
Study 3 – The First Sin

In Genesis 1:1-2:3, we have seen God is powerful, purposeful, orderly and wise. The world was 'very good'. Man was made in God's image to govern and cultivate the earth in God's name. In chapter two the bible lists the details of how God provides for mankind and giving us responsibility, freedom and limit. Man's relationships with God, nature and other people are harmonious and fulfilling. Contrary to Genesis 1 & 2, our world today is full of violence, death and decay. Genesis 3 tells us how.

Read Genesis 3:1-13

1. Compare what the serpent said to the woman (Genesis 3:1) with what God has said (Genesis 2:16-17), what can you tell about the snake's character?
2. Compare the woman's reply (Genesis 3:2-3) with God's words (Genesis 2:9, 16-17), what can you say about the woman's attitude towards God's command? How has she been influenced by the serpent?
3. The serpent is now more direct (Genesis 3:4-5). What statement does he make? Is this statement true (cf. Genesis 2:22-24)?
4. What reasons does the woman weigh before sinning? What similar temptations may a modern person encounter? How should we overcome them?
5. What follows immediately after they consumed the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? How have their relationships towards themselves, each other and God changed (Genesis 3:7-13)?
6. In your own words, explain what mistakes man has made. Have any of these led you to disobey God's commands?
7. In this passage, how does God respond to Adam and Eve? What can you tell about God's character? How can this bring comfort to you?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1.

The serpent says....	God says....
<p>⌈ 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of <u>any</u> tree in the garden?’” ⌋ (Genesis 3:1)</p>	<p>⌈ 2:16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of <u>every</u> tree of the garden, 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ⌋ (Genesis 2:16-17)</p>

In Genesis 3:1 the author introduces the serpent as “more crafty than any other beast of the field”. In his conversation with the woman, he has revealed his craftiness. First, the word “really” perhaps inherits certain scepticism. Second, in the narrative we are not told whether the serpent has knowledge of God’s command. But from his question to the woman we know he does. Yet by modifying just a few words he turns God’s generosity (eat of every tree except one) into dictatorship (shall not eat of any tree). Third, rather than referring God as “the Lord God”, the serpent simply states “God”, suggesting the serpent distant himself from God. The Hebrew word “Yahweh” (the Lord), implies the covenantal relationship between God and his people. The serpent tries to trick people to distant themselves from God and forsaking the covenantal relationship.

Question 2

Eve says....	God says
<p>⌈ 3:2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We <u>may eat</u> ① of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3:3 but God ④ said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of <u>the tree that is in the midst of the garden</u> ②, *<u>neither shall you touch it</u> ③, lest you die.’ ” ⌋ (ESV Genesis 3:2-3)</p>	<p>⌈ 2:16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You <u>may surely eat of every</u> ① tree of the garden, 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat ③, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ⌋ (ESV Genesis 2:16-17)</p> <p>⌈ 2:9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. <u>The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.</u> ②” ⌋ (Genesis 2:9)</p>

First, the woman omits ‘every’, saying simply “we may eat of the fruit”. Like the servant, perhaps she tries to downplay God’s generosity. Second, two trees are present in the midst of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the woman omits the tree of life. Third, she adds to the ban of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil a prohibition “even touching it”. Fourth, Eve follows the serpent’s way of calling God. Rather than calling “the Lord God”, she simply uses “God”. All these are suggesting she has moved towards the serpent’s attitude. She starts to twist slightly what the God really says, by adding her own comments and interpretation. We may conclude she begins to disobey God’s commands. Sinful thoughts often come before sinful actions.

Question 3

The serpent states “You will not certainly die”. This seems to be a direct rejection to God’s words. He then says, “but God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will become like God”. Ironically, the serpent seems to be right. First, God says they will die on the day they eat of the tree, but they didn’t. They were only driven out of the garden and Adam lived to the age of 930 years (Genesis 5:5). Second, the narrator describes their eyes are opened after eating the fruit, as predicted by the serpent. Third, God

vindicates that man has become like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:22). On the surface it seems God lies to his creatures while the snake is telling the truth, but actually the snake is utterly half-truths.

First, the consequence of sin is death. Death is in fact separation from God. In the garden man may enjoy the presence of God, with the tree of life, river, gold, etc. When Adam was driven out of the garden, he was physically separated from God and entered the realm of death. Another way to look at this is Adam has died spiritually. Second, their eyes are opened only to find out they are naked. Their innocence and purity is shattered and lost. Third, they are like God knowing good and evil, but not according to God's standard, but according to their own. The result is the separation from the God, the source of wisdom. God knows what is best for man, not man.

Question 4

Verses 6-8 is the climax of the story. Here is a series of consecutive actions: "she saw", "she took", "she gave", suggesting the rapidity of the movements. The reasons given are "good for food", "delight to the eyes", and "desired to make one wise". The woman should know it is not good to eat, because it is against God's rule. She should be more delighted in the word of God rather than food. She should always be humbled before God rather than trying to be like God.

Question 5

1. The eyes of both were opened. 2. They knew they were naked. 3. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. The snake's words are fulfilled, but in a negative way. Originally they are both naked but without shame (Genesis 2:25). This indicates their closeness (sex expressed within the marriage covenant), innocence and purity. When they make loincloths for themselves, they may either try to hide from each other, or from God. We may say they definitely had a sense of guilt before God.

Their relationship with God and each other are most certainly deteriorated. They hid themselves from the presence of God (v.8). Adam claims he hid because of nakedness, but in fact it is his guilt that triggers it. When God investigates further to guide him to confess his sin, he excuses himself by blaming the woman. God's guidance does not lead him into confession, but to self-righteousness. The woman in the same way denies the responsibility. At this point, his relationship with God and the woman are worsened because of unrepentance. As it is written in 1 John, ^{1:9}"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ^{1:10}"If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:9-10)

Question 6

They made several mistakes. First, they listened to a creature instead of the Creator. Second, they follow their own impressions rather than God's command. Third, they want to be like God, rather than trusting God to run their lives. Fourth, instead of honouring God, they made self-fulfilment their goal. Fifth, their continuous stubbornness during God's inquisition demonstrates their persistence in unrepentance.

Question 7

There is certain gentleness and guidance about the inquisition. God patiently waits for man to realise his mistake. Delitzsch (1:157) remarks, "It was God their creator, who now as God the redeemer was seeking the lost." Yet God is also righteous, therefore man will still be judged and punished. By reverting to the term "the Lord God" from v 8 (cf. "God" in vv 1b-5), the narrator hints that God can still be man's covenant partner as well as his creator and judge.¹

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 1, *Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, 76 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002).

REFERENCES

1. Charles & Anne Hummel, "LifeGuide Bible Study: Genesis", IVP, 1985.
2. The Navigators, "LifeChange: Genesis", NavPress, 1987.
3. Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 1, "Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 1-15", Word Biblical Commentary, 76 Word, Incorporated, 2002.