

Genesis Lesson 3: Genesis 3

Lecture

- Genesis 3 introduces us to the serpent without any fanfare. The description of the serpent is ambiguous but quickly skews toward evil intent.
- Genesis 3 gives us no information as to when evil entered God's good creation. But as chapter 3 progresses, it is obvious that an evil power has entered the snake.
- Christians who have studied the Bible associate the snake of Genesis 3 with Satan. However, Satan was not known to the early Israelites. So, here we have another example of progressive revelation. Here are some post-Torah Bible verses which speak about Satan:
 - One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.” Job 1:6-7
 - Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. Zechariah 3:1
 - Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Luke 22:3
 - The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. 1 John 3:8
- The passages from Job and 1 John give us a great indication that Satan was, in fact, roaming the world after the creation. He had already rebelled against God and desired to practice his mischief on earth.
- I have always found it amusing that Adam and Eve did not think there was anything unusual about a talking snake! Surely there were other snakes in the Garden of Eden. I guess they thought this one was special.

- Did you notice the names given to God in this chapter (God vs. Lord God; Elohim vs. Yahweh Elohim)?
 - When God is speaking or acting, his name is *Yahweh Elohim*, God's personal name which expresses his relationship to mankind.
 - When the serpent and the woman speak about God, they refer to him as *Elohim*.
 - The serpent dares not intrude on the special relationship between God and mankind.
 - The woman's motivation for not using God's personal name is less clear, but perhaps she is speaking about *the deity who created the garden* instead of *her personal relationship with the deity*.
- We do not see the following in our English translation of Genesis 3, but it is quite clear in the Hebrew; all the verbs in Eve's and the snake's conversation are plural. This tells us that Adam was present with Eve during the conversation.
- You might now be asking yourself the question, "Why did the snake speak with Eve and not Adam?" Was she the one perceived as more easily influenced? Was she more intelligent one? The simple answer is, the Scripture gives us no insight as to why.
- Let's look more at God's command about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2:16-17
 - In his Genesis commentary, John Walton translates this passage as, "When you eat of it, you will be sentenced to death and therefore doomed to die." He states that death will be a certainty; however, the language does not imply that physical death would happen immediately.
- How does the serpent twist God's words in Genesis 3:4 when he says, "You will not certainly die."
 - John Walton says the Hebrew could be paraphrased as, "Don't think that death is such an immediate threat."

- We should also question whether Adam and Eve had experienced death among God's creatures yet. Did they even understand the concept?
- As Christians, we are quick to jump to the concept of spiritual death. And it is true that Adam and Eve did suffer a spiritual death. Because of their sin, they lost "unsullied fellowship with God" according to Victor Hamilton. They become alienated from God.
- It is this alienation from God which makes Christ and the promise of Colossians 1:21-22 so powerful:
 - "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation"
- We move on now to a few comments about how God deals with the serpent, Adam, and Eve.
 - First, note that the serpent and the ground are cursed. The man and the woman are not cursed.
 - God decrees that the serpent will crawl on its belly and eat dust. We should focus on this passage symbolically, not literally.
 - We know that not all snakes crawl on the ground. Think of water moccasins.
 - Nor do snakes eat dust. Think about the 20th century idiom, "eat my dust." This idiom suggests superiority or dominance over another, particularly after a race or contest.
 - The author of Genesis is telling us that the snake will live a life of subjugation and humiliation. The snake can strike at man's heel, but man can kill it by crushing its head.
 - How are we to interpret Genesis 3:15?
 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

- Many conservative interpreters see here the *protoevangelium*, the first good news of Christ's redeeming victory on the cross.
 - Passages of scripture they point to for this are Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”
 - Hebrews 2:14: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil”
 - And Revelation 12:7-10: “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”
- Other interpreters suggest that in this Genesis 3:15 passage, the snake symbolizes sin, death and the power of evil. The passage suggests a long struggle between good and evil, with mankind eventually triumphing (Gordon Wenham).
- We already discussed vegetation in our discussion of Genesis 2. Look at the curse on the land and what God says to Adam from a functional perspective.
 - Because Adam ate from the forbidden fruit in a garden that was full of trees which produced good food to eat, Adam must now work to produce food.
 - The abundant land of the garden is no longer available. The land Adam must work is “recalcitrant soil” (Victor Hamilton) that produces thorns and thistles which Adam must fight to produce edible food. Death from hunger is ever present.

