

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 3

GENESIS 3:1-5 - THE SERPENT

CHAPTER 3 TAKES A WILD TURN. THE SERPENT APPEARS AND BEGINS DIRECTLY ATTACKING THE WORD(S) OF GOD TO ADAM AND EVE REGARDING THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL. HE ATTEMPTS TO INTRODUCE DOUBT AND CONFUSION TO GOD'S INITIAL DIRECTIVE. LET'S REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAD ACTUALLY SAID:

GENESIS 2:16-17 - THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN, SAYING, "FROM ANY TREE OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY EAT FREELY; 17 BUT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE DAY THAT YOU EAT FROM IT YOU WILL SURELY DIE."

THE SERPENT STARTS OUT HIS "CRAFTY" CONVERSATION PASSIVELY AND THEN TURNS TO FULL ON ATTACK OF GOD'S WORD.

V. 1 - QUESTION: "DID GOD SAY?"

V. 4 - LIE: "YOU WILL NOT SURELY DIE!"

V. 5 - OFFER: "IF YOU EAT FROM IT, YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD"

THIS IS GOOD INSIGHT INTO THE WAY THIS EVIL ONE WORKS, NOT ONLY IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, BUT FOR THE REST OF HUMAN HISTORY (TO THE PRESENT).

ORIGIN OF SERPENT: THOUGH SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS MAKE PLENTY OF SPECULATION, IN THE TEXT ITSELF, **NOTHING** IS SAID OF THE ORIGIN OF THIS SERPENT CHARACTER. WE WILL UNDERSTAND BY THE END CHAPTER 3 THAT THIS FIGURE IS EVIL AND PUTS HIMSELF AT ODDS WITH GOD AND HIS CREATION. AS SOMEONE READS THE NARRATIVE OF CHAPTERS 1 AND 2, THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF THIS "CRAFTY SERPENT" IS JUST THAT - *SUDDEN*. WE WILL READ NOTHING IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS ABOUT WHERE HE CAME FROM, WHAT LED HIM TO THIS REBELLION, AND HOW LONG HE HAD BEEN AN ADVERSARY (NOR ARE THERE ANSWERS AS TO WHETHER HE WAS A LITERAL SERPENT/SNAKE).

BUT THIS SILENCE ACTUALLY CONTAINS A MESSAGE. HE SHOWS UP SUDDENLY AND IS BENT TOWARDS EVIL, DECEPTION AND ATTACKING HUMANS. WE ARE TOLD HE IS CRAFTY. FOR THOSE WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE REST OF THE BIBLICAL STORY AND WHO ARE ENDEAVORING TO LIVE FOR THE LORD IN THIS DAY, WE CAN QUICKLY RECOGNIZE THESE TRAITS.

1 PETER 5:8 - BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR.

JOHN 8:44B (NIV) - ...HE WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, NOT HOLDING TO THE TRUTH, FOR THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM. WHEN HE LIES, HE SPEAKS HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE, FOR HE IS A LIAR AND THE FATHER OF LIES.

WE'RE ALL CURIOUS ABOUT HOW THIS ALL HAPPENED BUT WHAT GOD DOES TELL US IS CLEAR: THE SERPENT IS CRAFTY, HE SHOWS UP UNINVITED AND THROUGH LIES, DECEIT AND PRESSURE IS TRYING TO TRICK, LURE, AND ATTACK GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. IF THAT'S ALL WE'RE GIVEN TO KNOW ABOUT HIS EXISTENCE AND PURPOSE, THAT IS PLENTY.

SIDE NOTE: WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO LOOK AT IT TODAY, BUT IT IS INTERESTING IN LIGHT OF THIS TO SEE HOW JESUS, (CALLED THE "SECOND ADAM" IN ROMANS) HANDLES HIS VERY EARLY ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEVIL (SEE MATTHEW 4 & LUKE 4). HE ANSWERS EACH TEMPTATION WITH THE PHRASE "IT IS WRITTEN", A CLEAR CONTRAST TO EVE'S INABILITY TO HOLD FAST TO THE WORD OF GOD.

