



New Covenant

Presbyterian Church

Genesis 3:20-24 Small Group Questions

1. What indication is there that Adam believed the Gospel?

Adam named his wife Eve (Gen. 3:20) immediately after God told him that he would die (Gen. 3:19). The name “Eve” means “Life.” It is odd that Adam would name his wife “Life” (with the qualifier, “Because she was the mother of all living”) immediately after she was deceived, led a rebellion against God, would now bring forth children who would all die unless, of course, Adam was acting in faith on the promise that she would bring forth a Redeemer who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

2. What does the Lord mean when he says within the Godhead, “Now the man has become like one of us knowing good and evil?”

There is sarcasm bound up in what the Lord is saying. While, on the one hand, Adam did gain the experiential knowledge of Good and Evil by choosing the Evil and rejecting the Good, on the other hand, he had become completely unlike God in the fall. It might help us to think of it this way, God is essentially saying, “The man has gotten what he thought he would get when the serpent deceived Eve into thinking that she ‘Would be like God’ if she would take and eat of the Tree of which God told her not to eat.

3. What does the Lord mean when He says, “And now, lest he reach out his hand and take and eat of the Tree of Life and live forever..”

There is something bound up deep in the heart of man, after the fall, to try to work for his salvation. The Tree of Life symbolized eternal life. In this sense, it was a sacrament like the Lord’s Supper. After Adam fell, he had the propensity to try to gain access to eternal life by what he did. Jonathan Edwards explained this idea when he wrote:

Hence how vain and dangerous are their attempts that are attempting to get eternal life themselves. There are many that, notwithstanding the flaming sword of God’s justice and vindictive wrath that turns every [way], are endeavoring to find out ways to come at the tree of life. Many are bold to come in their own names and in their own righteousness. [There is] no sword for them that come in Christ’s name, but a flaming sword still for them that come in their own names. Men are exceeding apt to seek eternal life through their own righteousness though in a fallen state. And the holiness, majesty, justice, wrath, and power of God be engaged to prevent it, and to slay and consume all such that come thus in their own righteousness.

4. How is grace mingled in with the just retribution meted out by God on man in Genesis 3:9-24?

We find grace mingled with God’s judgments pronounced against man at every point. Whether it is in the promise of a Redeemer in the curse placed against the serpent or in the fact that the curses were placed on man in order to bring him to repentance or in the fact that God was protecting man from a principle of self-righteousness when he kicked him out of the Garden--so as not to give him any reason to think that he could gain life by what he did--God is everywhere preparing man to see his need for the Redeemer.



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5. What does the flaming sword in the hand of the cherubim indicate?

The flaming sword indicated the justice and wrath of God. In the Scriptures fire symbolizes God's consuming wrath. The sacrifice of the burnt offering was to be consumed with fire. God is said to be "a consuming fire" in the book of Hebrews (ch. 12). O. Palmer Robertson points out the significance of "the sword of the Lord" throughout the Old Testament when he writes:

"Bound by the oath of the covenant, the Lord must employ his sword to slay all the wicked. This sword of the Lord appears readied in the hand of the captain of the Lord's host as Joshua contemplates his attack on Jericho (Josh. 5:13). It became the central feature of Gideon's battle cry against the Midianites (Judg. 7:20). In the apocalyptic visions of the Revelation of John, the one whose name is the Word of God brandishes a sharp double-edged sword that strikes the nations (Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). This eschatological sword joins the "iron scepter" of the messianic king as an instrument for subduing the nations (Rev. 19:15; cf. Ps. 2:9)."

6. Where else do we find Cherubim mentioned in Moses' writings? How does this relate to the account of them placed at the East of Eden in Genesis 3?

Cherubim were sewn into the Veil that hung in the Temple--showing that the presence of God was being guarded from sinful man. This allusion back to the cherubim at the East Gate of the Garden-Temple should have triggered a reminder of the fall and the need for a way to be opened again for man in the work of redemption.

7. What is significant about the reference to the East in Genesis 3? Where else does the "east" play a prominent role in redemptive history?

