

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church
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DHW
Bible study class

BOOK OF GENESIS

Lesson 2

Genesis 3

INTRODUCTION

Genesis Chapter 3 is a very important chapter. Its account of the fall of Adam and Eve in disobeying God gives meaning to the rest of the Bible. Any denial of its literal meaning makes no sense of Paul's statement that *by one man sin came into the world and death by sin* (Rom 5:12), and God's redemption plan in Christ Jesus will be meaningless if what happened in this chapter is not historical. Some deny its literalness just because the serpent spoke. If we accept that the Scripture is the Word of God, and that it is recorded that the serpent spoke to Eve, there is no reason to believe otherwise.

It was God's best plan for man when he put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God's purpose was for men to enjoy Him, and at the same time He enjoyed the fellowship of men. He walked in the garden and communed with Adam and Eve.

The detailed description of what actually transpired between the serpent and Eve, and the subsequent involvement of Adam and God's judgment upon them are both instructive and insightful. The following is a suggested outline:

- (1) Satan's strategy (3:1-6)
- (2) The result of the Fall (3:7)
- (3) God seeking Man (3:8-12)
- (4) The penalty of sin (3:13-21)
- (5) Man driven from the Garden (3:22-24).

STUDY THE WORD

Satan's Strategy

The serpent was an animal which God created. This is clearly stated (v.1). And the serpent spoke to Eve. In the light of John 8:44, the content and intention of the speech of the serpent characterized that of Satan, whom the Lord Jesus Christ referred to as *murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. . . for he is a liar, and the father of it*. Moreover, Revelation 12:9 referred to the serpent as that *old (understood in terms of antiquity rather than age) serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world*. It can be safely viewed that Satan used the serpent and caused it to speak to deceive Eve.¹

¹ Davis comments in his book, *Paradise to Prison*, that Satan, the master deceiver, was certainly capable of making the serpent speak (p.86). Another instance when an animal spoke is when God caused the donkey to speak to Balaam (Numbers 22:28).

And who is Satan? Satan is an angel created by God. In the book of Isaiah, Satan is known as Lucifer, son of the morning. He sinned against his Creator God when he aspired to *ascend into heaven, and I will exalt my throne above the stars (all the angelic hosts) of God . . . I will be like the most High* (Isaiah 14:12-14, parenthesis mine; cf. Ezekiel 28:12-18). Satan brought sin into the world.

Satan's method of tempting Eve has been the pattern used throughout human history. He started by casting doubt on what God had commanded Adam who must have told Eve. And when he received a response, he used the exact words of God's commandment but blatantly and boldly denied God's words, and he went on to charge God for being selfish and mean because God did not want Eve to be like Him (vv.4-5).² Doubting, denying or demeaning God has always been his method of tempting and deceiving people to sin against God.

On the other hand, we can learn from Eve's fall about our nature and the steps to sin. Eve responded to Satan's subtle question. Then she did not precisely repeat what God had said. Compare what God said to Adam (2:16-17) with what she said (3:2-3). She referred generally to the fruit of the trees in the garden and then she did not specifically mention the name of the tree in which its fruit God forbade them to eat—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Moreover, she put words into

God's mouth by saying that *neither shall ye touch it* (v.3). Lastly, she did not repeat the full force of God's warning that disobedience would mean that *thou shalt surely die* (2:17).

There is a valuable lesson which we can learn from the attitude and action that led to Eve's fall. First she SAW that the fruit was good for food. Next, that it was PLEASANT to the eyes, and it was DESIRABLE because it could make one WISE like God as Satan deceptively suggested. And finally Eve succumbed and *she took*. A reading of 1 John 2:16 describes the combination of these three steps to sin -- first, *the lust of the flesh*, second, *the lust of the eyes*, and third, *the pride of life*.

Eve's actions reveal to us the nature of man's covetousness³, which God commanded us not to be in the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17). We should not tone down or discount God's warning. Today, there are people who play down the existence of Hell. They deliberately deny what the Word of God teaches. The Word of God describes it as the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone. On the day of judgment the Devil and his followers of fallen angels, and every person who is anti-Christ and who rejects God's offer of salvation, will be cast into this lake of fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:15). Some even charge that God mentions hell in His Word to scare people into heaven. What does that make God? A liar and a cheat! Those

² The word "gods" in verse 5 should preferably be translated "God" for Adam and Eve did not know of any other gods except the LORD God.

³ Hamilton describes Eve's actions as "the essence of covetousness. It is an attitude that says I need something I do not now have in order to be happy" (The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17, 190).

who teach such things are just like the “old serpent” which was being used by Satan.

