

The Nature of the Temptation (Gen. 3:1-6)

I. *Overthrowing the Order of Creation*

- A. **Subverting dominion over the creatures.** Humanity was made to exercise rule over the creatures, but the serpent comes to the woman and begins to instruct her. This is no ordinary serpent but is Satan himself working through a serpent (**Rev. 12:9; 20:2**). Satan undermines the order of God's creation by coming as a lower creature to dictate to the woman and by coming to the woman rather than to the man who is her head and protector (**1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23**).
- B. **Questioning the word of God.** The focus of Satan's temptation is the word of God. He disputes that there is any reason for the man and the woman not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In doing this, he questions the validity of what God has said and also God's motives for saying it. Rather than God giving the command out of His goodness, Satan claims that He has given it out of fear. However, the reason that Satan attacks God's word goes even deeper than this. The creation exists only by the word of God. It is by the word of His power that He brought all things into being and shaped them according to His will. To question the word of God is to question reality itself and the entire order that God has set up. Satan targets God's word because a rejection of it will also constitute a complete rejection of God's created order for all things. Disbelieving what God has said will taint the way we look at the rest of reality.

II. *Replacing the Promises*

- A. **The promise of Satan.** God had placed His blessing upon the man and woman and had given them every tree in the garden, except for one, for them to eat. His promise to them was eternal life under His blessing. Satan, however, comes and offers a different promise. He promises that they can eat of any of the trees without exception and promises that in eating of the particular tree that God has forbidden, that an even greater blessing will come to them. Rather than descending into death, they shall ascend to be like God. The irony is that the man and the woman were already like God, for He had made them in His own image. Satan not only promises what he has no power or authority to give but offers nothing that God has not already promised or given according to righteousness. All that Satan offers in sin, God gives in accordance with His glory and goodness.
- B. **Eating the forbidden fruit.** After hearing Satan's promise that they would be like God, the fruit of the tree becomes desirable to the woman. It is the nature of sin to make us discontent with what God has given and to seek that which we do not have. So she takes and eats of the fruit and gives some to her husband as well, and so the first sin is committed. Nonetheless, we need to notice that there is a difference between the sin of the man and the woman. The woman is deceived by Satan and falls into sin (**Gen. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:14**), but Adam sins willfully, with full knowledge of what he is doing. It is his sin that breaks the covenant and his sin that is greater. The language of the passage also seems to indicate that the man was nearby and aware of the interaction between the woman and the serpent but did nothing to stop what was going on.

Covering Up the Sin (Gen. 3:7-13)

- I. **Consequences of the Sin.** After eating the fruit, the eyes of the man and woman are opened, but not to see that they have become like God, but rather to see that they are naked. Although they had always been naked (**Gen. 2:25**), the difference was that their nakedness was not shameful because they radiated the image of God in righteousness and holiness. However, now their knowledge has become corrupted, their righteousness undone, and their holiness defiled. Therefore, when they see one another, no longer do they reflect the glory of God but show that they are sinful creatures of dust.

II. *Response to the Sin*

- A. **Trying to make it right by works (3:7).** Having lost the covering of the spotless image of God, the man and woman seek to cover their shame by making clothes out of fig leaves. However, this does not work, for God comes walking in the garden to meet with them, and they hide because their shame is not covered, and they are still naked (3:10).
- B. **Trying to hide from the consequences (3:8-10).** The man and woman recognize that their attempts to fix the problem are not sufficient, so their next response is to hide from God. They somehow hope that there is a means to keep the knowledge of their sin from God and, that if God doesn't know, that the reality of it will perhaps go away or be lessened. This also fails.
- C. **Trying to blame others (3:11-13).** Having failed at making the sin right by their works or by hiding it, the man and the woman finally try to shift the blame away from themselves in hopes that this will free them from guilt. The man blames the woman and, by implication, God Himself for his eating of the fruit. The woman blames the serpent for deceiving her and enticing her to eat.
- D. **Understanding our responses to sin.** The responses of our first parents to their sin is very instructive for us. Surely, we too have tried all of these methods for dealing with our sins, but none of them can ever work. We may, for a time, deceive ourselves into thinking that we can atone for our sins by good works or hide them so that no one knows or lay the guilt on someone else, but the truth is that there is no way that we have of remedying our sins. We are guilty before the law of God, we are covenant-breakers, and we are worthy of His judgment.

