

Welcome to the Fall

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The Big Picture / Sin; Covenant of Works; Redemption / Genesis 3

Opening Illustration

I like to read. And I don't know about you, but I don't like to read books that lack a plot or have an unrealistic problem to resolve. And while the Bible is not simply a book, it is still a book, and there is a plot. The plot to Scripture is God's redemption of humanity. And throughout this story of redemption, the main character is revealed. God is central to the story of the Bible. The past two weeks, we were introduced to essential knowledge about God. Namely, God is the Creator and Sustainer of creation, and God created the world good. If the story ended there, it wouldn't be much of a story. And unfortunately for us, the story does not end there. It continues into the moment when the plot thickens, where conflict is introduced, and the covenantal relationship between the sovereign God and the representative of humanity is broken.

The whole ark of the Bible is within the structure of creation, Fall, redemption, restoration. We have covered the creation element, but now we enter into the beginning of the story as we experience it, and that is how everything went south...

or in the context of Eden, east. So, let's look at how humanity ended up east of Eden and out of God's presence. And we will see how the Big Picture of Scripture is the story about a seed.

The Serpent's Words

Genesis 3:1–6 ESV

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Up until this point, I have noted the lack of conflict in the creation narrative. The Garden was bountiful and beautiful, and there was no conflict, but here we see conflict enter the picture.

Yet conflict does not enter the picture through rival deities or warring gods. No, conflict enters the picture through a question and a challenge from one created being to another.

We see the serpent, which we are told is more cunning than any other beast of the field that God had made. The serpent is the most cunning and crafted creature.

So, the serpent does not simply tell Eve, “God was lying to you about the fruit, he just fears you.” No, instead, the serpent invited the woman to come to her own conclusion by asking deceitful questions.

The serpent begins with an emphatic question, “Surely God did not actually say that you could not eat from any tree in the garden!” Deceptive, but subtle.

The serpent knows the stipulation given to Adam, and intentionally alters the words. Adam was told “you may eat from any tree of the garden, except do not eat from the tree of the knowledge or you will die.”

We will see in a few verses that the serpent does not speak back to God when God curses the serpent, because the serpent, being a creature, is impotent to challenge God. Instead, the serpent targets a weaker creature as an indirect challenge against God.

The Serpent as God's enemy

The serpent, when viewed from the whole of Scripture, is being utilized by Satan/the devil as a mouthpiece. We see this clearly in Revelation in the words of John: Revelation 12:9

Revelation 12:9 ESV

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Jesus speaks of the serpent in this way when rebuking the Jews, John 8:44

John 8:44 ESV

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The serpent, at least in some sense, is tied to the Satan, who will ultimately work through Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus.

The Woman's response

So the serpent asks the woman, did God really say . . . and since the answer is clearly “no” the woman answers, “no, God did not say that, He said this. . .” Genesis 3:3

Genesis 3:3 ESV

but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

Mostly right, but she added something, and the serpent jumps on that addition. Surely the addition was not ill-intentioned, and Jewish commentators explain that it was a perfectly fine addition to add as a security measure guarding against eating of the tree, but it is problematic since it adds to the command of God.

And the serpent takes that addition and turns it against God to create confusion. “You will surely not die!” And the serpent was right, the woman would not die for touching the fruit, but the serpent is deceptive knowing that she will die if she eats it. And the serpent continues, the reason that God does not want you to eat is because he is jealous that you will become like him.

But the reality was Adam and Eve were already like God, because God created them like Him.

Genesis 3:6 ESV

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

The deception is an attack against the character of God and places hints of confusion and covetousness in the woman, because after the serpent says this, she looks at the tree, she desires the fruit of the tree, and she covets the wisdom that it would give her. The coveting is threefold.

And the desires mirror the three desires of the world:

1 John 2:16 **ESV**

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

She saw that it was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that it would make her like God.

Adam's first mistake

What was Adam doing??! The language is clear, the woman was not alone here. Adam who was with her, simply acquiesces throughout this entire conversation. Adam, the covenantal head of humanity fails to defend God when the

serpent speaks falsely of God and fails to defend his wife when she is challenged by the serpent.

But Adam says nothing. He is silent the whole dialogue with the serpent.

So, the woman takes the fruit and she eats, and she gives it to Adam, and he eats.