GENESIS 3:6-8 - THE "FALL" OF HUMANS

EVE CONSIDERS THE SERPENT'S OFFER AND "SAW" THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR FOOD AND THE END GOAL OF ITS FRUIT WAS TO "MAKE ONE WISE" TOOK THE BAIT (BITE?) (EVE: *HMM... THE FRUIT FROM THIS TREE DOESN'T LOOK BAD! MAYBE THIS SERPENT GUY IS RIGHT?*). SHE EATS FROM TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AND PASSES A PIECE OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT TO ADAM. HE TOO EATS, AND EVERYTHING CHANGES. IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES ARE EXPERIENCED AND NOW ADAM AND EVE HAVE "OPEN EYES" TO SEE EVIL. AS A RESULT, THEY FEEL THAT THEIR NAKEDNESS IS BAD AND MAKE FIG-LEAF COVERINGS. THINGS ARE HEADING DOWNHILL.

GENESIS 3:9-13 - GOD TALKS WITH HIS CREATION

GOD IS HEARD WALKING IN THE GARDEN (GOD IS DWELLING/COMMUNING WITH HUMANS ON THE EARTH!) AND THIS PROMPTS THE NOW CHANGED MAN AND WOMAN TO HIDE. YET, GOD CALLS TO THEM. GOD'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE FIRST SIN - HE IS PURSUING ADAM & EVE AND ASKING "WHERE ARE YOU?" OBVIOUSLY THIS QUESTION ISN'T BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW BUT ACTUALLY GIVES US INSIGHT INTO HIS HEART IN LIGHT OF THIS MOMENT. RATHER THAN COMING DOWN AND DESTROYING THEM OR REBUKING THEM INSTANTLY, HIS QUESTION IS PERHAPS PROVIDING THEM WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT! CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW THE STORY COULD HAVE TURNED OUT!?

ADAM'S INITIAL RESPONSE IS ROOTED IN HONESTY (I'M AFRAID, I'M HIDING...) BUT THEN QUICKLY TURNS TO DEFENSIVENESS AND DEFLECTION UPON FURTHER QUESTIONS BEING ASKED. ADAM BLAMES EVE AND BY EXTENSION GOD HIMSELF, AND EVE BLAMES THE SERPENT. NO ONE ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS AND CHOICES AND AS A RESULT, GOD WILL LAY OUT THE CONSEQUENCES TO EACH OF THEM.

THERE WERE A FEW MOMENTS WHERE THINGS COULD HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENTLY. LET'S CONSIDER THAT FOR A MOMENT:

- 1 - EVE COULD HAVE REJECTED THE SERPENT'S OFFER OUTRIGHT
- 2 - EVE COULD HAVE GONE TO GOD AND ASKED FOR HELP BEFORE SHE MADE HER DECISION
- 3 - AFTER EVE ATE, AND HANDS FRUIT TO ADAM, ADAM COULD HAVE REJECTED HER OFFER AND/OR GONE TO GOD FOR CLARITY.
- 4 - ADAM (AND EVE) COULD HAVE RESPONDED TO GOD'S INQUIRY WITH "GOD, WE MESSED UP... WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE THIS RIGHT?" RATHER THAN BLAME AND EXCUSES FOR THEIR SIN.

WHY BRING THESE POINTS UP? BECAUSE WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANS AND GOD AND ONE OF THE LESSONS WE SHOULD GLEAN IS THAT ADAM AND EVE HAD OPTIONS OTHER THAN FALLING INTO SIN. AND WITH EVERY TEMPTATION WE HAVE, WE TOO HAVE OPTIONS OTHER THAN SINNING. THIS SHOULD BOTH CONVICT AND ENCOURAGE US. CONVICTION

THAT WE ARE FOOLISH AND PRIDEFUL AND NEED GOD'S HELP BECAUSE WE TOO FALL FOR THE SERPENT'S TRICK. AND ENCOURAGEMENT BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE SIN! AS PAUL WILL WRITE:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 (ESV) - NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU THAT IS NOT COMMON TO MAN. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TEMPTED BEYOND YOUR ABILITY, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT.

