

The First Messianic Prophecy – Genesis 3:1–24

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Introduction

No one can successfully deny that all but the briefest beginning of the history of humanity is one long tale of wickedness and woe, suffering and sin. The Bible is a book about sin and a Savior. But exactly when did this miserable condition begin, and how did this sad state of affairs come to be, from which mankind needed salvation? Did we not have Genesis 3, we would not know the origin – either as to time or circumstances – of the plague of sin that curses mankind on earth and that will damn him for eternity if not overcome. Genesis 3 is therefore at the same time one of the most important and one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible.

The Temptation

Verses 1–5:

Verse 1: Genesis 2 ends with Adam and Eve in the blissful paradise of Eden, literally without a worry in the infant world, which their Creator had placed under their dominion. They were in absolute innocence and at perfect peace with God and with one another. We have no means of knowing how long this state of perfection existed. However, with the beginning of chapter 3, this bliss is soon to be shattered, never to be restored in time and on earth.

The serpent is set forth as the Grand Tempter of mankind and is described as “subtle” (i.e., shrewd, cunning, and crafty) and a being with intelligence sufficient to reason and communicate. Because of this description some have decided that his conversation with Eve is an allegory, rather than an actual historical narrative. However, there is nothing whatsoever in the text of Genesis 3 to suggest allegorical language. Moreover, Paul, by inspiration, attributed historical authenticity to the serpent’s conversation with Eve: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Rom. 16:20).¹ Indirectly, John does the same by identifying the serpent as the Devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). We reject all explanations of the material in Genesis 3 as mere allegory. Rather, we accept the record as a historical occurrence.

How true the words are – and were from the beginning: “The devil never sleeps!” We are introduced to him in the form of a serpent. We do not claim to be able to understand how Satan could speak through a serpent. We may observe that Satan was given some limited

powers in ancient times to suspend or control certain natural laws (e.g., in Job's case [Job 1:6–19; 2:6–8] and in the cases of demon possession). Perhaps by some such means the devil was able to speak and act through a snake.

The serpent did not come with a frontal attack at first, but with a sly insinuation — thus we see his subtlety. We might paraphrase his question as follows: “I hear the rumor that God has forbidden you to eat of a certain tree in the garden. Surely He would not be so restrictive.” His approach was certainly intended to stir doubt, dissatisfaction, and resentment in Eve's mind. It was designed to cause her to think that God must be, by the restriction, unjustly withholding some deserved blessing. The Tempter desired her to become dissatisfied with the fact that this one tree was forbidden them, rather than considering the abundance of all of the fruitful trees God had provided and permitted. Satan still often turns the hearts of men more by wily and cunning strategies than by obvious assaults on God, Truth, and righteousness (e.g., theistic evolution). He yet tempts men to gaze with desire upon the things that His perfect holiness forbids, rather than to fix our gaze upon the numberless blessings He provides for us.

Verses 2–3: The warning was given to Adam before God created Eve (Gen. 2:16–18). It appears obvious that Adam had carefully passed on to Eve God's warning concerning the forbidden fruit and the consequence of eating it. Though Eve knew the warning well, she made no attempt to rebut Satan's implied complaint against God. She replied to Satan as if she were conversing with a person of honor and integrity. All who misjudge Satan's tactics or motives make a deadly mistake, as Eve learned to her deep regret (and to our awful consequence). She acknowledged that God had allowed her and Adam to eat of all of the trees in Eden, except one. God had indeed placed a restriction on eating the fruit of the tree in the garden's midst (“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” [2:17]). Not only were they not to eat its fruit, they dare not even touch it lest they die.

Here was man's first test of loyalty to God — the simple test of obedience. As creatures of volition and personal free will, they were not forced either to obey or to disobey God's command. Every accountable person since Adam and Eve has had to make the same choice because God has given commands and has required man's obedience to them in every generation. It is impossible to define *faithfulness*, *loyalty*, and *love* toward God and His Son apart from obedience (1 Sam. 15:22; Ecc. 12:13; John 14:15; et al.). In the first great test God gave man, he failed and failed miserably because of disobedience. Those who curl the lip, look at us in derision, and accuse us of “legalism” when we insist upon strict obedience to God's revealed

Word need to go back to the very beginning. They are literally making the oldest mistake in the Book when they despise God's commands!

Verse 4: Satan changed his tactic here. No longer subtle, he boldly and blatantly contradicted God's threat of death: "Ye shall **not** surely die" (emph. DM). We now see that Satan knew exactly what God had originally told Adam. He did not quote back to Eve God's order that they were neither to eat nor even to touch the tree "lest ye die." He must have been lurking nearby somewhere in Eden's shadows when God said to Adam, "Thou shalt surely die" (2:17), for this he quoted to Eve! He has not changed at all. He is ever-lurking, observing, biding his time until he can spring from his lair and devour his victims (1 Pet. 5:8). He still ensnares men with his wiles (Eph. 6:11).

