been fulfilled, while patiently awaiting its full realization (Rom 8:22-25; Heb 11:8-10,13). These individuals would be ambassadors for God, conveying His love to others by the same Plan (2 Corinthians 5:20, 21).

Satan, the enemy of souls, seeks to foil God's purposes and derail all who might come to express an interest in God's promises. Satan accomplishes this through an abundance of **alternative perspectives and distractions**. As Satan once proposed a better and higher existence to the angels in heaven, he presents to men **alternatives** to God's Plan of Redemption. God's Plan, which is designed to elevate men by restoring His image in them, would be continually opposed by Satan's schemes and ploys. Because of sin's degenerative nature, men would become feebler over time, physically, mentally, and morally, and would be ever challenged to choose the good over evil. Despite these seemingly insurmountable circumstances, God's purposes to redeem humankind will be fulfilled! This lesson describes the spiritual contest played out in the lives of men through the ages, leading to the bringing forth of Jesus Christ, the **Kinsman**

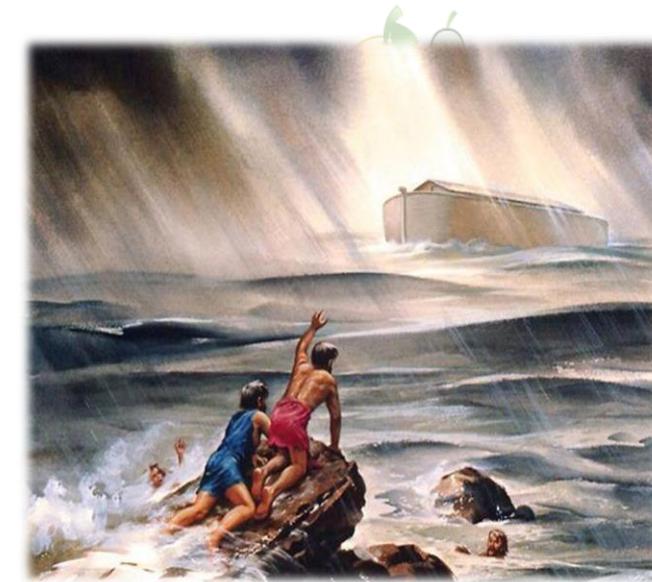
Redeemer in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4, 5; Lk 1:26-35). **Cain and Abel – [Genesis 4:1-16, 25, 26]:** Shortly after Adam and Eve's fateful fall to sin and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Eve gave birth to their first son Cain. The pair had hoped for the immediate fulfillment of God's Plan and Covenant with the birth of their son. However, they soon found in Cain's inherited sinful nature a rebellious disposition that could not fulfill the righteous requirements of the calling. This reality also made plain that fulfillment of the Everlasting Covenant would be in God's time and by His methods. The couple's second son, Abel, was of a nobler spirit and more inclined towards obedience to God. Both children were instructed in God's Plan and Covenant to redeem humanity, and regularly witnessed the sacrifices performed by their father as priest of the home, affirming his acceptance of, and reliance upon a Savior. The time of accountability arrived when both Cain and Abel were to demonstrate their personal acceptance or rejection of God's Covenant by bringing an offering to the Lord. Abel recognized the significance of God giving His Son for humanity's redemption and therefore, **by faith**, sacrificed a spotless lamb as a token of that great act. Cain however, brought the choicest fruit and vegetables he cultivated as an offering. Abel's offering was immediately consumed by fire from heaven, showing God's approval of his sacrifice while Cain's offering remained untouched upon the altar. The Bible shows how God reasoned with Cain, that he should submit to the prescribed order of the Plan and Covenant. Cain, however, hardened his heart in anger

towards God. Vexed by God's reproof and annoyed by the obedience of his brother, Cain rose-up against Abel and killed him. The act of Cain against his brother Abel offers the earliest example of the **enmity** that would exist between the **seed of the serpent** and the **sons of God** (1 John 3:12). Working under Satan's inspiration, Cain founded his own **alternative religion** and worship practices based on his devising, **man's works**. Cain would eventually depart from the presence of God, meaning, he and his descendants would choose to live apart from God, His Plan, and His Covenant. Adam and Eve would bear another son, Seth, of a similar disposition to Abel, who in love and obedience to God would raise children to love and honor God's Plan and Covenant. These were the **sons of God**.

