

Genesis 3

The world has been created and designed for man, including the garden of Eden. God has commanded the man to serve the garden and protect it. The one prohibition, which would test man's loyalty to God, was not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this chapter, the reader is introduced to man's adversary, temptation, sin, punishment, and the first hint at redemption.

TRANSLATION - 3:1-6:

1 Now the serpent was cunning, more than all the animals of the field which Jehovah God made and he said to the woman, "[Is it] true that God said, 'You should not eat from every tree of the garden?'" **2** The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the tree of the garden we can eat." **3** But from the fruit of the tree which [is] in the middle of the garden God said, 'Do not eat from it and do not touch it, lest you die.'" **4** Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not, in fact, die. **5** Because God knows that in the day you both eat from it that your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** And the woman saw that good [was] the tree for food and that it [was] a desire to the eyes and being desired the tree to make wise and she took from the fruit and she ate and she gave it also to her husband with her and he ate.

WORDS:

"Serpent" (31x) conveys the basic idea of "reptile" in our modern terms, which may or may not have been a snake. "Cunning" (*rwm*; 11x) is a play, in Hebrew, on the word "naked" (*rm*) from 2:24. It can have positive connotations: "clever" or "prudent." "True" can be understood as "indeed." "Wise" (16x) means "insight, understanding, or success" (cf. 1 Sam. 25:3). God ought to be the one from Whom we seek wisdom (Neh. 9:20).

GRAMMAR:

"You will not, in fact, die" translates the same two verbs from God's command, the infinitive absolute and the imperfect verb (2:17). The two together express forcefulness so that we translate "not, in fact..." "Will be opened" translates a passive verb, a *niphal*. "To be desired" is also a *niphal* and "to make wise" (vs 6) is a causative, *hiphil*.

COMMENTS:

The serpent is not a demi-god; it was created by God. It is not to be worshiped, therefore. Rather, if anything, it should be avoided. God knew sin as far as His holy nature would allow; that is, God knew the eternal repercussions of sin. Man did not know sin, much like a small child who has not been exposed to sin. But, man will "know" sin differently than God does. Man will *experience* sin and its fatal consequences. That is what God was trying to spare man.

Since Satan uses the plural pronouns, it suggests that Adam was present as he tempted Eve. The preposition "with her" also argues for that point. Adam should not have been deceived. He sinned, as it were, with his eyes wide open. If we are correct in dating the book of Job to the patriarchal era, then Israel would have been familiar with the "adversary" Satan from that work (cf. Job 1-2). The picture of the serpent we have here is consistent with that portrayal, whether the Hebrews in Moses' day made the same connection, we do not know.

The tempter first questions God's goodness: has He *really* given any tree of the garden? The tempter likes to make God look selfish and narrow-minded when He gives parameters and stipulations for man to obey. Satan questions God's motivation for withholding the tree of knowledge. Satan outright contradicts God, adding "not" to God's threat. He also deceives the human pair, arguing their eyes will be "opened" (a reference to more knowledge), and they would be "like God," knowing good and evil.

Eve, herself, does not consistently quote God either, adding “do not touch it” to God’s prohibition. We do not know why she added that. The simple fact is that Satan has twisted the truth so that Eve falls for his ploy and pays a severe penalty. What we see here from Adam and Eve’s perspective is a lack of gratitude. Consider all the trees they had from which to eat in the garden and they focus on the one tree which God had forbidden. From that perspective, many sins result from a lack of gratitude.

Satan, meaning opponent or adversary, will also largely be known as the “devil” (slanderer). The Bible was not written to answer our inquiries into Satan’s origin but we do get some glimpses into his background. For example, he was created by God, as all things were, and therefore “good” (cf. 1:31). He had a problem with “pride” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6) which led him to being expelled from the presence of God (Rev. 12:9; Jude 6). Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Apparently, there is no plan of salvation for the angelic creation who rebelled against God (cf. Heb. 2:14-18).

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - The word “desired” is found in the Ten Commandments, prohibited by Exodus 20:17.