- Work itself is not a punishment. God had already told Adam in Genesis 2:15 that his job was to cultivate the Garden of Eden. Rather, Adam is now going to experience hardship and frustration in his work. And his hardship and frustration will not end until man dies.
- In his commentary on Genesis, John Walton offers some excellent points of comparison between Genesis 1 and Genesis 3.
 - God blessed man and woman in Genesis 1:28:
 - God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”
 - After Adam and Eve’s disobedience, the blessing has not been lost, but the climate has changed.
 - When they ate the forbidden fruit, they hoped to gain autonomy from God. Instead, they are placed into situations (childbirth, the continuation of the race, and producing food) which will increase their dependence on God.
 - Victor Hamilton notes that God’s command to be fruitful and multiply and the blessing of multiple generations have not been withdrawn. Nevertheless, Walton states that the woman will feel an urgency to reproduce because of the threat of extinction; her desire will be for her husband.
 - The ground, which has been cursed, is not going to be as cooperative as the Garden of Eden in providing for their physical needs.
 - And the relationship between woman and man has been inexorably changed.
- I’d like to close with a comment made by Dr. Scott Redd in a recent sermon. His comment was an adaptation of Section 3, Item 1 from John Calvin’s *Institutes*.
 - “Every human has a fragment of memory that this is not the way God meant things to be.”

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Evildoers foster rebellion against God; the messenger of death will be sent against them. **Proverbs 17:11**

1. Read Genesis 3:1-7.

- a. How is the serpent described? Look up the description in other translations.
 - NIV: Now the serpent was more **crafty** than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. Genesis 3:1
 - ESV: Now the serpent was more **crafty** than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. Genesis 3:1
 - ASV: Now the serpent was more **subtle** than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. Genesis 3:1
 - NKJV: Now the serpent was more **cunning** than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. Genesis 3:1
- b. Do you think the description connotes good or evil, or is it ambiguous?
The description skews towards evil without being overtly so. Being **cunning** suggests **deceptiveness**.
- c. Refer to Genesis 1:24-25. How are God's living creatures described?
Their creation is described as **good**.
- d. What does the serpent say to the woman?
He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 3:1
- e. What do the serpent's words suggest to you about the serpent's intent?
The serpent is trying to install doubt into the woman's mind about God's commands and intent.

f. What was the woman's reply?

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Genesis 3:2-3

g. Were the woman's words true? Hint: see Genesis 2:16-17.

- And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2:16-17
- God did not say that they could not touch the fruit of the tree.
- God said, "you will certainly die." The woman said, "you will die."
- The woman doesn't specifically identify the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

h. What does the serpent say next?

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

i. What tactics did the serpent use to tempt the woman to eat the forbidden fruit?

- The serpent refutes what God said about certainly dying.
- The serpent suggests that God is not being truthful with the man and the woman.
- God had knowledge which he did not want to share with the man and the woman.
- He tempts the woman with the thought of being like God.

j. What did the woman do next?

- When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:6

k. What did her husband do?

Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

1. What happened after the couple ate the fruit?

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:7

m. Compare verses 5 and 7. In your opinion, was the serpent telling the truth?

- No, the serpent was not telling the truth about the knowledge of good and evil. All that the man and woman seemed to have gained was the knowledge that they were naked. Being naked in the Garden of Eden was not evil. That was Adam and Eve's natural state before the Fall.
- We might say that the serpent was telling the truth about death, as Adam and Eve did not immediately die when they ate the fruit.

2. Read Genesis 3:8-13.

a. What did Adam and his wife do after they heard the Lord God walking in the garden?

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8

b. Why?