Jesus identified the devil as the father of all liars (John 8:44), and in Genesis 3 we see him first plying his wicked craft. He wears this ignoble distinction in two senses: (1) He told the first lie in history, and (2) it was the lie of all lies. He only added one word to God's statement, but that one word produced the most horrible and far-reaching consequences of any single word ever spoken, as he doubtless hoped it would.

May we never forget the folly of altering God's Word in even the slightest respect. If the Lord Himself was concerned that not "one jot or one tittle" should be altered in God's currently applicable law during His earthly life, then we should quake at the thought of making any alteration whatsoever. We are equally cursed whether we add to it or subtract from it (Rev. 22:18-19). We can only marvel at the way in which Billy Graham and thousands of others like him high-handedly omit baptism as they pretend to quote Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38. As does Satan, they in effect cry, "He that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved."

Some like to add to God's Word such things as instrumental music in worship, infant "baptism," and/or hundreds of other innovations. Then there are the creators and publishers of modern Bible "translations" who make the Bible say what they want it to say, instead of faithfully reproducing what God actually said. All who engage in such nefarious maltreatment of Holy Writ are simply following the example of their father, the original perverter of God's Word. Paul's inspired statement is plain: We cannot be approved of God without "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), which includes not altering it in any fashion.

Verse 5: Here we have part two of Satan's original lie: "God has lied to your husband. He has withheld this fruit from you because he does not want you to be happy and because eating it will give you abilities that He alone now has. He has given you this cruel and unjust

injunction, not to spare your lives, but simply because He is jealous of His prerogatives.” The devil promised Eve that, rather than dying if they disobeyed God, the fruit would open their eyes and that they would become God-like in their sense of good and evil. Since Eve and Adam were both able to see physically, the “eye-opening” Satan promised is a metaphor for being able to perceive and discern things they previously could not. Since they already had some sense of good and evil (i.e., they had to know that obeying God’s law was good and that disobedience would be evil), the serpent’s promise implied a fullness of understanding possessed only by God. Having sown his seeds of doubt and uttered his outrageous lies, it appears that Satan departed, waiting (and perhaps watching) to see if he succeeded in his fatal mission.

The Infraction and the Reaction

Verses 6–11:

Verse 6: Satan’s open contradiction of God’s warning (v. 4) should have been a sufficient clue for Eve to utterly reject any further word from the tempter. Eve’s fundamental mistake was in trying to converse with the devil and in listening to his spiel. The first law of dealing with Satan is resistance: “Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). When Satan tempted the Lord, He flung God’s Word into Satan’s face each time (Matt. 4:1–10). What was the result? “Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (v. 11). Rather than resisting Satan, Eve listened to and was seduced by him.

We can envision Eve’s turning from Satan to find the mysterious, forbidden tree. We can see her looking longingly at its fruit and imagining how sweet that forbidden fruit might taste. Further, we can see her admiring the appearance of the fruit, perhaps because of its beautiful color and shape. Then selfish ambition and pride, engendered by the devil’s lies, took over and struck the final blow. It has long been observed that Satan has only three avenues of temptation at his disposal, which he uses over and over. John lists them as “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life,” and says that they constitute “all that is in the world” (1 John 2:16) – all forbidden pursuits are encompassed in these three approaches.

Satan need not employ all of these to cause some folk to fall. However, in crucial cases, he unleashes all of his weapons. Eve’s case was certainly crucial to his plan to alienate mankind from his Creator and doom him to an eternal separation. She allowed herself to be swayed by all three lusts. Her flesh lusted for the taste of the fruit. Her eyes lusted after its appearance. Her untoward ambition vaingloriously lusted for the attribute of wisdom like God’s. By her fall,

Satan gained the mastery over mankind. Some of the saddest words in the Bible are in Genesis 3:6: "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." She was the first to demonstrate James's detailed description of the *temptation-enticement-lust-sin-death* process:

But each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:14-15).

