**May 27, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 3 of the Book of Genesis**

**The Fall of Man**

Chapter 3 begins with the first reference to Satan in the Bible.  Satan had rebelled against God and was banished from Heaven and here we see he takes the form of a serpent or snake.  While the timing of Satan’s fall is unclear, God allowed him to have certain power on earth afterward.  In John 12:31 he is described as the prince of this world and in Matt. 4:8 Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world.  Ezekiel chapter 28 provides the most complete description of Satan’s fall and in that account, we learn that Satan was in the Garden of Eden (Ez. 28:11-19).  Isaiah chapter 14 provides additional context showing that Satan wanted to be like God and this led to his rebellion (Isa. 14:12-15).  In both instances, judgement is pronounced on a king who is symbolic of Satan; the king of Tyre in Ezekiel and the king of Babylon in Isaiah.  Some consider chapter 3 to be the most important chapter in the Bible since the events create our need for a savior and everything written after that points toward Jesus.

In verse 1 the serpent asks Eve if God had really said they could not eat from any tree in the garden.  This is a misrepresentation of what God had said and shows how Satan begins his attack.  He is described as crafty in the NIV and subtle in the KJV, adjectives that convey intelligence but have a sinister undertone.  Another trick he employs is drawing Eve’s attention to the one thing God prohibited rather than focusing on all the blessings God had provided for her and Adam.  We sometimes tend to focus on the few negatives rather than the many positives.

**Note the following:**

1. **Satan appears as a serpent and it may be that the physical appearance was different before God pronounced His judgement on this animal (see verse 14).  Some suggest that the serpent was actually an attractive creature which Eve found appealing.  That certainly describes how Satan operates, making sin seem attractive.**

2. **This animal spoke to Eve, something that would seem to be extraordinary yet Eve carried on the conversation with him.**

3. **Satan approaches Eve instead of Adam, perhaps because she did not receive the instructions regarding the tree of good and evil directly from God (see verse 16).  This may indicate incomplete communication from Adam to Eve, a character trait that continues to plague males to this day as we pride ourselves on economy of speech.  Eve embellishes what God had told Adam saying that not only could they not eat from the tree, they could not even touch it.**

4. **Eve must have been alone, maybe because Adam was tending to another area of the garden so Satan invented the strategy of divide and conquer, a tactic that has served him well for thousands of years.  Unity in Christ is one of the most powerful weapons we possess in our struggle with Satan.  Matthew Henry writes “There are many temptations to which solitude gives great advantage but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety”**

5. **Eve could have fled from Satan’s presence but she instead decided to engage him.  1st Corinthians 10:13 says that when we are tempted God will provide a way of escape so Eve had the option of walking away.  We often overestimate our ability to resist temptation.**

Satan makes the definitive statement “You will not surely die” which introduces doubt into Eve’s mind.  He then reveals his motivation suggesting to Eve that she can be like God if she eats the fruit.  Misery loves company and Satan’s desire to be like God led to his downfall.  John Phillips makes the point that the sinner becomes the seducer.  There is also an inference that God is withholding something from them because he wants to keep them in subjugation.   Eve found the fruit of the tree of good and evil attractive in 3 ways.

     1.      **Good to eat**

     2.     **Pleasing to the eye**

     3.     **Desirable for gaining wisdom**

In the KJV 1st John 2:6 we read that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the things of the world.  Satan used this same ploy in tempting Christ, albeit unsuccessfully.  In Luke chapter 4 after Jesus had fasted for 40 days, Satan appeals to His weakness from hunger by telling Him to turn stones into bread (lust of the flesh).  Next he takes Jesus to a high place and shows Him the kingdoms that can be His (lust of eyes).  Lastly he challenges Jesus to demonstrate His deity by casting Himself off a mountain and surviving (pride of life).  Each time Jesus is tempted by Satan, He responds by quoting scripture from Deuteronomy (8:3, 6:13, 6:16).

Next we see that Eve shares the fruit with Adam.  Imagine their eager anticipation of eating this forbidden fruit.  Satan had filled Eve’s head with thoughts of being like God and she probably told Adam what Satan had told her.  When they ate the fruit, their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked.  The beauty of the wisdom they expected to receive was instead the ugliness of their guilt and shame.  It would be like someone blind from birth being told of all the physical beauty of the world then receiving an operation to gain sight only to discover that the vision was limited to grotesque, colorless shapes.

Their immediate reaction is to clothe themselves, symbolic of trying to cover up their sin and hide it from God even as they physically tried to hide from God who was walking in the garden.  This may have been a preincarnate appearance of Jesus since scripture tells us no one has ever seen God (John 1:18, 6:46).    God of course knew where they were and what they had done yet His communication with them initially involves questions: Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the forbidden tree? What have you done?  God gave them ample opportunity to confess their sin but their responses were excuses.  Adam first blamed God for providing him with an unworthy spouse then blamed Eve for including him in the sin and Eve blamed the serpent. There is no confession of sin, repentance or seeking forgiveness which begs the question.  Would the result have been different if they had gone to God after sinning and asked for grace?  Would God have immediately restored their fellowship with Him and allowed them to remain in the Garden of Eden?  Since they did not act in that manner the point is moot and we see justice is meted out swiftly.  God first addresses Satan and it is clear that God has a plan to punish Satan while redeeming man.  When He says that the woman’s seed  will bruise the head of Satan, He is referring to Jesus who would ultimately defeat Satan.  God then tells Eve that bearing children will bring not just the physical pain of childbirth but emotional pain as well due to the challenges of raising children who may become rebellious.  Eve would experience that pain with her firstborn child.  Adam’s punishment would be toilsome work as he would no longer have a pristine environment in which to raise crops.

God then provided more durable clothing for them made from animal skins.  Some conjecture that God made them observe the slaughter of the animals that provided the skins.  The statement about eating from the tree of life then living forever seems to suggest that had they eaten from that tree they would not have suffered physical death, however that point is also moot since they were banished from the garden.

**Final Thoughts...**

We think of Adam and Eve’s sin as original sin, however the true original sin was committed by Satan.

Why did God put the temptation of the tree of good and evil in the garden?  I think that it was there to give them a choice to exercise free will.