Result of the Fall

The serpent tempted Eve. Eve yielded to the temptation. She ate and gave it to her husband, Adam, who also ate it. Eve appears to be the spokesman for Adam. Adam on the other hand listened to his wife rather than obeyed God. Hamilton describes her sin as *a sin of initiative*, whereas his sin as *a sin of acquiescence*.⁴

Was the devil right about what they would benefit if they disobeyed God? Obviously not, for he is a deceiver. Their eyes were opened. That is true. But instead of knowing good and evil, they saw that they were *naked*. This description of their nakedness previously (2:25) was a sign of their healthy, happy and transparent relationship together. But now their nakedness had become something unpleasant and filled with shame and the loss of innocence.⁵ They tried to cover their inner sense of guilt before God with fig leaves. They managed to cover their nakedness from each other, but they could not erase their sense of guilt and shame and the sin of disobedience. Man’s frail attempt at covering their *nakedness* before God is not only frail but absolutely futile!

God Seeking Man

God is described here as walking in the garden. Obviously this was not the first time that God came to the garden to walk.

God had put Adam in the garden, and later was with Adam to put him under anaesthesia to take a rib bone out of him to form Eve. Adam and Eve must have had many occasions of fellowship with God.

But alas, this time, instead of meeting God and enjoying Him, they hid themselves. They were experiencing a sense of guilt and shame for having been foolish to be deceived by the serpent instead of obeying God who loved them. Although God called Adam and said: *Where art thou?* it does not mean that God did not know where he was hiding for nothing can be hidden from God (Psalm 139:1-12). God is all-knowing. He was assuming the limitations of man.

God dealt with Adam instead of Eve, for Adam was created first and he was the representative head of the family. Hence he is responsible for the family. God’s dealing with him after the fall was gracious. God gave Adam a chance to confess his sin instead of condemning him outright. Does not God deal with us in a similar way today? Should we not learn this trait of God? Likewise, we should let those who hurt us explain or confess their faults.

However, Adam did not give a simple answer. Adam’s answer put the blame on the woman and God Himself. In other words, what Adam was saying is that if God had not made the woman and gave her to him, this would not have happened. But Adam failed to realize that he had the choice to obey God. He knew what was happening for when the serpent addressed

⁴ Ibid., 191.

⁵ Ibid., 191.

the woman, he used the plural form of the second person (vv. 1, 4-5)⁶ So Adam could have stopped his wife Eve or refused to eat the forbidden fruit. He did not do so. He listened to his wife and disobeyed God. The effect of sin transforms a person to defend himself by blaming others for his own wrong doing. Do we not see this kind of conduct daily in our lives? It is all too familiar isn't it? Eve followed Adam's stance and blamed the serpent. At least Eve admitted that she was deceived by the serpent (v.13). One glaring omission is that both of them did not show an attitude of contrition, unlike King David when he was convicted of his sin, he humbled himself, acknowledged his transgressions, and sought cleansing and forgiveness.⁷

The Penalty of Sin

God had said that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would surely die. They did not die instantly. Their death was delayed, for eventually Adam and Eve and their posterity suffered the same judgment.

⁶ The use of the second person plural form "you" by the serpent (vv.1,3-5) and Eve's answer to the serpent using the first person plural "we" suggest that Adam was present with Eve, and Eve was the spokesman—Hamilton, 194.

⁷ Psalm 51:1 {To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.} Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

Adam died at the age of 930 years.⁸ But a more serious punishment was their separation from God. Once they had such a wonderful fellowship with God whose presence they could enjoy in the garden. But now they were driven away from the garden.

Before the fall, God had commanded them to be *fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth* (Genesis 1:28). It was a blessing to bear and give birth to children. But now the judgment upon Eve is that she will suffer much pain and sorrow in giving birth to children.

The second part of the judgment upon the woman is that she would *desire* (Hebrew, *suq*) her husband. Another occasion in which this word is used is in Genesis 4:7 in which sin is described as desiring Cain. The word *desire* used here means to overwhelm and to dominate (control). This usage of *suq* in Genesis 4:7 throws some light into the understanding of the woman's desire of the man. Her desire is to attempt to control and dominate the man. What does this mean? It means that the woman would always seek to put her husband under her control. On the other hand, the husband will in turn try to rule over her. The husband and the wife, instead of maintaining a relationship of equality ruling over the rest of God's creation, now engage in a constant struggle, each trying to dominate the other.⁹

⁸ Genesis 5:5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

⁹ Hamilton, 201-202.

The Cost of Sin

Sin has devastated Adam and Eve. They found themselves “naked” and tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. But God in His mercy and kindness killed an animal, in all probability a lamb, to clothe them with a covering made of animal skins. It is apparent that the coats of skin are better than the covering of fig leaves. But the point is that in order to be better clothed on a more permanent basis, an animal had to be sacrificed. This, in a veiled way, pictures the vicarious death of the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.¹⁰

In verse 15, God said that He would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. If we understand this judgment simply as an enmity between the future offspring of snakes and of the woman, it means man and snakes would not co-exist. One will kill the other. But this is not true. To understand it properly, we need to see the judgment upon the serpent as meted out upon Satan. In the light of Christ’s words in John 8:44,¹¹ Satan’s offspring are those who are unbelieving and who are anti-Christ. There would come a time when Satan would influence his “seed” to give a blow to the seed of the woman, but Satan

¹⁰ John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

¹¹ John 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

would suffer a total defeat by the seed of the woman. The traditional Christian interpretation of this verse is that it is the direct expression of the Gospel. Jesus Christ being fully man, the seed of the Virgin Mary, was crucified on the cross by the followers of Satan. But God raised Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day, thus conquering death and Satan. In the theological circle, this verse is known as the *protevangeliium*—the first Gospel.¹²

Although salvation is a free gift from God, it is not cheap. For those, who believe and trust in Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of the world, will not perish but have everlasting life. It costs the life of the Son of God who gave Himself for us so that our sins can be covered by His blood and we shall forever be forgiven and cleansed!