The second crucial person in the devil's master plan to enslave mankind irreparably was the Christ of God. He must stop this One Who threatened to remedy the awful sin-curse Satan foisted upon the world. If He could not be made to fall, Satan's mastery would be broken. We should not wonder that the Tempter thus used every weapon in his arsenal against the innocent Jesus in the great temptation drama (Mat. 4:1-11). He appealed to the famished Lord's fleshly lust for food by suggesting that He turn stones to bread. He showed and offered Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if He would but bow before him, thus appealing to what His eyes could see and desire. Finally, he tempted Him to jump from the temple pinnacle, thereby attempting to appeal to vainglory or pride in the Lord by proving that He could thus jump without being harmed. He failed just as miserably in His temptations of Jesus as he had succeeded with Eve in the beginning. We should never cease in our thanksgivings to God that His Son, though "in all points tempted like as we are, [was] yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Perhaps the second saddest statement in the Bible is also in Genesis 3:6: "And she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." We must assume that Eve repeated Satan's evil propaganda to Adam in a very convincing way. Just as Eve apparently offered no resistance to Satan's overtures to her, neither did Adam resist the temptation that came from his wife. Eve may have given first thought to get Adam to eat the fruit in order to share with him whatever blessings came from eating it. However, after she ate, she may have wanted him to share the misery of the guilt-burden that she must have felt immediately. Her behavior may be the first expression of the old adage, "misery loves company." The very one whom God created to be the fitting helper of man has now become the agent of his destruction. Satan personally tempted Eve, but he apparently has acted thus only rarely through history. Ordinarily, Satan uses others as his agents of temptation to draw others into a web of sin, as did Eve with Adam. As with Adam, those nearest to us may sometimes be the most powerful sources of temptation.

Let us not pass from this verse without emphasizing the root of all sin, namely selfishness. Every reason Moses gives for Eve's disobedience is rooted in selfishness. While he does not give us the details of the appeal of the fruit to Adam, it is beyond argument that he

likewise ate out of selfishness. We do not believe that either Adam or Eve ate the fruit from the motive of selling their souls to Satan. Their motive was most certainly not to please their Creator. Rather, they were well aware that eating the fruit would constitute blatant rebellion against God's command. So, why did they do it? They were moved by the desire that all men have to some degree – to gain some sort of blessing, advantage, or prestige beyond what they have.

These ambitions are not wrong in the proper context and under careful control. The Scriptures encourage men to serve God because of the blessings and advantages of becoming His children, living God-fearing lives, and finally inheriting eternal life with Him. God's Word also appeals to us to do what God requires of us in order to achieve "prestige" with Him – the only prestige that really matters. These are honorable motives, or God would not employ them. However, when these motives are not kept in check by spiritual limits, without exception they lead to sinful and soul-destroying behavior. We have issued the challenge many times through the years for anyone to name a single sin (except those that we commit through ignorance) that does not have selfishness at its root. None have ever been named simply because there are none. Name them all – murder, theft, lying, rape, negligence, profanity, indecent dress, gambling, drunkenness, illicit drug usage, fornication, anger, *ad infinitum* – selfishness is the motive for them all.

Does the foregoing fact help us to see why so many statements of Holy Writ are aimed at bringing and keeping under control our selfish instincts? Jesus' great discipleship challenge aims squarely at our selfish natures:

And he said unto all, If any man would come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it (Luke 9:23–24, emph. DM).

We are not merely to deny ourselves **of some things**, but we are to say of self just what Peter said of the Lord when he denied Him: "I know him not" (Luke 22:57 uses the same Greek word for *deny* as in 9:23).

Our premise concerning the primacy of selfishness in causing sin is underscored by the numerous passages that urge self-control ("temperance," KJV) upon us (e.g., Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 9:25; Gal. 5:23; 2 Tim. 3:2–3; Tit. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:6; et al.) Additional passages condemn being self-willed (e.g., Tit. 1:7; 2 Pet. 2:10; et al.). The inspired writers frequently warn us against seeking our own wills and ways (e.g., Rom. 10:3; 11:25; 12:16; 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5; Phi. 2:4, 21; 2 Tim. 4:3; Jas. 1:14; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 18; et al.). Our Lord was the primary example of

utter selflessness, as He “emptied himself” to come to our low land of sin and sorrow. As He thought of the welfare of others before that of Himself, so should we:

Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied himself**, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he **humbled himself**, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross (Phil. 2:4–8, emph. DM).

The secret of Paul’s exceptional dedication to the Lord and to His Word is found in this same victory over self:

I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I that live**, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20, emph. DM).

Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have **I counted loss for Christ**. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for **whom I suffered the loss of all things**, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ (Phi. 3:7–8, emph. DM).

Paul’s attitude was (as ours should be) that, since Christ gave Himself selflessly for me, I can do no less for Him. Surely, the more we control self, the less we will sin.

Verse 7: At least a part of Satan’s speech to Eve was true. As he promised, their eyes were opened when they ate the fruit. Adam and Eve could already see physically. Adam had named all of the animals and birds (2:20), and Eve saw and lusted after the forbidden fruit (3:6).

Therefore, the opening of their eyes is a figurative reference to the enlightenment of their minds, the quickening of their consciences, and the broadening of their abilities to understand and discern.

