

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Genesis chapters 3-4

The fall and its consequences

[New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]

Introduction

I am sure that we can all remember some event where a seemingly small thing has turned out to have huge consequences. A small patch of a water stain on the ceiling or a little chip on the windscreen. It may look like something insignificant, but such are actually revealing a real problem that will have serious consequences. In the case of the water, it could be that your ceiling is about to collapse because of a water leak you didn't know about. On the car windscreen a small chip could be telling you that the whole thing is about to crack.

Such thoughts can also be extended to people, particularly influential people in history. When we look at those who have the most impact on history it is usually not a good history. I was listening to a speaker recently who had looked up the people who have had the most influence on the world. Included in that list were those who we would probably know well such as Hitler, Stalin, Napoleon, Genghis Khan. The common features of these people is one of suffering, war, and death as a consequence of that person's personal power and position. Usually, the history books tell us that people hadn't thought they were as bad as they turned out to be when they first came to power, but the consequences were severe.

One name that doesn't tend to make it onto such a list on the internet is Adam, who is part of our topic today. But perhaps he should be the first name people think of. The seemingly small act of eating the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden has shaped everything in this world since that point in time. We will spend some time considering some of those consequences as we consider the events captured in Genesis chapters 3 and 4.

Is it Real?

There has always been controversy over the literal nature of the first chapters of Genesis, but we as a group providing the Truth for Today teaching, take the whole Bible as the written word of God. As such it provides the full truth of the origin of the world in which we live. Some additional points that would provide support for this stance are as follows:

- The Bible is a remarkable book for there is much evidence that supports its accuracy and miraculous provision. It was written over a period of about 2000 years by over 30 authors, writing in different styles and at times, yet maintaining a clear theme throughout of God's dealings with mankind, as well as revealing the person of God and His provision for salvation. Deciding that some of it is not true would cast doubt on the validity of the whole. This in itself puts in jeopardy the truth of salvation and our hope of a future in heaven.
- There are a number of references to the early chapters of Genesis in the New Testament: for example, the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Luke 3:23-38 is traced back to Adam. The most notable reference is Romans 5 which we will look at later on. Such references give

validity to the Old Testament as they are linked with the Lord Jesus Himself who is known as the Word as well as the One who came in grace and truth.

It may be that you disagree with the points made or that Genesis, at least the early chapters are not literal, but I would encourage the listener ([reader](#)) to continue to listen ([read](#)) as the thoughts I have on this subject are still relevant and worthwhile to consider by all believers and non-believers alike.

The Scene

I don't intend to read in full the chapters we are looking at, but it is worth reading the first thirteen verses of chapter 3 to set the scene for our topic:

“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.’” Then 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. 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 you have done?” The woman said, “The Serpent deceived me, and I ate.””

The previous chapters have covered the life that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. We are not told how long this event in chapter 3 occurred after God had declared His world to be very good. In that time Adam and Eve would have experienced that life of perfection in total innocence, enjoying the many blessings of being able to walk with God in the Garden of Eden. They had knowledge of what it was God had planned for them but now there was a challenge to that as to whether they would accept what God wanted for them or go their own way.

We are introduced to the serpent who was clearly Satan acting to damage and destroy that which God had made good. There is not much detail provided for us in the Bible regarding the spiritual world. There are passages such as Job chapter 1 and several instances in the book of Daniel which are enough to show us that there are powers working for good and powers working for evil in this world. I don't want to dwell on this too much as it is not for us to speculate, except to say that there is clearly a rebellion in the spiritual realm against God and His angels, and that those evil forces are real and powerful. Their purpose is to disrupt and push people away from knowing and following God. We should take them seriously and be on guard against any influences that are contrary to God's ways and purposes.

We are then told of the first wrong teaching in the Bible. Eve's response to the serpent included an additional instruction not to even touch the fruit. This was not included in God's original instruction which was given to Adam. This addition allowed a doubt to be cast on the original instruction. God had not said some of it! This small error gave leverage to the tempter and allowed the idea to be developed that perhaps it would be okay after all.

