

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Back to the beginning: The entrance of sin into the world

If you were asked to name the ten most tragic events in world history, I wonder which you would choose. Opinions will vary, of course, but in a recently published list, three items impressed me:

1. The Black Death. This was a plague which swept throughout Europe from 1347 to 1350. Some 100 million people are thought to have died during this time. In this country, approximately one third of the population was wiped out.
2. World War I was mentioned. During 1914-1918, some fifteen million personnel, both military and civilian, died. A further fifty million died from the Spanish Influenza outbreak which followed immediately after that war and was attributed directly to that war.
3. World War II similarly was mentioned. Seventy one million people perished during that six year conflict. Some 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

I want us to think this morning of another event even more tragic than those we have considered. Those events generally were limited to specific parts of the world and were for a limited time. The entrance of sin into the world, however, was an event that has blighted the whole of mankind from its beginning right up to the present time! That sad story is set out for us in the Bible, in Genesis 3:1-7. This present series of talks is entitled 'Back to the beginning'. We began by looking at the Creation week as it is detailed for us in the Bible. Then we looked at the creation of Adam and Eve and their place in the garden of Eden. This is now the third talk in that series. We need to look in some detail at what Genesis 3 has to tell us and then we want to look at what God has done about it.

First of all, then, we will read Genesis 3:1-6: *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die."' And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'* So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate."

How long Adam and Eve had lived in the garden before this event we are not told. Genesis 3:8 suggests that during this time it had been God's practice to come down in *"the cool of the day"* to commune with Adam and Eve. It is likely that Satan would not allow this happy state of affairs to continue for too long. We note that Satan begins by insinuating doubt in Eve's mind (Genesis 3:1) and then moves to a direct lie, *"You shall not surely die..."* (Genesis 3:4). Here we see the very first lie in the Bible. It is not for nothing that Satan is described as *"the father of lies"* (see John 8:44).

It is surely significant that still today Satan works in these two ways. He creates doubts in the minds of some, particularly Christians, doubts as to the security of their salvation, doubts as to the reliability of God's promises. He also is busy spreading lies, particularly as to the Bible as the inspired word of God. "You cannot really believe that in this 21st century", he whispers. So successful has he been in this that as a nation we have largely turned away from the Bible as a rule for individual and national morality, and this in a country where only a few centuries ago, men were prepared to lay down their lives so that ordinary people might have the word of God in their own language.

We continue now with Genesis 3:7-13: *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?' Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' And the*

*LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"*

When God put Adam in the garden, God gave him that solemn warning, *"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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). But here were Adam and Eve having eaten of the fruit - and please note, the Bible does not tell us it was an apple - very much alive and scurrying away to hide from God. Had God not kept His word then? Not a bit of it! God always keeps His word. It is impossible for Him to lie, as Hebrews 6:18 tells us. Adam and Eve might be physically alive, but spiritually they were dead, *"dead in trespasses and sins"* as Ephesians 2:1 describes it. The essence of spiritual death is a broken relationship with God, separation from Him because of sin. It was because of that broken relationship that Adam and Eve no longer wanted to meet with God and tried to hide themselves amongst the trees of the garden.

So God calls to Adam, *"Where are you?"* (Genesis 3:9). This all-important question is the first question in the Bible addressed by God to man. Did an omniscient God, a God from whom nothing is hid, not know where Adam was? Of course He knew, but He wanted Adam and Eve to know where they were - separated now from Him because of their disobedience. God still addresses that same important question to each of us today. I still remember from my school days parts of a poem by Thomas Hood:

*I remember, I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun  
Came peeping in at morn.*

Then he continues,

*I remember, I remember  
The fir trees dark and tall.  
I used to think their slender tops  
Were close against the sky.*

*It was a childish ignorance,  
But now 'tis little joy  
To know I'm farther off from God  
Than when I was a boy.*

There's a haunting sadness about those last few words:

*"Farther off from God  
Than when I was a boy."*

Yet sadly they describe the spiritual condition of many today. Listener, may I press the question with you, "Where are you in your relationship with God?"

There's a terrible sadness in that picture of Adam and Eve hiding themselves, as they thought, from the God whose presence they had so much enjoyed as He had met with them in the garden in the cool of the day. We need now to look at the consequences of their disobedience. We'll read firstly Genesis 3:14-15: *"So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.'"*

Though we do not know for certain, it's likely that Satan appeared in some beautiful upright form to attract the attention of Eve, but from now on the serpent would be the creature we recognise, slithering along the ground. Although many of us today are fascinated by snakes, most of us have an innate fear of them. That's a direct consequence of the enmity that God put that day between the serpent and mankind. But the death knell of Satan was sounded, too, on that day. *"He shall bruise your head"* (Genesis 3:15) refers to Satan's ultimate destruction. That would be accomplished by the seed of the woman. Because of His virgin birth (see Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:27), the Lord Jesus is peculiarly the seed of the woman, not of man. That *"His heel would be bruised"* (Genesis 3:15) refers to the pain He would suffer in His death at Calvary. So the writer to the Hebrews tells us of the Lord Jesus, *"Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Hebrews 2:14-15). So even in that dark moment of man's sin and separation from God, the glorious promise of the Redeemer to come is given so that man might be reconciled to God!