They are now able to perceive things they had not known before, but not as Eve had hoped. She had thought Satan’s promise of new vision would be to their glory and advantage, but it was to their utter grief and shame. Our primitive parents had never felt or known guilt, but now that they were transgressors, they felt the burden of the displeasure and wrath of their gracious and loving Creator. In their sinless world they had never worn any clothing, yet they knew no more shame in their innocent nakedness than does an infant. Now that they had a consciousness of guilt, their nakedness became a source of shame. To cover their bare bodies, they fashioned fig leaves into the first clothes ever to be worn. Their sense of modesty is a forceful rebuke for millions of modern worldlings and for more than a few Christians. As it was in Eden, so it ever will be until that blessed Day to end all days.

1. Satan and sin always deceive.
2. Satan and sin always promise far more than they can deliver.
3. Satan and sin bring destruction and death to all who listen to them.

Verse 8: God's next visit in the Garden struck terror to the hearts of Adam and Eve. In an anthropomorphism, Moses depicts God as "walking" in the Garden. Actually, he says they heard His voice "walking." This highly figurative expression may refer to the noise of footfalls, the thunder that may have accompanied His approach (cf. Exo. 9:23), or His actual voice. Without doubt, the meaning is that they knew He was approaching. "The cool of the day" could refer to either the early morning or the early evening. There may be a hint that this was the customary time for Jehovah to visit the Garden.

We could almost weep at the difference disobedience made in the lives of Adam and Eve. Before their sin they had wonderful and intimate fellowship with their Creator. They could boldly stand in His presence with His pleasure because they were absolutely free of sin. But now we see them crouching and cowering, fearful to stand before the Creator and Ruler against Whom they have rebelled. And yet, there is an appropriateness to such behavior in sinners. Men who have rebelled against Heaven ought to be both ashamed and fearful to come into the presence of the Almighty.

Jehovah had warned that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit, and here the spiritual element of that promised death occurred. Death involves separation. The moment they ate they sinned, and the moment they sinned their blessed fellowship with their Creator was severed—they died spiritually. From the first sin in Eden until now, sin has ever been the wedge that separates men from God (Isa. 59:1-2; John 9:31; et al.).

Verse 9: It appears obvious that Adam was not where God was accustomed to finding him. He had always before eagerly welcomed God's presence, but now he did not come out to meet Him. Clearly, something was amiss. Adam must have greatly dreaded to hear God's question, "Where art thou?" He did not ask the question to gain unknown information, but to bring forth Adam's explanation and confession. God may have asked this question not only concerning Adam's hiding place, but concerning his spiritual condition, as well. It is a question every person would do well to ask himself and answer candidly. Am I in the awful slavery of sin? Am I futilely trying to run and hide from God? Am I a rotten husband/father/son or wife/mother/daughter? Am I an unfaithful child of God? Am I serving God with all of my might? "Where art thou?"

Verse 10: Adam's response was rather pitiful. He heard God coming and hid in fear. He had not done this before, because in his perfect innocence of any defilement of flesh or spirit, he had not needed to. His initial explanations for hiding were weak excuses that skirted the real cause. He was afraid all right, but the fear that caused him to hide sprang not from hearing God's voice or from his nakedness.

Verse 11: Once again, God questioned Adam, not to gain information, but to force him to see the awfulness of his disobedience. God let Adam wear his fashionable new fig-leaf suit for a while, but He stripped his soul bare by His questions. By asking how Adam knew he was naked, God made him to know that **He** knew Adam could not still be innocent of sin and know the meaning of *nakedness*. Adam's consciousness of nakedness implied his sin. God's second question in this verse should have cut Adam to the heart. This question directly confronts Adam with His sin, leaving him nowhere to turn or flee, and eliciting a partial confession, as seen below.

The Mitigation

Verses 12-13:

Verse 12: Our modern world is plagued with irresponsibility. It sometimes appears that few are willing to accept blame for anything anymore. This verse proves that mankind learned early to make excuses and shirk personal responsibility. Adam cast blame directly upon Eve for giving him the fruit; but worse, he indirectly blamed God: "God, if you had not made this woman and given her to me, she could not have given me the fruit and none of this would have happened." Besides the irresponsible and misplaced blame, there is an absence, or at least a marked coldness, of feeling toward Eve in his words. Rebellion against God in other areas often leads to the absence of natural affection for those most closely related to us (Rom. 1:30-31; Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8; 2 Tim. 3:2-3; et al.).

Adam confessed that he had eaten that which God had forbidden, but he had his rationalization ready. So what if Eve encouraged him to eat the fruit which God forbade? Did she force him to eat it? He could and should have resisted her temptation, rebuked her, and refused. As Eve had vested more confidence in Satan than in God, so Adam vested more confidence in his wife than in God.

