

CGYG / LIFE Bible Study Series 2006-07: Genesis

Genesis 3: Sin and the Fall of Man

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Genesis 3 marks a pivotal moment in history because it records the point at which man sins and disobeys God's commands, and the perfect fellowship and relationship between man and God is broken. Genesis 3 may be the most important chapter in the Bible, because it sets the stage for God's amazing story of redemption unraveled throughout the rest of the Bible. As we saw in previous studies, prior to Genesis 3, everything that God made was 'very good' (1:31) – that is, creation was fully God-honoring, fully God-pleasing, and perfect. So when we come to Genesis 3, we come to the saddest event in history. Man's sin leads to his fall and ultimately to God's judgment upon both him and all of creation. Literally all problems, from personal (e.g. murder, immorality, failure, disappointment, sorrow and pain, etc.) to environmental (e.g. earthquakes, tsunamis, pollution and decay, etc.) came from God's judgment as a result of this one event of sin.

1. What are some popular views you've read or heard about the idea of 'sin'? What about the idea of 'judgment'? What do you think about the popular opinion, "Sure, I may have told a few 'white lies' in my life– no one's perfect. But I wouldn't call myself a sinner or anything drastic like that... I've made a few mistakes in my life but hey, I've made up for them with the good things I've done as well."
2. What sorts of ideas does the world have about the 'goodness' of human beings? Do most people you know generally believe that people are 'born good', 'born evil' or 'born morally neutral'? What are your views on this?

Read Genesis 3

1. The serpent is elsewhere in the Bible referred to as "...the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray." (Rev 12:9). What was the question that the serpent posed to Eve? What was Eve's response to this? What does God actually say to Adam in Gen 2:16-17?
2. "Sin" is a word that most people don't like to talk about. Usually people give the excuse that sin is too harsh and judgmental a thing, or they outright deny that there is such a thing as sin (or deny that they themselves sin). In reality, however, Scripture tells us that all men and women know that they are sinners because they know they have violated the very law that God has written in their hearts (Rom 2:15). What do the following passages tell us about sin?
 - Rom 3:22-23 →
 - 1 John 3:4 →
 - Gen 4:7 →
 - Rom 8:6-8 →

In light of these passages, why was eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil an act of sin?

3. In what ways was the serpent crafty and deceptive in whom he approached and what he said (v.4-5)? What does this tell us about how Satan operates (c.f. John 8:44, 2 Cor 11: 14-15)? How does this play out in our lives?

4. What was so enticing about this temptation that the serpent presented to Eve (v. 6)? How does this mirror what 1 John 2:16-17 says about things of the world vs. things from the Heavenly Father? Think about your own struggles with sin – doesn't temptation usually start with an enticement of the senses and of the mind, which then if not cut off at the root, end up in some act of disobedience to God?
5. How did Adam and Eve respond to the temptation laid out by the serpent (v.6)? As a result of this, what happened to their relationship with each other (v.7, 12), and with God (v.8-10)? How does this contrast with these relationships only a few verses earlier before their sin (1:22-25)?
6. What was God's judgment on the serpent (v.14-15, c.f. Romans 16:20)? On the woman (v.16)? On Adam, and on the earth (v.17-19, 23-24; see also Rom 8:19-21)? What does the magnitude of God's judgment tell us about how God views sin?
7. Read Gen 2:16-17; Rom 5:12-14, 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4. What is the consequence of sin described in these passages? To whom does this consequence apply?

The consequence of sin was not only a physical death, although that was a clear judgment for sin. More importantly, it was a spiritual death that humans were to experience now, as a result of disobedience – a breaking in the perfect relationship he had with God up until this point. Physical death didn't come upon Adam after he sinned – God, in His mercy, preserved his physical life for quite some time, until Adam as 930 years old (5:4). The spiritual death was immediate, however, as their banishment from the Garden of Eden shows.

8. Read Gen 6:5,11-12 and Romans 3:10-12. To what extent did their sin (Adam, especially) affect the rest of humanity? What does Gen 6:5 tell us about the depth of man's sin? What does Rom 3:10-12 tell us about the breadth of man's sin? In light of this, what would you say to someone who believed that all people are born essentially good and need to be 'taught' to do evil (as Judaism and some other religions teach)?
9. For discussion: Christians are often asked, if God created all things, did He also 'create' sin? How would you answer this question, and what Biblical passages would you use to support your answer? Whom does the Bible point to as totally and completely responsible for sin (James 1:13-15)?

Taking every thought captive...

Ultimately, the Bible says that all men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). None of us are with exception, whether we are Christians or not. The great reformer John Calvin said that everything we do (even our best intentions and thoughts) are 'tainted with sin'. As fallen creatures, we cannot 'pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps' and save ourselves. Sin is a stain that can never be removed by human hands, only by the power of God. Though the presence and consequences of sin are very real and very tragic, the Bible describes the great and glorious plan of salvation that God has to redeem both man and all of creation from the power, presence and the penalty of sin: the good news of Jesus Christ, whom God provided to restore all things back to goodness and a reflection of His glory. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15:22 that "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." What wonderful news this is! Through His perfect life, His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ saves us from the very thing we are in bondage to... sin, and the penalty of sin – death. We will look more closely at this great promise of salvation in our next study.