

Chaos vs. Order

The Temptation and Fall Genesis 3

Introduction

Chapter 3 begins with the temptation from the serpent. "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'?" (Genesis 3:1 NKJV)

The text here doesn't identify the serpent as Satan, but the rest of the Bible clarifies that Satan appears as a serpent. Ezekiel 28 tells us that Satan was in the Garden of Eden. Job 26 and Isaiah 51 also associate a serpent creature with Satan. Revelation 12 and 20 speak of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan.

Moses lifting up a bronze serpent in the wilderness after Israel's sin is a picture of Jesus lifted up on the cross, identifying Himself with that very serpent. Jesus said in John 3:14, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15 NKJV)

The lifting up of the bronze serpent pictured the lifting up of sin judged in the form of a cross.

Ezekiel 28 tells us that before his fall, Satan was an angel of the highest rank and prominence, even a worship leader in heaven. Isaiah 14 tells us Satan's fall was due to his desire to be equal to or greater than God, to set his will against God's will. Satan's effectiveness is His cunning, crafty ways. We can't outsmart Satan, but we can overcome him with the power of Jesus.

It was the craftiness of Satan that made him successful against Eve. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3 NKJV)

Apparently, before the curse, the serpent was different than what we know today as a serpent. The serpent didn't start out as a snake; it became one.

I. Satan Tempts Eve

Adam and Eve probably had conversations with angelic beings that often appeared as humans. It wasn't so strange to Eve to think that an angelic being might appear to her in the form of a beautiful pre-curse serpent. Satan tempts the woman because he perceives she is more vulnerable to attack. Eve didn't receive the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil directly from God but through Adam.

Satan's first attack was against the Word of God. If he could confuse Eve about what God said, or cause her to doubt what God said, then his battle was partially won. Satan tries to do the same thing to us. He gets us to neglect and doubt God's Word.

Satan took God's command in Genesis 2:16, "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, and rephrased it in a purely negative way: "Is it true God won't let you eat of every tree?"

In verse 2, Eve replies to the serpent. "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.'"" (Genesis 3:2-3 NKJV)

Eve's first mistake was carrying on a discussion with the serpent. Eve's knowledge of what she should not do is partially correct, but what she doesn't seem to know makes her all the more vulnerable to deception. Eve doesn't seem to know the name of this tree; she calls it the tree in the midst of the garden instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17).

Eve misquotes God's command to Adam. She adds to the command and puts words in God's mouth when she says, "Nor shall you touch it." Eve's ignorance of exactly what God said was Adam's responsibility. He did a poor job of relating to his wife the command God gave him.

We can almost picture Adam telling Eve, "See that tree in the middle of the garden? Don't touch it, or God says we'll die!" While this is better than saying nothing, what Adam *didn't* explain made a vulnerable place where Satan could attack.

This may seem like a small thing to hinge the destiny of the human race and all creation, but the tree was nothing more than a restraint on Adam and Eve. It was there to remind them *they* were not God, that God had a legitimate claim to their obedience, and that they were responsible to Him.

II. Satan Challenges God's Word

In verse 4, Satan directly challenges God's Word. 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." (Genesis 3:4-5 NKJV)

Satan drew Eve into a discussion and planted the seed of doubt about God's Word. Then he exposed Eve's incomplete understanding of God's Word. Now he moves in for the kill, outright contradicting what God said. Satan first wanted Eve to forget all about what God said about the consequences of sin. When we know and

remember the consequences of sin, we are more likely to give up the passing pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25).

In Satan's direct challenge, he tries to get Eve to doubt the goodness of God. Satan suggests that if God lied to her, how could He be good? Satan also tries to get Eve to doubt that sin is bad. If the fruit of the garden is good for her, why doesn't God want her to have it? Satan always wants us to see sin as something good, that God is bad and evil, because He doesn't want us to enjoy everything.

Satan's greatest lie is that sin is not bad, and God is not good. Satan is always prepared to present a thousand reasons why disobeying God's command is okay. Satan always mixes lies with a little bit of truth. He tells Eve, "In the day you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be opened." It was true that Satan said their eyes would be opened, but they were opened to their own sin and rebellion against God. Their eyes were opened, and they did know good and evil, but not as gods. Satan lied when he promised them, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The final enticement was the most powerful because it was how Satan himself fell. He wanted to be equal with God. Eve bought the pitch, and, like Satan, she thought she would become like God by rebelling against God.