WE SHOULD LEARN FROM OUR 1ST ANCESTOR ABOUT THE FALSE PROMISES OF TEMPTATION & THE WAY TO RESPOND WHEN WE DO SIN. RATHER THAN MAKING EXCUSES, BLAMING OTHERS (OR EVEN THE DEVIL!), ACKNOWLEDGMENT/REPENTANCE/ASKING FOR HELP SHOULD BE OUR RESPONSE.

GENESIS 3:14-15 - SERPENT CURSED

GENESIS 1 AND 2 WERE FILLED WITH THE PHRASES EXPRESSING GOODNESS AND BLESSING. AND NOW WE HAVE "CURSING" AS A RESULT OF ADAM AND EVE'S SIN.

THE SERPENT IS THE FIRST TO BE CURSED. HE IS BROUGHT LOW AND DENOUNCED AND THEN A PROMISE OF TOTAL DESTRUCTION IS GIVEN. GOD DECLARES THAT HUMANS AND THE EVIL SERPENT WILL BE AT ODDS (ENMITY) AND ALTHOUGH THE SERPENT WILL HAVE SOME SUCCESS (BRUISING HEELS), IT WILL BE THROUGH A DESCENDANT OF EVE THAT THE HEAD OF THE SERPENT WILL EVENTUALLY BE CRUSHED.

DUST YOU WILL EAT. "BEING RESTRICTED TO CRAWLING ON THE GROUND WOULD NECESSARILY INVOLVE "EATING DUST," ALTHOUGH THAT IS NOT THE DIET OF THE SERPENT. THE IDEA OF BEING BROUGHT LOW, OF "EATING DUST" AS IT WERE, IS A SYMBOL OF HUMILIATION." (NET BIBLE NOTE, GENESIS 3:14)

GENESIS 3:16 - WOMAN CURSED

THE WOMAN IS THE NEXT TO BE CURSED. THE RESULT OF SIN WILL LEAD TO PAIN IN CHILDBIRTH, MISDIRECTED AND UNFULFILLED DESIRES AND WILL MEAN THAT THE MAN WILL "RULE" OVER THE WOMAN.

GENESIS 3:17-19 - MAN CURSED

FINALLY, ADAM IS CURSED. HIS PUNISHMENT INCLUDES THE GROUND ITSELF BEING CURSED (THORNS AND THISTLES). ALSO WORK, INITIALLY DESIGNED TO BE A BLESSING WILL BE DIFFICULT AND UNFRUITFUL (TOIL, SWEAT). MAN'S FOCUS WILL BE ON HIS WORK WHILE HIS WIFE'S WILL BE ON HER HUSBAND LEADING TO MISDIRECTED AND UNMET EXPECTATIONS AND DESIRES. WORST OF ALL, ADAM HAS NOW BEGUN TO DIE (RETURNING TO DUST). HE WILL NO LONGER ENJOY THE GARDEN AND HE WILL NO LONGER LIVE FOREVER.

IT IS AMAZING HOW SO MANY OF THE PROBLEMS OF OUR WORLD CAN BE UNDERSTOOD IN LIGHT OF UNDERSTANDING THIS BIBLICAL STORY. THE CREATION ITSELF IS NOW BROKEN (FROM THORNS TO THUNDERSTORMS). WORK IS HARD AND NEVER DONE. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE DYSFUNCTIONAL, WHETHER BETWEEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES OR WARRING NATIONS. AND PEOPLE DIE. RICH AND POOR, WISE AND FOOLISH, RIGHTEOUS OR REBELLIOUS. EVERYONE DIES AND WILL DIE (ECC. 2:16). WHY IS IT ALL LIKE THIS NOW? BECAUSE GOD SAID IT WOULD BE.

GENESIS 3:20-24 - BANISHMENT FROM THE GARDEN

THE FINAL VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER TELL THE STORY OF ADAM AND EVE'S BANISHMENT FROM EDEN. THINGS HAVE CHANGED AND THEY ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO LIVE IN PARADISE. GOD GIVES THEM GARMENTS AND SENDS THEM AWAY.