Verse 13: Again, God did not ask Eve what she had done because He was ignorant, but in order to bring Eve to admission of her guilt. The sense of God's question perhaps is, "How could you have done such a thing?" She ignored the part she played in Adam's sin and had her excuse ready, also: "It was not my fault; that wily serpent you created beguiled me. He made

the benefits of eating the fruit sound so good I just could not resist. Yes, I ate the fruit you forbade, but I am not to blame.”

Their admissions that they did indeed eat the fruit are praiseworthy but notice how mildly stated the admissions are. We would think that the enormity of their transgressions would have dawned upon them by God’s heart-piercing questions, if not before. However, we earnestly examine their words, “I did eat,” but we see no sign of grief, shame, remorse, or repentance in them. Rather than prostrating themselves before God and begging for forgiveness, they tried to shield themselves from blame by shifting it to others. We are made to wonder if they would ever have admitted their awful deeds had God not exposed them. How like them are almost all of their posterity!

The Denunciation

Verses 14-19:

Verse 14: With this verse God turns to the three characters in this dreadful drama, and, one by one, denounces them with respective and appropriate sentences. God first pronounced a two-fold curse upon both the serpent and Satan as punishment for their wicked work of beguiling Mother Eve — “Because thou hast done this.” The first curse is upon the serpent. This creature apparently had some standing in the animal kingdom before entering the service of Satan, but that was now lost forever. God debased him and made him contemptible above all other animal forms. The curse perhaps implies that he originally possessed legs for moving about or even for walking upright. If this were not the case, it is difficult to see wherein this part of the sentence was any sort of curse. He would never walk again, but was doomed to slither on his belly when he wished to move about and to eat the dust in which he slithered. The consequences of the sins of Adam and Eve were so far-reaching that they even affected the lower forms of life.

Verse 15: Here it seems that Jehovah turns to the malevolent spirit who had worked through the serpent — Satan himself. There would be perpetual warfare between him and his seed and Eve and her seed. There may be an initial reference here to the constant warfare that the devil and his angels wage against humankind. However, more particularly, God immediately narrowed *her seed* to a single “he” who would engage Satan himself in a do-or-die struggle. God announced the outcome of the contest: The seed of woman would deal a deathblow to the head of Satan, while he would inflict a relatively insignificant wound to his enemy’s heel.

This part of the Lord's curse has for centuries been credited as the first Messianic prophecy, and we believe correctly so. This view of the verse has been so long and so widely held that it has been given the name, the *protevangelium* – “the first gospel.” Note the expression, *the seed of woman*. Generally, in the discussion of procreation, *seed* is attributed to the man, rather than to the woman. There has been one exceptional case in which a woman brought forth a son without the implantation of seed by a man – the birth of Jesus, the Christ:

And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:34–35).

But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins (Mat. 1:20–21).

God promised Abraham that “in thy **seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18, emph. DM). Paul, by inspiration, bases an argument upon the singularity of the term *seed* in this promise, declaring that it refers solely to the Christ:

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16).

When God promised David he would have a son who would set up an everlasting kingdom, He described the Davidic descendant as *seed*:

When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy **seed** after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son (2 Sam. 7:12–14a; cf. Psalms 89:3–4, 29, 36; emph. DM).

To whom does this “seed” refer? Some say to Solomon alone. While there are some things in this context that refer to Solomon, who was to inherit David's earthly throne, some parts of the prophecy **cannot** refer to Solomon. In arguing the superiority of Christ over the angels, the writer of Hebrews quotes the first part of verse 14 above and applies it to the Christ: “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb. 1:5). On Pentecost Peter said that God's promise to David – that “of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne” – was spoken of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:30). David's “seed” was to be established on his throne when David's life was over (2 Sam. 7:12). Peter made a point of the fact that David was dead and that his tomb was still nearby (Acts 2:29). Peter went on to argue that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ who had now ascended to sit upon His promised throne

at God's right hand (vv. 32-36). Only the rankest skeptic and/or the premillennialist would deny that Christ is the "seed" of David Who has established his kingdom and has ascended to His eternal throne.

Satan had introduced death, disease, and destruction into the world and shattered man's innocence and its consequent peace between himself and God. Adam and Eve must have felt somewhat like the Pentecostians who, in the misery of their guilt, cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Our first parents must have wondered if that which they had done could ever be reversed or remedied. God's curse upon Satan is an indication that it can and will be. This statement from God shone a ray of light and hope, dim as it must have seemed at the time, upon an otherwise dark and sin-cursed world. The beam of this light grows ever broader as we move through the Old Testament, till at last, "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman... that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). With His coming, "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9).

Speaking of that tragic garden temptation and fall, Paul wrote:

So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous (Rom. 5:18-19).