Adam called his wife “Eve” (Hebrew, *chawwah* = life) to mean that she is “the mother of all living.” The name “Eve” is connected with the word “living” or “life” (Hebrew, *chay*). God’s clothing of Adam and Eve with coats of skins, which demand the sacrifice of an animal, does intimate that God’s original command to man to multiply and be fruitful is not withdrawn despite man’s sin and disobedience. In calling his wife “Eve”, Adam “does not believe that he and his wife are to be the last beings of the human race.” God reclothed Adam and Eve, and Adam renamed his wife, Eve.¹³

¹² For more discussion refer John J Davis, Paradise to Prison, 93.

¹³ Hamilton, 205-206.

Driven From the Garden

Was the serpent right after all, when God said that *the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*? The serpent's remark to Eve promised of "unlimited privileges, unheard-of acquisitions and gifts." Their eyes were opened but the promise of bliss did not happen. In fact they experienced the reverse: guilt instead of innocence, misery instead of joy, they were now forbidden to eat of the tree of life whereas previously they were free to enjoy the garden and eat of the tree of life.

Did Adam have the knowledge of good and evil before he ate the forbidden fruit? The answer would obviously be in the affirmative. In what sense then is his understanding of the knowledge of good and evil after eating the forbidden fruit? James Murphy explains thus: *The result of his conduct, whether in the way of obedience or disobedience to the divine command, was to be the knowledge of good and evil. If man had obeyed, he would have come to this knowledge in a legitimate way. For he would have perceived that distrust of God and disobedience of his will, as they were externally presented to his view in the suggestions of the tempter, were evil; and that confidence and obedience, internally in himself in defiance of such suggestions, were good. And this was the germ of the knowledge of good and evil. But by disregarding the express injunction of his Maker with respect to this tree, he attained to the knowledge of good and evil in an unlawful and fatal way. He learned immediately that he himself was the guilty party, whereas, before, he was free from*

*guilt; and thus became aware, in his own person and to his own condemnation, of good and evil, as distinct and opposite qualities."*¹⁴ Their expulsion from the garden was necessary as the penalty of their sin against God. It means being separated from God. And it was permanent and could not be undone. Sin separates us from God. On the other hand, God's driving the man out of the garden so that he was prevented from eating of the tree of life, must be seen as a merciful act. Sin has brought misery and hardships to man. If he eats of the tree of life, he could live forever. But what kind of life would man be having? Preventing man from eating the tree of life would shorten his sweating, toiling and decaying in a sin marred world.

PRACTICAL VALUE

An important truth that is revealed is that God is holy, and that His holiness must never be taken for granted by man. We have observed that the breaking of only one commandment which God gives to Adam results in DEATH. At this point of time, the physical death of humans is not instant the moment the man sins, but it is postponed according to the mercy of God. This death also includes the separation of man from God. We must take a serious and concerned attitude in our life that we do not at anytime sin against God by not obeying His commandments. When we sin, our fellowship with God is impaired, and we must quickly repent and confess our sin before God, who promises to

¹⁴ James G. Murphy, Barnes Notes: Genesis, p.138.

forgive us and restore our fellowship with Him.¹⁵ God is holy, and as His precious children, we ought to be holy for He is holy. Remember to love and obey Him and maintain that close walk and sweet fellowship with Him.

This chapter also teaches us why men must die. Why should a man born into this world must die, and for that matter, every living thing in planet Earth? It is because of the sin of man who is the apex of God's creation. Death is inevitable because of our sin. And in His mercy, the time of death is postponed for God desires that none should perish but all repent and be saved in Christ Jesus. So while we still have breath, let us do what is the will of God and do the things that honour and glorify Him.

Satan will always try to tempt us to disobey or rebel against God. He is evil and wicked and he is determined to lure and rob you of every perfect blessing which comes from God. His method of tempting us is revealed in his tempting of Eve. He lies and deceives man. He appeals to the pride of man, the lust of the flesh and pleasure. Satan has not changed his *modus operandi* down through the ages. Many men have fallen through this way. When was the last time you have been tempted to sin against God? Beware! Flee from him!

God in His appointed time sent the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who voluntarily gave His life so that you and I might have our sins forgiven, and be saved by acknowledging and receiving Him into our life. So, why should a man die in his sins when Christ has provided the way for his reconciliation with His Creator-God? He should thank God and seize the only way which has been given to him to return to God, to love and obey Him.

GOD BLESS YOU.

¹⁵ Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*:

John 9:31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.