

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, July 22, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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The First Human Sin & Humanity's Fall

In this morning's study, we take up what some have rightly called the most empirically verifiable affirmation of Scripture--the fall of man. It is the affirmation that answers the question of why there is so much suffering and evil in this world. It also answers the question of why, if there is a God, that people feel so alienated from Him. It even answers the question of why, if there is one God, there are so many different religions in the world. But most of all, it answers the question of why Jesus Christ--the Son of God--came into this world as a member of the human family and died on the cross.

The third chapter of Genesis--the Book of Beginnings--tells us . . .

I. HOW TEMPTATION TO SIN FIRST ENTERED THE WORLD (vv. 1-5).

- A. The closing words of Genesis 2 remind us of the state of innocence that the first couple enjoyed before God; "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25)¹ But immediately after we're told this, we're then told of the tempter who first tempted them from their innocence; "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (3:1). In asking the understandable question of how it could be that a serpent spoke, it needs to be remembered that the Bible does not present this as an ordinary serpent. This one was either indwelt by, or was the embodiment of, Satan--"that serpent of old" (Revelation 20:2), "who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). That Satan often makes use of deceitful forms to do his work is clear in Scripture (1 Chronicles 21:1; Matthew 16:23; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- B. The origin of Satan's own sin (possibly told to us in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-19) is not the concern of Genesis 3; but rather the origin of human sin. We're told that it was Satan in the form of the serpent--a creature over whom man was originally mandated by God to have dominion--that put doubts in the woman's mind about God's true care for her and her husband (vv. 1b-5). He called into question God's word about the death that would result from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see 2:16-17); and told her, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (3:4-5). Here, by the way, is the basic nature of all sin: a desire to live lawlessly (1 John 3:4)--a desire to break apart from a dependence upon the Creator/Lawgiver, and to rebel against the very obedience to His commands that is essential to our relationship with Him.

II. THE FIRST HUMAN SIN (v. 6).

- A. We're given a pattern of the first temptation--and also for that of all temptation since--when we're told that "the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise . . ." These three reactions on the part of the woman to the serpent's lie parallel what the apostle John tells us elsewhere in Scripture about "all that is in the world" that is not of the Father; that is, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). It appears that it was in these same three ways that the devil also tempted our Lord in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11)--but with the Lord resisting all of the

devil's temptations.

- B. Temptation itself does not become sin unless it is acted upon in a way that disobeys God's instructions (see James 1:13-15). Thus we're told that the woman "took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." It seems that the man was present at the time of her temptation; but he did not stop her from her action. We're given further insight from 1 Timothy 2:14; where we're told, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." She was fooled into sin by the tempter; but he walked into sin with his eyes wide open. Why then did he also eat? We're not told. But it's clear that it was through Adam--not Eve--that sin and death entered and spread throughout the human family (Romans 5:12ff).

III. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF MANKIND'S FALLENNESS (vv. 7-13).

- A. Immediately, the effects of the fall began to show themselves. First, there was a sense of a loss of innocence. Whereas before they were both naked and not ashamed, now we're told "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings" (v. 7). Fallen people--in cultures and various people groups throughout the centuries--have been trying ever since to create ways to 'cover' that internal, inescapable sense of guilt before God. And then, because of their sense of 'nakedness', the man and the woman sought to hide from the divine Lawgiver whose commandment they broke: "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (v. 8). Spiritual "death" began to show itself as the result of their sin in that they were aware of their guilt before God and sought to hide from Him.
- B. The relational damage from the fall began to show itself in other ways as well. God Himself felt a loss. In what would have to be the most tragic question in all of human history, God called out to Adam and said, "Where are you?" (v. 9). When man explained that he was naked and sought to hide from Him, God asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (v. 11). And man then proceeded to blame the woman (v. 12)--showing that a breakdown in human relationships was a consequence of the fall; and the woman also proceeded to blame the serpent (v. 13)--showing that a breakdown in man's relationship with creation was also occurring.

IV. THE CURSEDNESS OF MAN'S FALL (vv. 14-20).

- A. It's then that a holy God justly issued forth a series of curses. First, He cursed the serpent--the physical instrument of Satan--and Satan himself along with the serpent (vv. 14-15). This was the beginning of the state of cursedness that creation itself now suffers under because of Adam's sin (Romans 8:19-22). Man's sin thus brought ruin upon the "very good" creation that God had placed under him. Then, God issued a curse upon the woman; saying, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (v. 16). Finally, the man is cursed; "'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return"' (vv. 17-19).
- B. Note, however, God's mercy. Even in the curse, redemption is promised; for

we're told that when God cursed the serpent, He told him that He "will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (v.15; see also Romans 16:20). The "Seed" of the woman is the promised Redeemer who would be born from fallen humanity itself. And it's because she would--although in pain--bear children that mankind has the hope of redemption (see 1 Timothy 2:14-15). This hope is why we're told in verse 20 that "Adam called his wife's name Eve (*Chavvah*', "life"), because she was the mother of all living."

V. THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN (vv. 21-24).

- A. The curse--and its promised removal by God--is the great narrative that we might say is "book-ended" in the Bible from beginning (Genesis 3) to end (Revelation 22:1-3). God's provision of redemption is shown in that--whereas the first couple sought to cover themselves with leaves, God clothed them in tunics of skin (v. 21). Something "died" in their place; and thus the promise of future atonement was pictured.
- B. But just as the tree of life is found at the end of the Bible's story (Revelation 22:2), fallen man needed to be kept from access to it until the redemption could be provided. Thus--lest they take of the tree and live forever in a state of separation from God--the first couple were driven out of the garden (vv. 22-23). As the Lord Jesus promises in Revelation 2:7, however, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"--and to "overcome" is to have faith in Jesus' atonement for sin (1 John 5:5; Revelation 13:11).

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.