Curses on the Man and Woman (Gen. 3:16-19; 22-24)

- I. **Judgment According to the Covenant.** God's covenants come not only with blessings in keeping them but also with curses for breaking them (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). These curses are the inverse of the blessings promised in the covenant. In the Mosaic covenant, God promised to bless the people by establishing the people in the land, generously providing for them, and protecting them from enemies. However, the curse for breaking the covenant was that they would be expelled from the land, deprived of what they need, and be conquered by their enemies. Likewise, the curses that come upon the man and woman are the inverse of the blessings they were to have in keeping the covenant. They were commanded to be fruitful and multiply (1:28), the woman will now have pain in childbearing (3:16). They were given the gift of marriage (2:23-24), the woman will now wrongly desire to rule over her husband (3:16). They were to tend the land (2:15), now it brings forth thorns (3:18). They were to live before the face of God, now they will be cast out of His presence (3:22-24) and die (3:19). They were to enjoy the rest of the Sabbath (2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11), now they will toil in their work (3:17-19).
- II. **What About Death?** One of the unexpected elements of the judgment God brings upon the man and woman is that they do not immediately die. God had said that in the day that they ate of the tree, they would surely die (2:17). Some skeptics will cite this as proof that the Bible cannot be trusted. However, there are a few things to observe. First, God does include in the curse the eventuality of physical death that will come (3:19). Second, we need to recognize the reality of the spiritual death that did happen that day. The man and woman lost the original righteousness that they had possessed and so became dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and so kept from eating from the tree of life (3:22-24). Third, the fact that they don't immediately physically die points to the grace of God, that He has something better in mind.

The Protoevangelium and the Hope of Redemption (Gen. 3:14-15; 20-21)

- I. **The Protoevangelium (3:15).** In spite of the sin of the man and woman and the judgment that God has brought upon them, God demonstrates that He purposes not to destroy them, but to redeem them from the curse of their sin. The first way He reveals this is in His curse upon the serpent. In that curse, He reveals that He will put enmity between Satan and the woman, between his seed and her seed, and that her seed would ultimately crush his head and destroy him. This promised seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head will be a son ("he will bruise"). This has become known as the protoevangelium (first preaching of the gospel). Rather than Satan gaining allies against God from this sin, God has promised that he will have perpetual war with the woman and that from her will come one that will destroy him and his works. In this, God testifies to the coming redemption in Jesus Christ (**Rev. 12**). **Genesis 3:15** is arguably the most important verse in the Bible. The entire rest of the Bible is a record of how this verse will come to pass. More specifically, the rest of Genesis organizes itself around the drama of the conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.
- II. **Renaming the Woman (3:20).** In two brief but powerful statements, the Scriptures demonstrate that the man and the woman understood the promise of redemption that God had given, that they believed it by faith, and that God atoned for their sins. The first of these is when Adam renames his wife. Whereas before, just as he is simply named "man," and she was simply "woman," Adam now names her Eve, which means "the mother of all living." The significance of this occurring after their fall into sin, and God's judgment being pronounced on them is vital. Although she was the instigator who brought the curse of death on humanity, Adam does not name her according to her transgression, but according to the promise of verse 15; that she is the one who will bring about the seed who will overcome and destroy the curse. This demonstrates Adam's faith in the promise of God to redeem and in the Messiah, who will come and accomplish that redemption.
- III. **The First Sacrifice (3:21).** God responds to their faith by clothing them with animal skins. Although their efforts to clothe themselves with the fig leaves did not solve the problem of their nakedness, God is able to provide the proper clothing. He does this with animal skins, which indicates that He killed an animal in order to clothe them. In this, we see how God establishes the need for sacrifices to deal with sins. The true reason that Adam and Eve do not die that day is because God accepted the death of another in their place. Adam and Eve deserved to die, but God kills one that is sinless in their place and covers their sin with the life of the one slain. We see in this an example of the truth that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (**Heb. 9:22**) and why sin offerings always required the sacrifice of a spotless animal. Ultimately, it points us to the sacrifice of Christ. He is the spotless lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**), and by that sacrifice, all who have faith are redeemed by His blood (**Heb. 9; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20**) and clothed in His life and righteousness (**2 Cor. 5:1-5; Phil. 3:9-11**). God offered and accepted this first sacrifice on behalf of Adam and Eve, forgiving them and clothing them because of their faith in the redemption He had promised in Christ.
- IV. **Waiting for Redemption.** The fact that Adam and Eve have saving faith and God justifies them does not mean that everything is made well. They are still cast out of the garden, still live under the curse of the fall, and still have to wait for the coming of Christ. The Scriptures build the expectation of Christ and progressively give a fuller picture of who He will be and what He will do as our redeemer. However, until then, the realities of sin and its effects on the world will play out. The war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman will continue until God makes all things new.

