

Lesson 21

Effects of the Fall

God judges sin.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God is holy and must punish all sin. He punished the serpent and Adam and Eve for the sin in the garden. God showed his love through Jesus and the forgiveness he offers to believers. God has promised that there will be no more sin at the consummation!

Key Passage

Genesis 3:14, 3:17–18; Revelation 21:4

Memory Verse

John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

What was life like before the Fall of man? Can we even imagine it? Probably not. However, there are some clues in Scripture that help us understand a bit about life in a perfect world.

First of all, there was no death. Death came as a result of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12) and is called an enemy that God will one day destroy (1 Corinthians 15:25–26). Second, the earth that God created was "very good" (Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 32:4). There were no hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, or other destructive events. God upheld His creation perfectly. Third, man and the animals were vegetarian (Genesis 1:29–30). No animals ate other animals, and Adam and Eve did not eat meat. In fact, permission to eat meat did not come until after the Genesis Flood (Genesis 9:1–3). Finally, Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with their Creator. He spoke with them, and they experienced unbroken fellowship with God.

The day that Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator has been called the saddest day in the history of the universe. God had given them a perfect creation—no death, disease, or suffering. They had been given dominion over the animals and were told to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). However, Eve was tempted by the serpent (Satan) and ate the fruit that God had forbidden them to eat. Adam joined her in her rebellion, and the world has never been the same.

As a result of their disobedience, God punished the serpent (Genesis 3:14), the woman (Genesis 3:16), and the man (Genesis 3:17). The serpent was cursed more than all the beasts; he would crawl on his belly and eat dust. And, in a spiritual sense, one day Satan's head would be crushed by the seed of the woman—Jesus (Genesis 3:15)! The woman was subjected to increased pain in childbirth and the desire to rule over her husband (Genesis 3:16). The ground was cursed on account of the man; it would now bring forth thorns and thistles, and with difficulty man would eat of its fruit (Genesis 3:17–18). Man would now die: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

The Fall and the subsequent Curse brought disaster to God's very good creation. We are now experiencing the futility, the groans, and the pains of a universe subject to darkness because of sin (Romans 8:19–20).

We are all affected by the Fall, not only by the Curse God placed on the universe but also by sin. Because every human is a descendant of Adam and Eve, we are born with the same sin nature found in Adam (Romans 3:23). Consequently, we are all bound by the Curse and must endure the distress, pain, suffering, disease, and natural disasters that accompany it. But that is not the end of the story. For we know that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, has overcome death (1 Corinthians 15:54–55). And all who repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness will be redeemed to enjoy eternity in the perfectly restored universe—a universe that promises the end of death, mourning, crying, and pain (Revelation 21:4). We eagerly await this with hope and expectation of finally seeing our Savior face to face (Job 19:26–27).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The account of the Fall often presents controversy. One controversial issue involves animals. If everything was perfectly peaceful in the Garden, as Genesis 1 and 2 indicate, then why are so many animals today equipped with features and structures that seem suited for attacking, tearing, killing, and eating? Scripture tells us that animals were originally vegetarian (Genesis 1:29–30). So, how did they acquire their ability to kill? Where did these defense/attack structures come from?

Creationists have suggested several answers that make sense and fit within the biblical text:

Originally, these features had a good purpose, but as the environment changed, the purpose for these features had to change as well.

God added new features to creatures at the Curse so they would be able to withstand the onslaught of violence provoked by sin.

Although not necessary in a perfect world, God designed the original creatures with the features they would need to live in the fallen world God knew was coming.

God placed designs for these features in the genes of the original creatures, but they did not become active until after the Curse.

While we do not know exactly how the animals acquired these defense/attack structures, we do know this: according to God's Word, animals will once again get along with each other and with man (Isaiah 11:6–7). This will happen at a time called the Consummation.

The history of the Bible can be divided into three great periods: the pre-Fall world, the post-Fall world, and the Consummation.

The pre-Fall world: God's original creation was perfect—no sin, no disease, no death. And Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect relationship with one another and with their Creator. Because our present sin-cursed world is riddled with decay and death, it is hard to even imagine the pre-Fall world!

The post-Fall world: The Fall of man and subsequent Curse of Genesis 3 affected the entire creation. This is why the Apostle Paul describes our present world as "groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (Romans 8:22). The creation is broken; it is in "bondage to corruption" (Romans 8:21). Sin, disease, carnivory, natural disasters, and death are the course of this present world—"red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson wrote. The sin in the Garden of Eden affected the whole cosmos.

The Consummation: At the Consummation, when Christ shall return as Judge and King, the Curse will be removed. God will sum up all things in Christ, putting all enemies under His feet, and death itself will be destroyed. The new heaven and new earth will be a return to Eden-like agricultural fruitfulness (Ezekiel 47:12; Revelation 22:1–3) and to perfect harmony in human relationships (1 Corinthians 13:8–12), in animal life (Isaiah 11:6–8), and in everything under the rule of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus. Earth will receive her King, and all will be restored. What a glorious hope we have!

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.

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