Later Hebrew writers - “Satan,” as a person and not a generic “adversary,” shows up again in 1 Chronicles 21:1-2 and the prophet Zechariah 3.

NT writers - Jesus says Satan was a murderer “from the beginning,” a “liar,” and the “father of lies” (John 8:44). Jesus came to render the devil powerless (Heb. 2:14) and to destroy his works (1 John 3:8). Yet, Jesus warns that Satan is still shrewd (Matt. 10:16) and seeks to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

TRANSLATION - 3:7-13:

7 Then they were opened the eyes of both and they knew that they [were] naked and they sewed together the fig leaf and they made for themselves waist coverings. **8** And they heard the sound of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the wind of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the face of Jehovah God in the middle of the trees of the garden. **9** And Jehovah God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” **10** And he said, “Your sound I heard in the garden and I was afraid because naked I *myself* [was] and I hid myself.” **11** Then He said, “Who informed you that naked you *yourself* [were]? From the tree which I commanded you, *not* to eat from it, have you eaten?” **12** And the man said, “The woman whom you gave [to be] with me, she gave to me from the tree and I ate. **13** So Jehovah God said to the woman, “What [is] this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me and I ate.”

WORDS:

“Waist coverings” is a girdle, a loin cloth or an apron. The fig leaf is the largest among the trees from that area. For some reason, whether its fragile material or too immodest, God will make something else for them (3:21). “Heard” (vs 8) could also be translated “obeyed,” which is ironic since that is *not* what they did in verse 6! “Sound” could be translated “voice;” “wind” is the same word as “Spirit” in Gen. 1:3. Here, it means the time of day when a breeze is blowing. We do not know if it was morning or evening. “Deceived” (vs 13) is used 14x in the OT.

GRAMMAR:

“Opened” (vs 7) is *niphal*, a passive form. In verse 10, “Your sound” is in an emphatic position, showing it was the sound of God that frightened Adam. “Naked” is also emphatic and, again, so is “I.” “I hid myself” is *niphal*, here suggesting a reciprocal connotation. “Informed” (vs 11) is a *hiphil*, a causative tense. “Deceived” is a *hiphil*. “Hid themselves” is *hithpael*, which is reflexive. “You” in verse 9 is singular. God is speaking directly to Adam.

COMMENTS:

The tree was good to look at, but, once they disobeyed, what they saw was their own nakedness. The tree was desired to make them knowledgeable, but what they knew was their need for covering themselves. What was supposed to be “good,” led them to fear their Creator. When God called to the man, “Where are you?” God is surely asking man to evaluate himself, where he was in relationship to God. Jehovah knew where Adam was, in every way.

Man’s new-found “knowledge” made him ashamed to be naked. God asked how he came to that knowledge. God answers His own question on Adam’s behalf: “Have you eaten from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?” Adam does not accept responsibility. In fact, he blames Eve first, and then God! The woman was honest and open: “The serpent deceived me.” But regardless of whether one had his eyes opened (Adam) or was deceived (Eve), both disobeyed and both would be separated from the tree of life. Highlight the number of times the verb “to eat” has been used in some form in this paragraph. It illustrates the nature of the act of disobedience.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - Exposure of nakedness was prohibited by God, particularly as a part of worship (Exo. 20:26; 28:42-43). Noah was disgraced and a curse came on his family because of public nakedness (Gen. 9:22-25). “Walking” is a frequent metaphor to refer to God’s presence and favoritism. Enoch, Noah, Abraham all walked with God (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). God also “walked” among the camp of Israel (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14; 2 Sam. 7:6-7). For that “walk” to remain, Israel would have to obey God.

NT writers - The passage is not a quotation or allusion to Gen. 3, but the NT begins with man seeking after God (Matt. 2:2) while the OT begins with God seeking man. Like Jonah, man often runs from or hides from God, even through the end of the Bible (Rev. 6:16). But nothing is hidden from God’s knowledge (Psa. 139:7; Luke 12:2; Heb. 4:12-13).