God's footsteps

Genesis 3:7–13 **ESV**

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Upon eating of the fruit, Adam and his wife realize something. They're naked! But surely they already knew this, but there's a newness to their realization, and they feel shame! So, Adam, who previously failed to lead in his acquiescence, begins to lead through denial, accusing, and playing the victim.

Adam's attempt at atonement

Adam denies the reality by attempting to clothe himself. Adam and the woman take leaves from a tree and make themselves an apron to cover their bodies, but that does not work, because when they hear the sound of God in the garden they hide themselves in the tree.

God's Questions

God calls out to the couple "Where are you", and Adam provides an ironic answer: "I heard you, and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid myself." It's ironic because the words "I heard you" in Hebrew also translates to "I obeyed your voice". Obviously, Adam did not obey God's voice, otherwise he would not be naked, ashamed, and hiding, but Adam is hiding because he disobeyed God's voice and expects to die.

Yet instead of a swift death, God asks another question, “Who told you that you are naked?”

God directs both of these questions to Adam and gives Adam the opportunity to confess his sin.

Genesis 1–11:26 (3) God Questions the Man and Woman (3:9–13)

God initiates the dialogue by calling out to the man, “Where are you?” (v. 9). The question is rhetorical and is designed to prompt Adam to consider his wrongdoing. . . There will be no possibility for reconciliation if the guilty are unwilling to confess their deeds

God, like a gentle father, does not immediately punish Adam for his disobedience but invites confession and reconciliation reflecting the character of God revealed in Exodus 34:6-7

Exodus 34:6–7 ESV

YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Yet Adam does not have faith in God at this moment to

confess boldly. Instead he hides himself and then accuses the woman and God for his disobedience. Instead of answering, “yes, I ate of the tree that you commanded me not to eat from” he says, “The woman, that YOU gave me, gave me the fruit.” It’s not my fault, it’s the woman’s fault, and it’s your fault.

A pastoral aside

Let’s take a moment to acknowledge how relatable Adam’s shame is. First, he fails to live up to his role as a husband to lead and protect by standing quietly to the side. And then, he accuses his wife of being the problem. And last, he charges God for being the source of his strife.

Too often, and husbands I am talking to you (myself included), we make our wives lead in a way that is unloving of us. I know that I am too quick to let my wife take the lead on things that I don’t have an opinion on, but the reality is that she doesn’t want the responsibility, and she doesn’t feel loved when I pawn off my responsibilities in the little things on her. We as husbands tend to fall into the same trap that Adam did that everything is good, I’m going to let her have this one, but then when things take a turn, we don’t take accountability for our failures to love our wives well in the little things or for failing to correct a mistake before it becomes something bigger in order to keep the peace, and then we blame her for our problems. Instead of owning our

failures or shortcomings, we tend to blame our wife for her shortcomings, when God has called us to love our wives as Christ loves the Church! He does not focus on our weaknesses, he perfects them. So, men, have patience with your wives, step up and show up to lead your wife well. And do not blame God when marriage or life gets hard, but look to Him to reveal, to forgive, and to heal your flaws and shortcomings. But don't complain that you may have to do more, die to yourself and live for God in how you serve your wife.

So, we see Adam blame his wife and blame God for giving her to him in the first place, and God does not answer. Instead God looks to the woman and says "what happened?" And she answers honestly, "the serpent tricked me." She doesn't take full ownership, but we see that she doesn't lie to God or accuse God.

God allows both to speak, and then He turns to the serpent.

The Snake's Curse

Genesis 3:14–15 **ESV**

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;

he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

I don't have too much to say about the chastisements of God here. God curses the serpent, but God is also prophesying beyond the serpent to Satan who spoke through the serpent. The word cursed means to be bound with a curse. Which this binding language is significant. First, the serpent is bound to be unable to walk, so it is imagery of humiliation. No longer shall the serpent walk with his head high, but the serpent shall be bound and reduced to slithering in the dust, to “eat dust.” Not literally, since we know that snakes do not eat dust, but it is humiliating language. “Your face shall be in the dirt.”

Second, this language is echoed in Revelation 20:1-3

Revelation 20:1–3 **ESV**

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

Within the big picture, we see that God curses the serpent and the deceiver (Satan) with a curse that keeps on cursing. And then God provides additional information: how this

curse will be put in place.

Genesis 3:15 ESV

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This, historically, has been understood as the first proclamation of the Gospel — There will be a seed. And this seed is twofold. First, this seed will be the promised descendent who will undo all that Adam’s transgression has caused. The seed whose genealogy we will be following for the next three months.