In the development of this theme in Scripture, we find allusive allusions in the history of Israel with relation to the Tabernacle their tribal warfare in conquering the land. After numbering each of the tribes, the Lord told Moses and Aaron to set the tribes around the Tabernacle of meeting, according to each of their respective places determined by the Lord. The men of war from each tribe would position themselves north, south, west and east of the Tabernacle. God Himself would dwell in the midst of His people. When the tribes were positioned about the Tabernacle during Israel's wilderness wandering, Judah was commanded to camp on the east side when the Tabernacle. In the stepping stones toward the restoration of Eden and the presence of God, the east side (or East Gate) represents the way back (see Gen.28; and 3:24). When Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast out of the Garden. Two cherubim with flaming swords were placed at the East of Eden (Gen. 3:24), guarding the way back to the dwelling place of God. Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, is the One who opens that way up again. He is the way to the presence of God, because He is the presence of God. Whenever the east gate of the Temple is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is generally mentioned with reference to Judah's place.

In Numbers 2:3 we discover that God gave instruction concerning Judah first, and gave the tribe a special placement for the battle: "On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be the leader of the children of Judah." In order for Israel to secure back to the presence of God, they have to fulfill the conquest and establish the dwelling place of God (i.e. the Tabernacle and then the Temple) in Jerusalem. To this end, Judah is the first to go to battle (Judges 1:1-3). This was a picture of the conquest of God's enemies and the securing of the spiritual inheritance by Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.



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Additionally, the Tabernacle also faced toward the east, the place to the rising of the sun. The alter was the first piece of sacred furniture in the Tabernacle and it was so because the way into the presence of God was not possible without the sacrifice. When the priest came into the Tabernacle for the morning sacrifice, the sun would have shone on the alter on which the sacrifice was being offered to God. There seems to be two reasons for this: The first is that the sun would shine on the very thing that opened the way back to the presence of God; and second, the sun was itself a type of the Sun of Righteousness who is said to “rise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2). This is probably the reason for the Tabernacle facing toward the east.

One of the principle restorative allusions in the OT prophetic literature also has to do with the east side of the Tabernacle and “East Gate” of the Temple. In Ezekiel’s prophecy of the New Temple (Ez. 40-48) the “east Gate” is the prominent focus of the eschatological dwelling place of God. It is the gate that is shut so that no one but the Prince can enter in (Ez. 46:1-8). The Prince (i.e. a clear reference to the Messiah, see Dan. 9:25) enters with the burnt offering (Ez. 46:12). Once the sacrifice was offered we find that “there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar” (Ez. 47:1). The water is a symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit, as our Lord intimates throughout the fourth Gospel (John 4:10; 7:37-39; 19:34). Judah being at the “east” throughout the OT typifies the Redeemer and His work opening the way into the presence of God (Heb. 6:19-20) for us.

8. What does Jesus do to make way for man to again be given a right to the Tree of Life? How do the elements of Genesis 3:22-24 help us better understand what He did to redeem us?

While in all of these places to the Lord executing His judgment on His enemies, there is one significant place in the prophetic literature in which the sword of God’s justice will fall on the Messiah for the salvation of God’s people. Since we all deserve the judgment of God it is only fitting that we would find a passage that speaks of the substitutionary role that Christ would play in taking the judgment of God for us—thrown under the figure of the “sword.” In Zechariah 13:7 we read:

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...”

Jesus explicitly pointed His disciples to this prophecy at the hour of his betrayal leading to His sufferings. When the chief priests came to take him, Jesus told his disciples, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’ (Matthew 26:31). The prediction of the LORD’s sword falling on His Shepherd/Companion is a prediction of His wrath being poured out on Christ at the cross. Jesus passes through the flaming sword of God’s justice (Zech. 13:7) which was itself represented by the cherubim standing with flaming swords at the east entrance to the Garden-Temple (Gen. 3:24). Each of them takes their place in redemptive history to aid us in filling in the picture of what God was promising to do. The Son of God entered into the battle against Satan, sin and death—bearing the wrath of the flaming sword of God’s judgment—in order to open the way back to the presence of God for us.

The second Adam, Jesus Christ, passed through the flaming sword of God’s wrath for His people. The veil was torn in two from top to bottom when the veil of His flesh (Heb. 10:10) was torn apart in judgment on the cross. He stepped out of the tomb to newness of life where His disciples were met by Angels, not holding a flaming sword, but saying, “He is not here. He is risen, and He said.” Jesus has made a new and living way back into the presence of God for all who will believe in Him (Hebrews 10:19-20).