TRANSLATION - 3:14-19:

14 So Jehovah God said to the serpent, “Because you did this, cursed you [are] above every animal and above every animal of the field. On your stomach you will move and dust you eat all the days of your life. **15** But enmity I put between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will strike [your] head and you yourself will strike his heel. **16** To the woman He said, “To increase I will increase your pain and the conception in pain you will bear sons and to your husband your desire; he himself will rule over you. **17** Then to the man he said, “Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree which I commanded to you saying, ‘Do not eat from it,’ the land is cursed because of you; in sorrow you will eat of it all the days of your life. **18** Even thorns and thistles will sprout against you and you will eat the herbs of the field. **19** In the sweat of your nose you will eat bread until you return to the land because from it you were taken because dust you [are] and to dust you will return.

WORDS:

“Cursed” is used 63x in the OT. To disobey God brings a curse. “Cursed” here is the same as in verse 15. The verb is found in the punishment of the serpent and Adam but not Eve. “Dust” is a key word in the curse of man. “Enmity” (vs 15) is a key word in the OT, being found 285x. “Seed,” as we have already mentioned, is a key word in Genesis (59x). “Crush” is the same verb for both the seed of Satan and the seed of woman. “Conception in pain” is perhaps another example of a hendiadys, two words used to convey a single idea: “painful conception.” “Desire” and “rule” are both found in Gen. 4:7. “Listened” (vs 17) is the verb translated “heard” in verse 10 and “voice” is the same word as “sound” from verse 10. God is not disparaging Eve; He is severely criticizing Adam for listening to *anyone* over God Himself. “All the days of your life” in the curse of Adam (vs 17) is the same phrase used of the serpent in verse 14. “Nose” in verse 19 is usually translated “brow” in this verse, since that is the source of sweat.

GRAMMAR:

“Cursed” is a passive participle. “You” (vs 14) and “you” (vs 15) are emphatic. “To increase” (infinitive absolute) and “I will increase” (*hiphil*, causative) together make a very emphatic statement. “Crush” is also found in Psa. 139:11 and Job 9:17. “Sprout” (vs 18) is *hiphil*.

COMMENTS:

Satan, ignorant as he is (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8), did not know that his behavior would bring about his own, painful, crushing defeat. We do not believe that this curse meant that the serpent had been a four-legged animal before and would now move on its belly. This is poetry which, while still conveying an important message, is not to be understood literally. Serpents do not eat dust, for example. But, the idea is one of humiliation and, in fact, slithering on its belly, it would be more vulnerable to having its head crushed (vs 15). The verb used of Satan and of the seed is the same verb (“strike or crush”) but the effect is decidedly different. Getting “crushed” on the heel is not fatal; getting “crushed” on the head is fatal, especially for a serpent.

The whole tenor of the text argues that there is something more going on here than simply the fear of snakes. We have a serpent speaking to Eve, talking about disobeying God! There is enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of woman. Generally, the “seed” is associated with the male; here, it is identified with the woman. The rest of the Bible will answer the question as to what God intended. Clearly 3:15 is the *protoevangelium*, the “first [promise of] the gospel” message. The seed of woman will crush the serpent’s head.

Please observe that the verb “curse” is not used with Eve. God will increase her pain in childbearing, implying that childbirth would have involved some pain before the disobedience. Her desire would be to her husband but he will rule over her. We’re not sure exactly what God meant by this but the second phrase, “but he,” is disjunctive which suggests two opposite actions. Eve will desire her husband, but he will rule over her. In Genesis 4:7, sin, personified, will “desire” Cain but he must “rule” it. We do know that God intends for man to be the head, both of the family and of the church. Yet, we do not see complete subordination of women here as one might expect from a misogynistic patriarchal society. In other words, while Adam blames Eve, neither the human author (Moses) nor the divine author (the Spirit) lays the fault for sin on the behavior of Eve.