Finally, we have Adam's indifference to a dangerous situation. Like those who ignore water marks that spread, Adam did nothing to prevent what was clearly leading to the breaking of the single rule God had laid down for them in the Garden of Eden. We can sometimes assume that Adam was away somewhere else, and Eve brought the fruit to him, so he might have been unaware of the source of the temptation. But the narrative points to Adam being right there alongside. Eve simply had to hand it over to him. He made no effort to stop Eve, to challenge the serpent or to even say that perhaps she should not have eaten the fruit in the first place. Eve was deceived by the serpent. Adam wilfully disobeyed God, thus bringing sin and all its consequences into the world.

Consequences – God's separation from us

Verses 22 to 24 of chapter 3 provide us with a description of God's immediate action in sending Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. The description in the text talks about God's concern over what Adam and Eve had learnt when they had sinned. It is worth pointing out here that God was not against Adam and Eve learning. Indeed, their task to look after the Garden of Eden and to name the animals is one that points to a lot of learning and understanding. We must remember that the tree they ate from was not called the tree of Knowledge but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In taking its fruit they had learnt what it was to reject God and follow their own way. In so doing they had gained a knowledge that would forever damage them.

The worst part about this knowledge is that it meant their walks with God in the Garden of Eden were over. God acted to remove the risk of them accessing The Tree of Life and moved them away from the place He had walked with them. Thus, representing the fact that God cannot allow sin to be where He is. There was no progression or gradual moving out. Sin had caused separation from God and He removed them from His presence. We may lament about the state of the world getting worse over time, although it is a debatable point. But the fact that God will have nothing to do with sin whatsoever has always been the same and this was the point where that was made very clear when the Garden of Eden became out of bounds.

We have seen throughout History periods of time when people have managed to improve society and make life better for others. But this has never changed how God must deal with fallen man. No amount of effort on our part will bring any relief to this issue. This is the worst consequence of that act of sin by Adam and Eve and for so many it has never changed. The seriousness of this condition is shown in the provision of Cherubim and the flaming sword that kept out any who would try to enter Eden. The depiction of Cherubim on old paintings is somewhat distant from these terrifying creatures described in the Old Testament. There could be no doubt in anyone's mind that there was no admittance granted.

Consequences – our separation from God

But as well as God removing sin from His presence, we see that man had now separated himself from God. In eating the fruit, Adam and Eve had made the choice to go down a pathway that said that they would rather do things their own way than God's way. This pathway was set for all subsequent generations ever since. Over the years, there have been numerous efforts to effectively remove God from the equation. The pursuit of knowledge, pleasure, entertainment and activity are all ways in which people are looking to provide themselves with a name, relevance or happiness. The fact that we go to further and further extremes shows that this doesn't work. All of it is ultimately our natural desire to reject God and go our own way.

We may wonder why chapter 4 is included for at this point, but I see it as the demonstration of what that pathway away from God ultimately leads to. What started as a simple stealing of fruit moves swiftly on to fratricide within a generation and then on to boasting about assault and murder. The decision to follow our own pathway instead of God's way leads to lives that are self-centred and self-gratifying, where anything goes to serve ourselves.

It is worth mentioning briefly verse 7 of chapter 3, where we are told of Adam and Eve sewing fig leaves to make clothes for themselves. This verse provides us with another aspect of failed righteousness. The attempt of mankind to solve their own problems. There is logic and some thought behind it but ultimately the solution is not sufficient. Mankind's attempts to make themselves righteous ultimately fail to provide a sufficient solution. It is only later in verse 21 where God provided the necessary 'covering' in more ways than one.

Consequences – the curses

We can now turn to consider the curses for another set of consequences of the fall in Eden. Chapter 3 verses 14 to 17 provide the detail:

“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.” 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.” 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.””

There is a lot that could be taken from these verses, particularly teaching on relationships between men and women. Happily, there is teaching in the New Testament that helps us deal with these things and it is good to see how many issues in the world are solved by living in keeping with the teaching of the New Testament.

The main point that drives these verses is the damage to relationships between people that has been caused by the fall in Eden. Men and women were created by God to be a help to one another and to have a close relationship bond. When sin was brought into the world this was damaged and there have been problems and difficulties between people ever since. We see today how relationships are encouraged to be based on what is best for ourselves first, rather than any sense of mutual benefit being provided.