THE TEXT TELLS US THAT ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THEIR REMOVAL IS THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER HAVE ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE (V. 22). GOD EXPLAINS THAT IF ADAM AND EVE CONTINUED IN THE GARDEN, THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO STILL EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE AND IF THEY DID, THEY WOULD "LIVE FOREVER". (THIS SUPPORTS THE IDEA WE LOOKED AT IN CHAPTER 2 ABOUT IMMORTALITY BEING FOUND IN SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF HUMANS.)

SO ADAM AND EVE LEAVE THE GARDEN AND GOD PLACES ANGELIC GUARDIANS (*CHERUBIM*) AND A "FLAMING SWORD" TO ENSURE HUMANS WILL NOT GET TO THE TREE. WOW. ADAM AND EVE WILL STILL LIVE AND WORK THE LAND, STILL STEWARDING THE CREATION AS GOD HAD DESIRED (V. 23), AND GOD WILL STILL BE INTERACTING WITH THEM - BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE - EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED AND FOR THE NEXT FEW CHAPTERS, THINGS FOR HUMANS ARE ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE. BUT FOR NOW WE WILL PAUSE TO TAKE IN ALL THAT WE'VE READ.

A FEW (OF THE MANY) LESSONS FROM GENESIS 3: THE CORE TEMPTATION OF THE SERPENT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO PAINT GOD AS RESTRICTIVE AND NOT THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD THINGS. REMEMBER THE DEVIL'S FINAL LIE TO EVE WAS THIS:

GENESIS 3:4-5 (NLT) - "YOU WON'T DIE!" THE SERPENT REPLIED TO THE WOMAN. 5 "GOD KNOWS THAT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED AS SOON AS YOU EAT IT, AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, KNOWING BOTH GOOD AND EVIL."

YOU WON'T DIE AND YOU CAN BE LIKE GOD. THE IRONIC THING WAS THAT ADAM AND EVE WERE ALREADY IN THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE ONLY THING THEY LACKED WAS "EVIL". YET THE DEVIL WAS ABLE TO SPIN HIS OFFER OF DEATH AND REBELLION INTO A NICELY WRAPPED PACKAGE. THIS ORIGIN STORY OF THE DOWNFALL OF HUMANS TELLS US SO MUCH ABOUT OUR LIVES TODAY. THE DEVIL IS STILL MAKING THIS OFFER DAY IN AND DAY OUT - *"GOD IS HOLDING OUT ON YOU, COME WITH ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU A BETTER WAY TO LIVE, A BETTER AND QUICKER WAY TO HAVE PLEASURE AND FULFILLMENT. YOU CAN BE LIKE GOD!"*

AS WE ALL HOPEFULLY KNOW BY NOW, THE DEVIL HIMSELF RARELY SHOWS UP AND DIRECTLY OFFERS THESE THINGS IN THIS WAY. REMEMBER, HE'S CRAFTY. INSTEAD HE OFFERS THESE THINGS THROUGH HIS INFLUENCES IN THE WORLD AROUND US. BUT THE OFFER IS NO DIFFERENT. HIS TEMPTATIONS IN OUR LIVES ARE ATTEMPTS FOR US TO GET FROM HIM SOMETHING WE CAN ONLY TRULY GET FROM OUR CREATOR. WHAT WE REALLY "LACK" IN LIFE ARE THINGS THAT IF CONSUMED WILL ACTUALLY LEAD TO OUR DEATH. LIKE IT WAS WITH ADAM AND EVE, THIS DEATH IS EVENTUAL AND GRADUAL MORE OFTEN THAN IT IS IMMEDIATE - BUT DEATH NONETHELESS.

THE APPEAL TO "BE LIKE GOD" IS MORE SUBTLE THAN WE MAY THINK. IF WE THINK ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTERISTICS, IT IS TO BE OMNIPOTENT (ALL POWERFUL), OMNISCIENT (ALL KNOWING) AND OMNIPRESENT (ABILITY TO BE EVERYWHERE). ISN'T THIS THE PULL OF THE EVIL AGE WE LIVE IN. THAT WE CAN DO IT OURSELVES (POWER), THAT WE CAN GET THE INFORMATION WE NEED ON OUR OWN, *"DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO"*, AND WE KNOW WHAT IS BEST (KNOWLEDGE). AND OF COURSE WE ALL FEEL THE TREMENDOUS PULL ON OUR LIVES IN THIS BUSY AGE TO BE EVERYWHERE AND DO EVERYTHING (THINK: OMNIPRESENT).