Although it appeared that the Arch Adversary had prevailed over the Seed of Woman at Calvary, the death of Christ was but a comparative heel bruise. In the irony of all ironies, it was the death of Christ, in which His sacrificial blood was shed, that gave Christ the power over Satan and sin:

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

There was no adequate redemptive agent for sin and sinners before He offered up His sinless blood: "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.... For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 9:22; 10:4).

When Christ arose from the dead, He struck a deadly blow to Satan's head, from which he can never recover. When the Lord returns to claim His own, He will forever seal the devil's doom by casting him and all of his servants into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10; 21:8).

Dim though it may be, God's statement to Satan in Genesis 3:15 is distinct enough for us see in it the glorious promise of hope and reconciliation to God.

Mere mortals can only marvel at their Creator, Who would have been completely justified in destroying the parents of our race, but Who tempered His wrath at their sin with mercy. A subject of even greater wonder is that God and His Son would be willing to make such a momentous sacrifice that They might extend grace and redeem hopeless and helpless mankind. Genesis 3:15 announces the first hint of all this astounding plan.

Verse 16: God's first sentence against human sin was appropriately meted out to Eve, since she was first in the transgression. Her sentence is two-fold: first suffering, then subordination. The first part of her sentence relates to her children. However, much suffering and sorrow in conception, gestation, and childbirth might have been hers before, because of her sin, these would not only be multiplied, but **greatly** so. This language seems to imply that God had originally planned for all that is involved in childbirth to be relatively simple, painless, and anxiety-free. However, this sentence so changed the experience that "as a woman in travail" became the most frequently used phrase by inspired writers to describe anyone in great distress: "And they shall be dismayed; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman in travail (Isa. 13:8a; cf. 21:3; 54:1; Jer. 4:31; 6:24; Mic. 4:9-10; John 16:21; 1 The. 5:3; et al.).

The second part of Eve's sentence relates to her husband. Her desire would be to him, and he was to rule over her. Almost with one voice, the commentators agree that *desire* here does not refer specifically to sexual yearning (although it might include such), but to the turning and yielding of her will to her husband's and of her dependence upon him. She was therefore to be subordinate to him. Eve had seized leadership by being first in the transgression and then tempting her husband to follow her (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13). God's statement to her is not only the announcement of her perpetual subjection to her husband, but a confirmation of his perpetual authority over her.

This sentence does not imply any lesser worth, intelligence, or ability of womankind. Subjection and subordination do not equal inferiority. Just as an employee may be vastly superior to an employer in various ways, so may a wife be vastly superior to her husband, yet in both cases, the former must still be subordinate to the latter. This sentence gives absolutely no excuse for any husband to abuse his wife, whether physically, verbally, or emotionally. That the sentence delivered to Eve for her transgression is permanent is proved by its repetition in

the New Testament. The perfect balance of the submission of wife to husband and of the loving care of husband to wife is seen in Paul's lovely statement of it:

Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.... Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church (Eph. 5:22-29; cf. Col. 3:18-19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

All the objecting, protesting, and screaming by radical activists, opposition from theological liberals, or even legislation which seeks to destroy this mandate from God notwithstanding, it still stands, and will stand until the Lord returns for His own.

Further, God superimposed upon the church the principle of male leadership, and the corresponding female submission. Admittedly, there are some exegetical difficulties in I Corinthians 11:1-16. However, Paul's major point in this passage is clear: God has placed men in authority and women in subjection in the church, even as in the home. He later reinforces this principle in a Corinthian worship setting:

As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:33b-35).

Paul stresses this edict again as it relates to a worship assembly in Ephesus:

I desire therefore that the men [i.e., males, not merely mankind, DM] pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works. Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

As in 1 Corinthians 11, so in the passage above, there are some expressions difficult to interpret. However, the main point is clear: Males are to lead in worship assemblies that involve both adult males and females (i.e., preaching/teaching, leading prayers, and, by implication, other worship activities), and females are to be in submission rather than in leadership.

This same principle is emphasized by implication in the qualifications of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9), both of which are leadership roles in the church:

1. All the nouns and pronouns in reference to one who would be a bishop (e.g., *man, bishop, he, husband, his, deacons, elders*, etc.) are masculine in gender.
2. A female can hardly be “the husband of one wife.”

God’s order regarding woman’s subordination in matters religious is not only ignored, but openly ridiculed and despised by most religious bodies that profess allegiance to the Bible. Still worse, many of our liberal, culture-cultic brethren now openly disavow God’s pattern in this regard, and are increasingly introducing women into leadership roles in the church. All such efforts constitute outright rejection of God’s sentence upon womankind (and its implications concerning the church) because of Eve’s transgression.