We have just celebrated Christmas with its reminder that God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to be the Saviour of the world (John 4:42, 1 John 4:14). Christmas stands as witness to the fact that the promise God made in Eden of the Redeemer to come, He has kept!

We need now to look at the consequences for Eve. They are set out in Genesis 3:16: *“To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”* As a mere male, it's not for me to talk about the pains of childbirth. Although they can be understood in terms of the physical processes taking place, at the same time, they are also the consequence of the sin in Eden. Eve had taken the initiative in leading Adam to sin, though he had been a willing participant. God's plan for man from now on was that the husband exercise his role as head of the family.

There were consequences, too, for Adam. We'll read Genesis 3:17-21: *“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.’ And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”*

That beautiful creation had been surveyed by God on the sixth day, when we read, *“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”* (Genesis 1:31). That perfect creation itself was now spoiled by sin. Part of the evidence of that spoiling would be seen by Adam in the thorns and thistles that would now spring up and make him work so much harder in tilling the ground. The spoiling is also seen today in earthquakes and other natural disasters. It is interesting, and saddening to reflect that those thorns, fruit of man's sin, added to the pain of the Saviour when men plaited a crown of thorns and put it on His head before crucifying Him (see Matthew 27:29).

Although we have already considered that spiritual death was the primary outcome of man's sin, now his physical death is spelt out: *“Dust you are, and to dust you shall return”* (Genesis 3:19). So it has continued throughout history to the present day. But just as the light of the coming Redeemer shone in Eden that day, so too the grace of God, His undeserved kindness, is seen. Adam and Eve had made some poor attempt to cover themselves with fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). Now God provides in the tunics of skin a far better covering for them (Genesis 3:21). Those skins, however, would have required the death of some animals. There is a little picture here of the wonderful truth that God's covering for our sin, His imputed (or His credited) righteousness would only be achieved through the death of His Son.

We still need to read the final sad verses of Genesis 3: *“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’ - therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life”* (Genesis 3:22-24). There could be no way back for Adam and Eve to their previous happy existence - 'Paradise Lost' as the poet, John Milton, has described it. Yet even in this expulsion, we can see something of the kindness of God. Suppose sinful man had been able to live forever. As each new generation came along, they would have the combined wickedness of all previous generations to advise them as to the course of their own evil deeds. What a calamitous world that would have been!

But we might ask, “What is the relevance of all this for us today?” We will just summarise some of the consequences that we have already touched upon:

1. Because of man's sin and alienation from God, human relationships have been damaged. This is evidenced in killings, in wars, in the break up of families, in soured industrial relationships, to name but a few.
2. Because of man's sin, death is part of our human condition. Because our bodies are no longer the perfect creation that God intended, we suffer from all kinds of illnesses and disabilities.
3. This physical world itself suffers from man's sin. Hence we see earthquakes, droughts, flooding etc. Romans 8:19-22 tells us that this physical creation groans and labours with birth pangs, awaiting the day when sin will be removed.

If this message today could only speak of that sad day when sin entered into the world, this would be a very sorry state of affairs. We have already seen that even in those dark moments in the garden of Eden, God promised a coming Deliverer. It is time now to look at God's remedy for man's sin. Paul's letter to the Romans is a wonderful setting forth of the Christian Gospel, that is the Good News. Martin Luther wrote of it, “This epistle is in truth the most

important document in the New Testament ... It is the soul's daily bread, and can never be read too often, or too much." When you have time, read it carefully through and rejoice in its good news.

In Romans 1:1-3:24, the Apostle clearly demonstrates that the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, are guilty before God (see especially Romans 3:23). In Romans 5, he looks back to that time in Eden and writes, "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*" (Romans 5:12). He later continues, "*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 5:19-21).

When we were born into the world, we inherited Adam's sinful nature. We were "in Adam" as the Bible describes us (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). Of course, by our own sinful acts, each one of us has added to the catalogue of the world's sins. When He died at Calvary, the Lord Jesus suffered that punishment for sins - death - that we deserved. As Mrs. Alexander's hymn puts it:

*He died that we might be forgiven;  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.*

When we repent of our sins and turn to the Lord Jesus, in faith receiving Him as the One who died for those sins, we step, as it were, out of the ranks of those who are "*in Adam*", and step into the ranks of those who are "*in Christ*". Of such, Paul writes, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). Elsewhere Paul writes, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Listener, as we come to the end of our time together this morning, let me leave with you this question, "Do you know this blessing of being 'in Christ'?"

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