THE APPEAL TO OUR OWN LIVES ABOUT BEING "LIKE GOD" IS NOT THAT WE'RE TEMPTED TO SIT ENTHRONED IN THE HEAVENS OR BE WORSHIPPED NECESSARILY - BUT IT IS THE APPEAL TO BE THE RULER OF OUR OWN LIVES. THIS IS A PLACE NOT RESERVED FOR CREATED

THINGS. IF WE ARE CREATED, THEN WE HAVE A CREATOR AND BY IMPLICATION, OUR CREATOR IS SUPREME. IT IS THE CREATOR THAT KNOWS THE WAY HIS DESIGN SHOULD WORK BEST. WE MAY HAVE IDEAS, BUT OUR BEST ATTEMPTS AT BEING "LORDS" OF OUR OWN LIVES ARE NOT GOOD OR RIGHT.

AND KNOWING THIS, THE EVIL ONE WILL TRY AND TEMPT US TO TAKE THE PLACE IN OUR LIVES THAT IS RESERVED FOR GOD ALONE. THIS WAS HIS ORIGINAL OFFER TO EVE AND IT IS THE SUBTLE AND TEMPTING OFFER OF THE EVIL AGE WE LIVE IN. WATCH OUT SONS OF ADAM AND DAUGHTERS OF EVE. DON'T BE LIKE MOM AND DAD.

INSTEAD, WE SHOULD SURRENDER (AND STAY SURRENDERED) TO JESUS AS OUR LORD. JESUS, WHO LIKE ADAM WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, DID NOT FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF ADAM. WHEN HUMANS REACHED OUT TO GRAB FRUIT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, THEY WERE REACHING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE "LIKE GOD" (**GENESIS 3:5**) YES JESUS "DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED" (**PHILIPPIANS 2:6**). INSTEAD, JESUS HUMBLER HIMSELF AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR OTHERS SO THAT THE HUMAN RACE MIGHT BE REDEEMED AND THAT A RETURN TO PARADISE MIGHT BE MADE AVAILABLE. JESUS SHOWS US HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION OF THE EVIL ONE AND SINCE HE WAS TEMPTED, BUT NEVER SINNED, CAN COME TO THE AID OF THOSE WHO NEED IT TO HELP THEM OVERCOME (**HEBREWS 2:18**).

THIS ENTIRE STORY CAN POINT US TO JESUS. AND THAT IS ULTIMATELY GOD'S INTENTION. FOR AS WE READ, IN THE MIDST OF THE CURSING OF HUMANITY AND THE WORLD ITSELF, GOD INSERTS THE PROMISE OF A SNAKE CRUSHER TO COME. THE BAD NEWS IS THAT THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HUMANS AND THE DEVIL, BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, WILL CONTINUE ON. BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT IT WILL EVENTUALLY END. ACCORDING TO GENESIS 3:15, THE DEVIL **WILL** BE DESTROYED. AND THOUGH THE SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL WHO WILL CRUSH THE SERPENT'S HEAD IS NOT YET KNOWN TO ADAM AND EVE, THE PROMISE OF THIS ONE, IS. AND SO THAT'S WHAT THEY MUST CLING TO EVEN AS THEY WALK OUT OF EDEN. IT IS THE PROMISE WE MUST CLING TO AS WE LIVE IN THE WORLD HARDLY RECOGNIZABLE AS FORMERLY "VERY GOOD." BUT CLING WE MUST. FOR EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE CURSING, THE VERY GOOD GOD MAKES A PROMISE - THE END OF EVIL WILL COME, THE CURSE WILL BE BROKEN, AND ALL THINGS WILL BE MADE NEW (REVELATION 21:3-5; 22:1-5).