We point out, again, that “Adam” and “land” are cognate words: God said to the “man, I will curse the land...” This happened because Adam did not listen to, or obey, the voice of God. While work was to be done in the garden (2:15), it would not have the toil and frustration (“thorns,” “thistles,” and “sweat”) that Adam would later experience. Eve would bear children in “sorrow;” Adam would work the ground in “sorrow.” Both would be constant reminders of man’s disobedience to God and the resulting punishment. Observe how frequently the verb to “eat” is found in these three verses (3:17-19; 5x). This illustrates the nature of the disobedience: they ate what they were forbidden to eat. The curse of man in verse 19 ties him back into the land; he came from dust and he will return to dust. Man is not eternal. He is limited and now, he will be separated from the tree of life and will die physically. Lamech will name Noah after the human desire to have rest (Gen. 5:29). If the typical understanding of 2:5 is correct, that there was no rain between the creation and the flood, Adam’s work may have been especially challenging. In that light, the new climate after the flood (periodic rains) may have been an act of mercy on God’s part.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - We have noted that “desire” and “rule” from 3:16 are also found in Gen. 4:7. Curses by God on disobedient Israel are conspicuous in Deut. 27-28.

Later Hebrew writers - The serpent poetically lives on dust of the ground (Isa. 65:25; Micah 7:17; Psa 72:9). There is pain in childbirth (cf. Psa. 113:9); but children are still a gift from

God (Psa. 127, 128) which becomes a metaphor for hard and difficult times (Micah 4:9-10; Isa. 13:8; 21:3). Man will return to dust (Job 10:9; 34:15; Psa. 103:14; Eccl. 12:7).

NT writers - Painful labor is forgotten, Jesus says, when a child is born into the world (John 16:21). By the same token, troubles in this life will surely be forgotten in the experience of heaven's glories (Rev. 7:17). Paul will say that Jesus was born "of a woman" (Gal. 4:4), indubitably referring to the virgin birth but, perhaps, an allusion to Gen. 3:15. Sin and deception are associated with the devil in 1 John 3:7-10. John identifies clearly this serpent as the devil, Satan, the tempter in Revelation 12:9 who will be thrown into hell, the lake of fire (Rev. 20:2, 7-10). Until then, as Christians are spreading the gospel of Christ, they are trampling Satan under their feet (Rom. 16:20). In Galatians 3:16, Paul identifies the "seed" promised to Abraham as being none other than Jesus. He specifically has in mind Abraham but since "seed" is a theme of Genesis, Paul would surely say the "seed" of 3:15 is Christ.

TRANSLATION - 3:20-24:

20 Then Adam called the name of his wife "Eve" because she herself was the mother of all living. **21** Then Jehovah God made for man and for his wife tunics of skin and He clothed them. **22** And Jehovah God said, "Behold, the man is like one of us to know good and evil. So now lest he extend his hand and take even from the tree of life and eat and live indefinitely... " **23** So Jehovah God sent him from the garden of Eden, to serve the land, [where] he was taken from there. **24** And He expelled the man and He placed to the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the sword was turning every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

WORDS:

We begin translating "man" here as "Adam" simply because "Eve" also now has a name. The LXX translates "Eve" as *Zoe* (living). "Tunics" (vs 21; 29x) was the type of garment given to Joseph by Jacob in Gen. 37. King David's daughters wore long-sleeved tunics (2 Sam. 13:18-19). Otherwise, we do not know exactly what type of garment this was. The verb "sent" (vs 23) is the same verb as "extend" in verse 22. Adam "extended" his hand in disobedience so God "sends" Adam out of His presence. "Expelled" (vs 24; 24x) is the verb used of God expelling the sinful nations out of the promised land in Deut. 33:27. "Cherubim" (vs 24; 91x) is a transliteration of the Hebrew noun. We do not know what these creatures were; the word is plural and its origin is unknown. The definite article suggests Moses' audience knew what he was portraying (cf. Exo. 25:18-22; 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 37:7-9; Num. 7:89). To call cherubim angelic is presumptuous.