But this seed is also a proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God in the Church.

Romans 16:20 ESV

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

It is the Church as the body of Christ who will ultimately crush the head of the serpent. The woman is both Eve and also the Church, the bride of Christ, and the offspring is humanity on one hand, Jesus Christ on another, and the Church in a third way!

But this is good news. God does not eradicate the problem, but he gives a solution through a promise. The promised

seed.

The Woman's Punishment

Genesis 3:16 **ESV**

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

Then we get to the means by which this promised seed will come — through childbearing.

At this point, I must point out that God does not curse the woman. God curses the serpent and God curses the earth, but God does not curse his image bearers. Instead God chastises the woman with the repercussions of her disobedience. The repercussions: pain in childbirth and disharmony in marriage.

But we must not miss the hope here: the woman will bear children, and from those children will come the promised seed.

The Man's Punishment

Genesis 3:17–19 **ESV**

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the

voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 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."

The problem is not that Adam listened to his wife, it is that he listened to his wife instead of to God. Whereas Adam should have refused to eat and sought to atone for her before God as her husband and as the covenantal head of mankind, he simply listened to her in disregard for the stipulation of God.

And the result is that God curses the ground which mankind has been invited to participate with God in cultivating. Before, God provided the rains and the growth, and man provided the labor. But now, both are still true, but it won't be easy or pain free. Now work is toilsome and difficult. It is still rewarding and meaningful, but it comes at a cost. A life of toil and a life that returns to the soil.

The curse within the covenant is confirmed "You shall surely die." But let's come back to that. First, let's look at the hope that sits at the direct center of this chapter - the seed.

The hope - The whole story is about this seed

Genesis 3:20–21 **ESV**

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Before we conclude the result of Adam's transgression, let's take a moment to relish the hope of Scripture.

God in his cursing of the serpent, promised to defeat the deceiver who was with the serpent. God ensures the woman that death will not be immediate, but she will bear children. And in that assurance that the woman will bring forth new life according to the promise, Adam gives her a name: Life-giver. Eve is not the one responsible for sin, Adam is. Adam was not deceived, he willfully disobeys the stipulation directly given to him as the covenantal head of humanity. Finally taking accountability for his actions, Adam looks at his wife and says, "through you will come our redemption and salvation. All life will come through you." Which on the one hand looks at Eve as the first mother of humanity, but it also looks at Eve as the mother of the promised seed who will save humanity from the curse of sin and death.

Which brings us to the reality of the Fall: The Covenant of Work's curse - death.

God's Inner dialogue

Genesis 3:22–24 **ESV**

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Adam and humanity no longer stand before God naked and without shame. Sin has entered the world. The world, human nature, creation has been corrupted and tainted.

God does the most loving thing that He can do, and He exiles them from His presence. Sin cannot exist in the immediate presence of a holy God. To prevent humanity from living lives of eternal corruption, he enforces his curse: You shall surely die. But the death is not immediate, it is excommunication from the presence of God, the source of life. And God places Cherubim and a flaming sword at the entrance of the Garden.

We must remember that the Garden in Eden is the place where God is present. It is a Temple. And when Israel build the temple, the Holy of Holies, the throne room of God is marked by the presence of the ark of the covenant (the footstool of God's throne). And over that ark are two cherubim, there to guard mankind from getting too close to God in their corrupted state.

The Promised Seed

And so we find ourselves excommunicated from God, looking forward to the promise. And at this point of the story, salvation comes by looking forward to the promise. Adam is atoned for by faith, and we see his faith in the naming of Eve. Adam looks forward to the promise. And in the weeks to come we will see how the promise is further revealed to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Jeremiah, and ultimately to the whole world through Mary.

We get to look back on the promise fulfilled, but that does not mean that we are totally freed from the curse of Adam's transgression. At this point, we have seen how God created all that exists and how it was good, and we have seen why things do not reflect that original goodness. But with the Fall comes the heart of the biblical narrative - redemption. So, now we shift our focus into the redemption narrative of

Scripture as we see the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And as we reflect on the Fall, we do not only acknowledge the ways that we reflect Adam in his silence and defensiveness or Eve in her being deceived and misguidance of her husband, but we also look to the second Adam who shows us how we should be as husbands, as Christians, and as Image bearers.