Noah – [Genesis 6:1-9:17]: Noah, the ninth generation from Adam, born of the lineage of Seth, lived in an era of which the Bible states, "**the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**" (Gen 6:5). The sons of God and the sons of men, who for generations lived separate lives, apart from one another, had begun to intermarry. The Bible states, "**the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose**" (Gen 6:2). Those who had once pledged faith and allegiance to God, His Plan, and His Covenant, were marrying those who scorned any knowledge of Him (Deut 7:3, 4). This rebellion displeased God as He saw those, once faithful, inevitably turning their backs to Him. Satan realized that causing the sons of God to **compromise** was far more efficient and had more lasting

Sons of God versus Sons of Men

[Based on Genesis 4:16 – Genesis 6:6]



Lesson 5

effects than attempting to destroy them as Cain did to Abel (see Ezra 9:1-15). Grieved in His Spirit by men and their love for sin, God purposed to destroy the earth and its inhabitants, only after offering a single way of escape. Noah, who "*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*", was informed of God's plans, and was instructed to build an ark, a massive ship for the saving of his family, remnants of the animals, and any who would heed the warning to preserve life (Gen 6:8-22). Noah and his sons labored for 120-years in building the ark. Through preaching and prophecy, he warned earth's inhabitants of God's impending judgment. The ark stood as a symbol of men's salvation in Jesus Christ, where only those who, despite the scornful jeering of the sons and daughters of men, entered in would be saved. The day came when God commanded all the beasts, Noah, and his family to enter the ark. God destroyed the earth by flood and only eight people from the populated world were saved.

Abraham – [Genesis 12-22]: Abram, born ten generations after Noah, was called by God to separate himself and his family from their native land, Ur of the Chaldees (known as Babylon in time), to a land of promise to which God would lead. Abram found favor with God, Who purposed to bring forth from Abram's descendants the promised **Kinsman Redeemer**, Jesus. God also purposed that from Abram would come forth a kingdom of priests, who as God's ambassadors would inform the world of a Savior and His Covenant (Exodus 19:3-8). God purified and perfected Abram's character through a series of trials that resulted in his name being

changed to *Abraham*, meaning "father of many nations". God also fulfilled His promise to Abraham in giving him an heir in his old age. Abraham would learn to trust God unreservedly, such that at the command of God, he was willing to sacrifice his *only* son, Isaac. Though God stopped Abraham from slaying Isaac and directed him to a ram caught in a thicket as *a substitute*, Abraham passed the test. Abraham's obedience gave the world a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of God's Son on humanity's behalf, symbolized in both Isaac and the ram. Abraham gained the title of "*Father of the Faithful*" and would become the **spiritual forefather** of the sons of God, all who in faith, believe God's Covenant of a Savior, Jesus, and are thus accounted righteous, regardless of origin (Gal 3:6-9, 26-29).

The Children of Israel were the descendants of Abraham's grandson Jacob, whose name was changed by God to *Israel*, meaning "Prince with God and men". The Children of Israel were to be God's *firstborn* sons (Ex 4:22), God's appointed kingdom of priests, used to instruct, minister, and to gather the world to Himself, all based on a promise made to their ancestor Abraham. They however, from their establishment as a nation, rebelled against God and His covenant promises. Though shown signs and wonders and entrusted with all the oracles of God, the Children of Israel forged a course of rebellion that would result in their eventual banishment (compare 1 Chronicles 5:1). Israel's first rejection of God came 490 years after He miraculously delivered them from Egyptian bondage and slavery. At that time, they demanded a human king as other nations, rejecting God as their King (1

Sam 8). Israel further pursued a course of open rebellion, following the idolatrous and hedonistic practices of the surrounding nations that resulted in God dividing Israel into *Northern and Southern Kingdoms*. In mercy, God sent Israel His spokesmen, the prophets (many of whom they killed), to give warning of impending chastisement should they not curb their rebellion. After another 490 years of apostasy, God removed His hand of protection from Israel, allowing their enemies to lead them into captivity for 70 years. During their captivity, the prophet Daniel was shown amazing prophecies of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, as well as **End Time** events, all to be studied in subsequent lessons. To challenge the powerful revelations of Daniel, within 100 years of his death, Satan raised up *counterfeit prophets* in Persia, in India, and in China, that are still sought today. God would enter covenant with the Children of Israel for a final 490-year period after their captivity. During this time, they were to prepare the world to welcome Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In hopes of another, the Children of Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah and King, subjecting Him to the cruelest hostilities during His 3½-year ministry. In mercy, God granted the Children of Israel added time to repent after Jesus' death and ascension. Their stoning of God's messenger Stephen, 3½ years after Jesus' ascension, marked the close of Israel's final probation, the rending of ambassadorship from the Children of Israel, and granting this high honor to **Spiritual Israel**, the Christian Church (Matt 21:33-46; Rom 2:25-29, 9:1-33).