

WHAT IS ORIGINAL SIN? (4)

As we continue to look at the idea of original sin two passages come to mind in the Old Testament that could be used to support such a doctrine. David says the following in Psa. 58 :3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth." Isaiah said, "You have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open, Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; And you have been called a rebel from birth." (48:8) Do these passages teach that man can be born in sin? Let's take a look at Psa. 58:3 first.

The key word in this passage is "estranged" which means to be strange or become strange. Paul called those who are Gentiles as being strangers to God in Eph. 2:19. Therefore, David is saying that those who act wickedly are living just like the Gentiles who are wicked, because they were born strangers to God. The specific sin mentioned in 58:3 is that of lying. Those who lie (the men in v.1 and 2) have gone astray or wandered in this direction from the time they were born. They were not born speaking lies, this would be absurd, but as they grew they became like strangers by going astray and speaking lies. The process of going astray may begin at birth but the actual sin does not take place until later life. The lies mentioned in v.3 are committed by the men in v.1 and 2, not infants.

The passage simply teaches that the Jews who were not judging correctly and speaking lies are compared to the Gentiles. These Jews were doing the same things the Gentiles do, and this made them to be like the Gentiles (they were strangers and going astray from God).

Isaiah's statement in 48:8 is easily understood when read in context. He (Isaiah) is not speaking to any particular individual, but to the entire nation of Israel, the house of Jacob (see v.1). Isaiah is stating that Israel has gone astray from God ever since it became a nation. The prophet is speaking of the birth of a nation, not an individual.

Psalms 58:3 and Isaiah 48:8 do not teach original sin. Rather one verse shows the relationship of unfaithful Jews to wicked Gentiles and the other an attitude and character of a nation since its inception. To use these two passages as proof texts of original sin would be erroneous.

Next week I will look at Lamentations 5:7 and Job 21:19.

--Greg