III. The Fall of the Human Race

Verse 6 records Adam and Eve's sin and the fall of the human race. "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." (Genesis 3:6 NKJV)

Eve surrendered to this temptation just as John describes in 1 John 2:15. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17 NKJV)

First, she gave in to the lust of the flesh (saw that the fruit was good for food), then she gave in to the lust of the eyes (pleasant to the eyes), then she gave in to the pride of life (desirable to make one wise).

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted in the same three-fold way. "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU,' and, IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.'"

"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him." (Matthew 4:3-11 NKJV)

Satan appeals to the physical appetites, but Jesus responds, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Then Satan appeals to covetousness and emotional desires, but Jesus responds, "Don't tempt the Lord your God." And finally, Satan appeals to pride, but Jesus responds, "Worship God and serve Him only."

Even though Eve was deceived into thinking it was so, in the end, the tree was *not* really good for food. The fruit probably was pleasant to the eyes, but that view wouldn't last long. It was only true in Eve's mind that the tree was desirable to make one wise.

Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:14 is that Eve was deceived when she sinned. In her mind, she became convinced she was doing something good for herself. Satan tempted Eve, but she's the one who fell for it. She couldn't really say, "The devil made me do it."

Not only did Eve sin, but she became the agent of temptation for Adam. But when Adam ate, he was not deceived. Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, in open rebellion against God. It is Adam, not Eve, who bears the responsibility for the fall of the human race and the introduction of death into the world (Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22).

Eve was tricked into sinning, but Adam knew exactly what he was doing (1 Timothy 2:14). Satan's goal was for Adam and Eve to take and eat of the forbidden fruit and destroy the human race.

But God's plan was to send Jesus to the world Adam cursed and surrender to death so that through His life, we can take and eat and be fully restored in fellowship with God.

IV. The Sin Exposed

When Adam and Eve's sin is exposed, they immediately recognize their nakedness. Verse 7 says, "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." (Genesis 3:7 NKJV)

Suddenly they knew they were naked, and their shame was exposed to all creation. Psalm 104 and Matthew 17 suggest that light can be a garment for the righteous. One writer says, "It is more than probable that they were clothed in light before the fall, and when they sinned, the light went out." (Barnhouse)

The way they saw themselves changed, but also, the way they saw the entire world was now different. After the fall, everything looked worse. When Adam and Eve saw their nakedness and felt terrible about it, they didn't feel good about it, and that is good. It's a good sign if you feel guilty when you have done something wrong. If you have no sense of guilt or shame when you sin, you're really in a dark place.

Their own attempt to cover themselves was ingenious, but fig leaves can be prickly, which would make for some pretty itchy coverings. Every attempt to cover our own nakedness before God is just as foolish. We need to let Jesus cover us with His righteousness (Revelation 3:5, 18) and put on Jesus Himself as our covering garment (Galatians 3:27).

After making their coverings, Adam and Eve waited. It wouldn't be until *the cool of the day* (Genesis 3:8) that God would generally come to them. Spurgeon says, "Their hearts must have been sorely perplexed within them while they were waiting to see what God would do to them as a punishment for the great sin they had committed."

Conclusion

In verse 8, God calls out to Adam and Eve. "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?" (Genesis 3:8-9 NKJV)

Adam and Eve knew that when they heard the LORD coming, He would want to be with them. Cool of the day is literally "the breeze of the day." The sense was, "in the wind of the evening," when the evening breeze was blowing through the garden, God would come to meet with them.

What did Adam and Eve do? They hid themselves, which shows they knew their attempt to cover themselves failed. They didn't proudly show off their fig-leaf outfits; they knew their fig covering was completely inadequate, and they were embarrassed before God.

How does God handle the situation? He calls out, "Where are you?" This was not the interrogation of an angry commanding officer but the heartfelt cry of an anguished father. God knew where they were, but He also knew a gulf had been made between Him and them.

It was a gulf that God, Himself would have to bridge.

- The question was meant to flush out Adam's sense of being lost and bring him to a place where He would confess his sin.
- The question was also meant to express God's sorrow over man's lost condition and show that God seeks after those who are lost.
- And the question was meant to express the accountability that humanity has before God.

God's question required an answer. They couldn't refuse to answer God the way a criminal might try to keep silent when questioned. Spurgeon writes, "In our courts of law, we do not require men to answer questions which would incriminate them, but God does; and, at the last great day, the ungodly will be condemned on their own confession of guilt."

The way God came to Adam and Eve is how He comes to all of the lost and fallen of humanity.

- God came to them patiently, waiting for the cool of the day – when the evening breeze began to blow.
- God came to them with care and compassion – before the darkness of night overwhelmed them.
- God came to them personally, - addressing Adam and Eve directly.
- God came to them with truth, - showing them, He knew of their lost condition.