GRAMMAR:

"Clothed" is *hiphil*, the causative tense. "So now" draws a sharp contrast as God punishes the man for his disobedience. We have inserted ellipses in verse 22 to show that God does not finish His sentence, a rhetorical device known as *aposiopesis*. His thought is immediately fulfilled in action as God sends Adam and Eve out of the garden. "Expelled" (vs 24) is *piel* tense, the intensive form of the verb. "Turning every way" is a *hithpael*.

COMMENTS:

Just as Adam named the animals (2:20), so here he names Eve. Adam and Eve, being separated from the tree of life, will now begin the process of dying. In light of that ominous future, Adam names Eve, hopefully, as the "mother of all living." God alleviates the shame that came with their nakedness by providing clothing for them but not fragile covering, a durable garment, made from animal skins, to protect them from the elements to which they would now be exposed outside of Eden. Additionally, supposing God killed an animal in order to make the clothing (rather than making the clothing out of nothing), Adam and Eve would be continually reminded of the cost of their disobedience. Not only did God *make* the animal skin for clothing but God also *clothed* them. It is improper to appear before God naked which argues to later generations that cult prostitution cannot be pleasing to Jehovah God.

The warning of death (2:17) is now fulfilled as Adam and Eve are separated both from their Creator and from the tree of life, from which they could eat and “live forever.” The expression “*even from the tree of life*” suggests that Adam and Eve had not yet eaten from that fruit. God sent them out and, to emphasize the point, Moses writes God “expelled” man who settled east of the garden. God then placed a unique creature, more than one cherub, to guard the tree of life. It is sadly ironic that Adam was put in the garden to “guard” it (2:15) but he now must be guarded *from* it! Such is the price of disobedience. Whether the cherubim held the flaming sword or the sword is independent of the cherubim is not clear from the text. What is clear is that man was separated from the tree of life and will not be reunited to it until the Seed comes and restores the relationship lost due to sin! That is the story of the Bible: *the salvation of man, through Jesus Christ, to the glory of God.*

We might also suggest that separating man from the tree of life, allowing physical death to take its course, is an act of grace on God’s part. Otherwise, man could be condemned to live in a physical world that would now be dominated by sin and Satan without any hope of a better place!

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Life is a gift but it must be coupled with obedience (Deut. 30:11-20). Just as surely as Adam and Eve were expelled from God’s presence because of sin, the inhabitants of Canaan, because of sin, will be expelled from the Promised Land (Exo. 23:28-31). Cain was “expelled” (Gen. 4:14), a word which later will be used for divorce (Num. 30:9; Deut. 33:27).

Later Hebrew writers - Images of cherubim (Psa. 18:10) were in the tabernacle and the temple (1 Kings 6:23-29, 32; 7:29, 36; 8:6f). Ezekiel begins his writing with a vision of cherubim (1:5-28) and he will portray cherubim in the new temple (41:18-20, 25). This prophet will also portray the fall of the king of Tyre in poetic form reminiscent of Eden (28:11-19). Man will return to the “dust of death” (Psa. 22:15; Job 7:21). When God brings Assyria against Israel for her disobedience (700s B. C.), thorn and thistles will grow on their (pagan) altars and they will seek to hide themselves from God (Hosea 10:8). It is likely Hosea has the expulsion of man from Eden in his mind.

NT writers - “Eve” is not frequently named in Scripture but she is found in 2 Cor. 11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:13. “Adam” is mentioned nine times in the NT: Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; Jude 14. It is clear that the NT writers accepted Adam and Eve as real, historical persons and that sin was introduced into the world through Adam’s disobedience. Yet, thankfully, righteousness and salvation have also been introduced into the world through the obedience of Jesus Christ. If we are to be saved from the sting of sin, we must obey Christ. Let us point out also that the idea popularized by John Calvin that man became inherently wicked following the sin of Adam, that man is born with a “sinful nature,” is false and a misunderstanding of the nature of Adam’s sin. Man has the moral ability to make right choices even if he does not consistently make right choices.