Verse 17: God preceded His sentence upon Adam with a statement that his guilt was its cause. Instead of taking care to protect his wife from the Tempter, or trying to win her repentance after learning of her fall, he weakly capitulated to her enticement. As with Eve, God issued to Adam a two-part sentence. First, the ground from which he must get his food would be cursed. God had especially prepared Eden as a fertile paradise with every sort of vegetation that was good for food (Gen. 2:8–9). God did the planting. All Adam had to do was “dress it and keep it” (v. 15). There was apparently a total absence of any aggravating vegetation to compete with the produce and orchards God provided. It would appear that to dress and keep such a garden would have required comparatively little effort.

Verses 18–19a: However, as God delivered Adam’s sentence, all of this changed. God here hints at what He will soon order (Gen. 3:22–24): He and Eve were soon to be expelled and forever shut off from the Garden’s beauty and from its fertile soil and available food. Outside the Garden was no paradise. It was not ready-made by God to supply man’s necessities. The soil would apparently not be so fertile and Adam would now have to expend great toil to produce his own food. The native plants would not be fruitful vegetation and trees, but coarse, competing, and troublesome thorns and thistles (likely intended to represent every wild weed and growth that cumbers the ground). Man would thenceforth have to fight these back and cultivate whatever food he ate. Farmers and gardeners can well attest to the spontaneous and hardy growth of undesirable vegetation, which must be constantly fought in order to grow and harvest desirable food crops. God repeats the element of extreme toil as part of the sentence, this time measured in terms of the sweat required to make his living. Thenceforth, only as man was willing to expend necessary effort should he eat his food and be worthy of doing so (2 The. 3:10–12).

Verse 19b: The second part of the sentence upon Adam was the verification of his mortality because of his sin. God had warned him of this consequence when He prepared the Garden for him: “And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**” (Gen. 2:16–17, emph. DM). This sentence is constant and will not be lifted until time is no more (Eze. 18:4; Rom. 6:23; et al.). Both the spiritual and physical consequences of sin are apparently combined in God’s warning of sin and death. As we earlier saw the immediate spiritual death of Adam and Eve when they sinned (their fellowship with God forfeited), so now God speaks of the consequence of physical death that will eventually overtake all mankind. It is of this latter aspect of death that Hebrews 9:27 states: “It is appointed unto man once to die.” From the time of God’s Edenic pronouncement until the eternal Eden is restored at last, bodily death is the prospect of all humankind: “Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Adam and Eve were apparently created capable of immortality in Eden, as seen in the following facts:

1. As mentioned above, God told Adam that when he sinned, he would die, implying that, as long as he did not sin, he would not die.
2. The “tree of life” was in the Garden. They apparently had not yet eaten of its fruit when they sinned. One reason God expelled them from Eden was to prevent their eating of the life-giving tree whose fruit, said God, would enable them to live forever (Gen. 3:22).
3. The sentence of returning to the dust in death seems to indicate that before their transgression this was not their destiny.

It is man’s physical frame that God created from the dust of the ground, and to that dust it shall return in death. This experience is inescapable except for those who are alive when the Lord returns. We cannot avoid it. We can only follow God’s instructions so as to be prepared for it. It is tempting, but vain, to imagine “what might have been” had Adam and Eve not sinned.

The Identification and Titivation

Verses 20–21:

Verse 20: Adam had first named the companion God made from and for him *Woman* (Gen. 2:23), which means “from man.” Now he gives his wife the new name, “Eve,” meaning “life” or “to live,” in keeping with the fact that she would be the spring from which every subsequent human being would come. She was also the “mother of all living” in the sense that her “seed” would eventually be the source of eternal life for humankind.

Verse 21: God's last act before expelling our parents from the Garden was to make animal-skin coats for them. We are not told what God's purpose was in doing this. Perhaps He was thereby telling them that their fig leaf aprons did not provide sufficient covering for them to be modest. The word for "aprons" (v. 7) refers only to a belt or loincloth, while the word for "coats" in this verse is elsewhere rendered "garments" and may refer to a long tunic or a robe. The garments God made them certainly provided more covering for their bodies than the scanty ones Adam and Eve made for themselves. However, He may also have been equipping them for the far harsher conditions with which they would soon be coping outside the Garden. He may have been teaching them how to protect themselves from the sun's scorching rays and the winter's cold, since they had likely not lived long enough to learn such things through experience.