- He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Genesis 3:10
 - Adam and Eve were ashamed.
- c. Comparing Genesis 2:25 to Genesis 3:10, how has Adam's relationship with the Lord God changed?
- In Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve were naked and felt no shame. In Genesis 3:10, Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness.
 - They hid from God, more out of shame for doing what God commanded them not to do than for being naked.

- d. What does God ask Adam?

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? Genesis 3:11

- e. What does Adam reply?

The man said, “The woman you put here with me —she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Genesis 3:12

- f. Does Adam answer God’s questions directly? How does he answer God’s questions?

No, Adam does not answer God’s questions directly. Instead, he deflects by pointing the finger at the woman as the instigator.

- g. What does God ask the woman and what is her reply?

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”
The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Genesis 3:13

3. Read Genesis 3:14-19.

- a. What curse did God pronounce on the serpent?

So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:14-15

- b. What consequences of sin did the woman face?

To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” Genesis 3:16

- c. In the original Hebrew, the word for pain used in verse 16a is not the usual one for childbirth pangs. With that in mind, how else might you interpret verse 16a?

Raising children will be laborious and painful for the woman.

- d. What does verse 16b suggest about the relationship between Adam and his wife after they have sinned?

The suitable helper view of woman, where the man cherished his wife and they became one flesh, has been changed to a relationship in which the woman's sexual desire may lead her into a relationship of subjugation.

- e. What consequences of sin did the man face?

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Genesis 3:17-19

- f. Do you think Adam and Eve were relieved at this point?

- They were probably relieved.
- God only cursed the ground and the snake; he did not curse Adam and Eve.
- God did not immediately strike them dead for eating from the tree.
- They might have been thinking, "How bad can it be?"

4. What did Adam do next, according to Genesis 3:20?

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.
Genesis 3:20

5. How did God extend grace to Adam and Eve according to Genesis 3:21?

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Genesis 3:21

6. Read Genesis 3:22-24.

- a. Adam and Eve had never been restricted from eating from the tree of life before they sinned. Why do you think God prevents them from doing so after they sinned?

- And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." Genesis 3:22

- God did not trust that they would not abuse the fruit from the tree of life.

- a. What does God do next?

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:23-24

- b. Read Revelation 2:7. What does this passage say about the tree of life?

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. Revelation 2:7

7. What does Genesis 3 teach you about sin, temptation, and God?

- God gave us free will to choose to obey or disobey his commands.
- Temptation makes us view God's commands and the world around us from a skewed perspective.
- God is merciful.

Genesis Lesson 3

Genesis 3

The Serpent of Genesis 3

- Christians Who Have Studied the Bible Associate the Snake with Satan
- Satan Was Not Known to the Early Israelites; Another Example of Progressive Revelation
- Post-Torah Verses Which Speak About Satan:
 - Job 1:6-7
 - Zechariah 3:1
 - Luke 22:3
 - 1 John 3:8
- Job and 1 John Give Us the Fact that Satan Was Roaming the World After Creation
- He Had Already Rebelled Against God and Desired to Practice His Mischief on Earth

Words for God

- Use of God (Elohim) vs. Lord God (Yahweh Elohim)
- When God is Speaking or Acting, His Name is Yahweh Elohim, God's Personal Name
- When the Serpent and the Woman Speak about God, They Refer to Him as Elohim
- The Serpent Dares Not Intrude on the Special Relationship Between God and Mankind
- The Woman's Motivation for Not Using God's Personal Name Is Less Clear; Perhaps Speaking about Who Created the Garden Instead of Her Personal Relationship with the Creator

Adam Was Present

- In the Hebrew, All the Verbs in Eve's and the Snake's Conversation Are Plural; So, Adam Was Present with Eve
- Why Did the Snake Speak with Eve and Not Adam?
- Was She Perceived as More Easily Influenced?
- Was She the More Intelligent One?
- The Scripture Gives Us No Insight as to Why

God's Command vs. The Serpent's Words

- Genesis 2:16-17
- John Walton: “When You Eat of It, You Will Be Sentenced to Death and Therefore Doomed to Die.”
 - Death Will Be a Certainty; Language Does Not Imply That Physical Death Would Happen Immediately
- Genesis 3:4
- John Walton: “Don’t Think That Death Is Such an Immediate Threat.”
- Had Adam and Eve Experienced Death Among God’s Creatures? Did They Understand the Concept of Death?