Concluding Thoughts about Genesis 1-3

I. *Why Genesis 1-3?*

- A. **Common questions and ideas.** There is a lot of confusion about Genesis 1-3, but one of the things about which people are most confused is why it is in the Bible in the first place. Why is it important for Moses to communicate this account of creation and the fall to the Hebrews who have been saved out of Egypt? Why is it important that the account be preserved in the word of God for all generations to know? Many scholars claim that the first three chapters are given just so the Hebrews would have an origin story like other ancient cultures (often said to undermine the truthfulness of these chapters). I think most Christians would simply say they don't know.
- B. **Proper expectations.** The reason these chapters are here is to set the right expectation. This is not just an account of the origins of humanity, it is also the account of where God's people came from. That means that what is happening to the Hebrews, and to us, is all part of what God started all the way back in the Garden. Therefore, it was not an option for the Hebrews to believe that God's purpose in the Exodus was merely to give them fields in a land in the Middle East so they could live nice lives in this fallen world. God's redemption requires nothing less than the full overturning of the fall and the full restoration of all the purposes He had in the beginning.
- C. **A full redemption.** Therefore, there is not now, nor has there ever been an excuse for not recognizing that God must bring salvation by His promised Messiah and that this is His purpose for history. This expectation is set from the very beginning. We cannot buy into the idea that the Hebrews had no way of knowing what God was intending to do. No, the entirety of the Old Testament is about how God is building up towards His redemption in Christ (**Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39-40**). This is not an idea imposed on the Old Testament by the New Testament; it does not require interpretive gymnastics. It requires taking the God revealed in the pages of Scripture seriously and knowing that, if He has set in motion this process of redemption, He will surely bring it to pass and will never settle for less. Genesis 1-3 teaches us to look for the Messiah and gives us hope, that when He comes, He will restore things to an even greater place than what we see here in the beginning.

II. *Why the Fall?*

- A. **Humility in what we don't know.** The other question that is usually asked at this point, especially if one has an appreciation for the sovereignty of God is, "why did God allow the fall?" There is one sense in which we have to shut our mouths in humility and say we don't fully know the mind of God on this matter.
- B. **Praising God for what we do know.** There is another sense in which we can give a definitive answer, and it is because God is accomplishing something much better than would have been if Adam did not fall. If Adam hadn't fallen, he would have gained eternal life and glory for the human race and creation, this is true. However, if that had been the case, we would not know the sweetness of redemption and of good overcoming evil. But even more importantly, as close as we would have been to God, we would still have only a man as our representative head. But now, we are united to and represented by, not Adam, but Jesus. We have been made one with the God-man Himself, and our communion with Him and knowledge of the Lord will be so much greater because of that fact, that we cannot comprehend it. Glory be to God for the fall, for it is the fall that gives us Jesus.