There is certainly instruction in God's action for the radical groups today who seek to place the lives of brute beasts on an equality with or even a superior level to those of humankind. These groups picket furriers and others who wear leather clothing or trade in animal skins. Other extremist groups protest eating animal flesh. These deluded folk remind us of the judge in one of Jesus' parables "who feared not God, and regarded not man" (Luke 18:2). They have no respect for God Who did not hesitate to make fur coats out of lower creatures for the use of his highest creation. God placed all of His fresh, new creation (including "every living thing") under man's dominion and told him to subdue it (Gen. 1:26, 28). The earth and the living creatures in it were created to serve and satisfy the needs of mankind, the only member of God's creation He made in His image and after His likeness (v. 27). Although the food sources of Adam and Eve were at first vegetation (v. 29), God later told Noah that every living thing, including the animal realm, was to be used for his food (9:2-3). Those who oppose our consumption of animal flesh for food seek to prohibit what God has clearly allowed. Paul labeled this very proscription as a "doctrine of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1-4). Thus, they do not respect God.

Neither do these activists regard man. If they did, they would not try, sometimes by use of intimidation and force, to prevent their fellowmen from wearing clothing or from eating food which God permits. When they exalt mere animals to the level of human beings, they show their utter disregard for the superiority of mankind, made in the image of God. We would by no means encourage cruelty to animals or abuse of our planet and its resources in any fashion.

However, the truth of the matter is that God designed them all to serve our needs, not the reverse.

The Expulsion

Verses 22–24:

Verse 22: God notes that by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil Adam and Eve have become God-like in at least one way. They now have a familiarity with good and evil which they did not have before they sinned. The very name of the forbidden tree indicates the ability it would give to those who ate its fruit. As indicated earlier, this fact is the one bit of truth Satan wove in with his lies to Eve. As Jehovah conversed with the Pre-incarnate Word (John 1:1–3) and the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2) concerning the creation of man (vv. 26–27), so He does here also. This man and woman are no longer innocent; they cannot be allowed to eat of the tree of life and live forever in a world now polluted with sin. (That which God said to Adam in the remaining verses of this chapter obviously applies both to him and Eve. What God does to Adam regarding residence in the Garden, He does to both, because both of them ate the forbidden fruit and God wanted neither of them to eat of the tree of life.)

Verse 23: God had already implied to Adam and Eve that they would have to forfeit their Garden home as part of the sentence for their crime against Him (Gen. 3:17–19). In this verse God specifies another cause for their expulsion: to keep them from the tree of life. They are therefore sent out of the Garden, where Adam must begin producing his own food from the thorn-infested ground.

Verse 24: Moses now says that God “drove” them from the Garden. *Drove* is a strong word, elsewhere translated by such terms as “cast out,” “thrust out,” “expelled,” and “divorced.” This word may imply that they did not leave their idyllic home willingly. We may have some degree of understanding for their longing to stay there. They can doubtless see the hostile and strange world outside and anticipate to some degree how burdensome their lives are about to become. The contrast of that world to which their sin consigned them with the peaceful and fruitful beauty of the place God originally prepared for them was drastic indeed.

They were not only **cast** out of Eden; they were also **shut** out. God placed Cherubim as guards at the Garden’s entrance and a flaming sword, which further guarded every direction from which any might approach. The shamed and humbled couple must have been a pitiful sight as they trudged out of Eden to begin their new lives. Every briar and thorn Adam fought, every foot of ground he cleared, every furrow he plowed, every bit of food he produced, and every drop of sweat that rolled down his face must have been bitter reminders of his folly.

Likewise, every pain Eve suffered due to her womanhood and her childbearing functions, and every time she chafed under the domination of Adam must have caused her to think, and even look, longingly in the direction of Eden. All of these hardships were made the worse if they took up residence near the Garden, where it was so near in proximity, yet so far in accessibility

Men speculate in vain in an attempt to know just how long the Cherubim and the sword guarded Eden and its priceless tree. God did not abandon His paradise or the tree of life. He has transferred them to the spiritual realm of Heaven, where John saw a vision of them both (Rev. 22:2). As the Eden of old was a place of delight and peace, where humankind had perfect fellowship with God, so all of these and so much more will be in that future Eden, and not merely for a brief moment, but for an endless, tearless, and painless day (1 Pet. 1:3-5; Rev. 21:4).

Conclusion

How limited our knowledge of necessary things would be without Genesis 3! Even in this earliest history of God's dealings with mankind we see that He demands unquestioning obedience. The chapter reveals the malevolence of Satan from man's earliest existence. We learn here that sin results from disobedience to God and transgression of His law (1 John 3:4). This chapter teaches us that sin causes separation from God. We further see that physical death entered the world and gained its hold on man because of sin and Satan.

However, in all of the dark and discouraging things we learn here, there is also a glorious message of hope. The promised Seed of woman would someday slay the old serpent, Satan. God sent that Seed – His only begotten Son – into our sin-cursed world some twenty centuries ago and in His death and resurrection dealt Satan a fatal blow. By this means He has removed the Cherubim and the flaming sword, thereby opening the way for all who will obey Him to partake of the tree of life:

Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8-9).

Endnote

1. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

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