God's Command vs. The Serpent's Words

- As Christians, We Are Quick to Jump to the Concept of Spiritual Death
- It Is True That Adam and Eve Did Suffer a Spiritual Death
- Because of Their Sin, They Lost “Unsullied Fellowship with God” (Victor Hamilton); They Became Alienated from God
- It Is Alienation from God Which Makes Christ and the Promise of Colossians 1:21-22 so Powerful

God Deals with the Serpent, Adam, and Eve

- The Serpent and the Ground Are Cursed; The Man and the Woman Are Not Cursed
- God Decrees That the Serpent Will Crawl on Its Belly and Eat Dust; See This Passage Symbolically, Not Literally
 - Not All Snakes Crawl on the Ground; Water Moccasins
 - Snakes Do Not Eat Dust; The Idiom “Eat My Dust” Suggests Superiority or Dominance Over Another
 - The Snake Will Live a Life of Subjugation and Humiliation
 - The Snake Can Strike the Man’s Heel; The Man Can Kill It by Crushing Its Head

Genesis 3:15

- Many Conservative Interpreters See Here the *Protoevangelium*, the First Good News of Christ's Redeeming Victory on the Cross
 - Romans 16:20
 - Hebrews 2:14
 - Revelation 12:7-10
- Other Interpreters Suggest That in This Passage, the Snake Symbolizes Sin, Death and the Power of Evil; It Suggests a Long Struggle Between Good and Evil, with Mankind Eventually Triumphing (Gordon Wenham)

The Curse on the Land

- See This from a Functional Perspective
- Because Adam Ate from the Forbidden Fruit in a Garden That Was Full of Trees Which Produced Good Food to Eat, Adam Must Now Work to Produce Food
- The Abundant Land of the Garden Is No Longer Available; The Land Is Now “Recalcitrant Soil” (Victor Hamilton) That Produces Thorns and Thistles Which Adam Must Fight to Produce Food
- Death from Hunger Is Ever Present
- Work Itself Is Not a Punishment; In Genesis 2:15 Adam’s Job Was to Cultivate the Garden of Eden
- Adam Is Now Going to Experience Hardship and Frustration in His Work Until He Dies

Work

“Work is a blessing. God has so arranged the world that work is necessary, and He gives us hands and strength to do it. The enjoyment of leisure would be nothing if we had only leisure. It is the joy of work well done that enables us to enjoy rest, just as it is the experiences of hunger and thirst that make food and drink such pleasures.”

Elisabeth Elliot

“There is no work, however vile or sordid, that does not glisten before God.”

John Calvin

Adam and Eve



Original Sin and Banishment from the Garden of Eden



Genesis 1 and Genesis 3 (John Walton)

- God Blessed Man and Woman in Genesis 1:28
- After Adam and Eve's Disobedience, the Blessing Has Not Been Lost, but the Climate Has Changed
 - When They Ate the Forbidden Fruit, They Hoped for Autonomy from God
 - Instead, Their Situations (Childbirth, Continuation of the Race, Producing Food) Will Increase Their Dependence on God
 - God's Command to Be Fruitful and Multiply and the Blessing of Multiple Generations Has Not Been Withdrawn (Victor Hamilton)
 - The Woman Will Feel an Urgency to Reproduce Because of the Threat of Extinction; Her Desire for Her Husband
 - The Ground Under Curse Is Not Going to Be as Cooperative as the Garden of Eden
 - The Relationship Between Woman and Man Has Been Inexorably Changed

Expulsion from the Garden of Eden



In Closing

- Dr. Scott Redd, as Adapted from John Calvin’s *Institutes*:
 - “Every human has a fragment of memory that this is not the way God meant things to be.”