Another point to make on the curses is the fact that the serpent was also cursed. There is a lot of discussion about whether the snake used to have legs and other things like that. But the message we gain from this is not about snakes in general. It is the cursing of another of God's created beings who has disobeyed and gone away from following God's ways. The curses start with the serpent and the key point is that there will be enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed. We see in this then that there is always a battle and a struggle going on in the background that we are not fully aware of. All these things are working against us to take us away from following God. It is not just us, but other powers that are drawing us away

and we must always be mindful of that. We can also see here that God knows it too and will one day judge those that do so.

Consequences – degrading world and the process of death

Verse 21 of chapter 3 tells us that God made skins for a covering for Adam and Eve. This gave them a much more substantial and practical covering than fig leaves. But it also is the first mention of actual death in the Bible. God had said that if the fruit was taken then death would come in and here it does come in immediately. But we are also shown how far reaching this issue is because death and decay has not only affected the human race but has a much broader reach in affecting the creation as a whole.

Verses 17 to 19 of chapter 3 also tell us of the curse of the ground that was now in place. God had provided the Garden of Eden, and it was able to provide in abundance. But now, creation was on the downward trend. How much we feel this today. Resources are running out, there are issues with extinction, and we see that effect of decay in so many areas of life. Again, there are attempts to solve these problems but despite all of the resources and time spent on it there is no effective solution, and we continue to see that mankind is unable to solve the problem of death and decay that affects the world around us.

Good Tidings?

The events of chapter 3 of Genesis are the most influential events as far as mankind is concerned but it is not all bad news. We get glimpses in this chapter of the fact that, although God cannot permit sin, He is able to provide the solution for it. We have the skins in verse 21, which brings in death, but also atonement. In the curse upon the serpent we see that there will be One who will crush its head. Verse 26 of chapter 4 talks about the birth of Seth. We know that it was that family line that leads to the Lord Jesus. Romans chapter 5 is a wonderful chapter which links Salvation to Genesis chapters 3 & 4 today. Verses 17 to 21 provide us with the explanation of God's goodness and provision in the face of sin:

'For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 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.'

It is a remarkable thing to read in these verses, that despite the failure of man in the Garden of Eden, out of it has come something better. For those who believe in the salvation of God through the saving work of the Lord Jesus, we have not had Eden restored, what we do have in Christ Jesus is something far superior. God was not caught out by the sin that entered the world in Eden. There was always a plan for salvation and His goodness and love have come through in this, with a much more glorious future for those who belong to Him. Thanks be to God!

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus not only provided salvation, but it also showed how God is the only answer to the problems of the world. Also every consequence of sin that we have considered was shown to be overcome when He walked here in this world. How much more marvellous it will be to walk with Him when sin has been fully removed and we have been made new to enjoy all of the heavenly blessings that have been provided for us.

Lessons For Today?

The narrative of Genesis chapters 3 and 4 is essentially linked to the theme of salvation throughout the Bible. I just want to bring out a few practical applications that come from this for our everyday walk.

Firstly, we have the practical reminder not to trust in the world's methods and ideas for 'saving' the planet. However well-intentioned policies or movements might be, they are still the efforts of man to solve their own problems and as such will ultimately fail to solve them. We can support certain ideals and live responsibly and righteously. But they are no substitute for the salvation that only God can offer.

We have great lessons about sin from what we see in Adam particularly. There is the issue of the comparative magnitude. We can all feel we are generally good. But in the Genesis chapters 3 and 4 narrative, the consequences were far reaching from a seemingly small act. There is the issue of escalation where things start off with a small sin but before long, we are committing something far, far worse. We can also learn from the need to challenge something that will lead to sin. Adam was right there when all of these things happened, and never said a word of challenge!

For those of us who teach, which in some capacity is the case for all believers, we have an important lesson in not adding to the word of God. We must carefully and accurately present the truth of God's word, not adding our own thoughts for effect.

Finally, we must all have that heart to look to God for our provision. From salvation from sin, to the pathway we walk here in this world, it is God we must look to for provision and guidance. All other methods take us away from Him along our own pathway.

Conclusion

There is so much more that could be considered in these two chapters, but I trust that some of the thoughts brought out today will point us more towards God's goodness and grace, whilst showing how much we all need His salvation. In a world where we are always told to do what makes us happy and do our own thing, we need such reminders of what going our own way can lead to.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Genesis chapters 3 and 4: The fall and its consequences, talk number T1379.

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