

Starting Over Again

Genesis 3:20-24

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Responding to God's Judgment (3:20-24)

God created a perfect world, but humans chose to sin. In doing so, they destroyed both themselves and everything that surrounded them. Spiritual death came immediately, but physical death took longer. Because of that, there is time to respond. There is a new start - a sad start, but one that contains a seed of hope for the future.

Adam's Response: Naming His Wife - Possibly Implying Trust and Hope (3:20)

What did Adam name his wife? _____ Why? _____

_____ (In Hebrew, the name "Eve" sounds similar to the word "Living.")

As seen in chapter 2, the concept of "naming" something had to do with learning and understanding its significance. Adam understood Eve's significance. Though she had been instrumental in bringing *death* into the world, by God's grace, she would also be instrumental in bringing *life* into the world.

- Adam's act of naming his wife stands in stark contrast to the curse and death the two had just brought into the world, and may suggest that they understood God's *grace* in the situation, and the hope implied in verse 15.
- Adam's reference to "life" probably implies *more* than just *biological* life. Eve would be the mother of all who would receive *spiritual* life - those who would oppose the "seed of the serpent." Furthermore, the very *source* of life - Jesus Christ - would come from her.

God's Response: Providing and Protecting (3:21-24)

How did God deal with their nakedness? How did God provide for them (v. 21)? _____

- Many believe that the "garments of skin" implied a sacrifice, and taught Adam and Eve about the need for a sacrificial atonement for their sins.
- As seen before, physical nakedness had spiritual implications - it is not merely a *physical* phenomenon! That is why their response to nakedness changed so greatly, when they sinned. In this verse, God's act of *clothing* them also has spiritual implications. There will be an ongoing need for their sins to be "covered," so that the shame of their guilt will not remain exposed. Throughout the Old Testament, animal sacrifices will be needed as a *temporary* measure, until Jesus Christ comes to provide the perfect sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 10).

- In the New Testament, the concept of "clothing" is used to illustrate many spiritual principles. We read about "putting on" or "being clothed with": Christ (Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27), the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11), the "new self" (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10), various godly character traits (Colossians 3:12), etc.

What (besides death) occurred because Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree (v. 22a)? _____

- Though they became *like* God, as far as knowing good and evil was concerned, it was from an *evil* perspective. (Had they *not* eaten from the tree, they would have known good and evil from a *righteous* perspective.)

Because of this, what would God have to protect them from (v. 22b)? _____

Why did God need to protect them?

- Eating from this tree, as a *sinner*, would have accomplished the *opposite* of what they expected. They would have been forced to live *forever* in a state of *death*, separated from God and from his blessings. Salvation (which is possible only through the *death* of Jesus Christ) would have been impossible.
- If, physically, they were *unable* to die, that doesn't mean life would have been a pleasurable experience. They were already *spiritually* dead - separated from God - and this would influence the nature of the "life" they would have experienced, had they eaten from the tree of life. Most likely, pain would forever increase, as injury and age took their toll. As the effects of human sin impacted everything around them, God's blessings throughout *creation* would diminish until they disappeared. As this occurred, the very concept of living would become a horror. Ultimately, unending "life" (if you could call it such) as a hopelessly lost sinner, would be like "hell on earth," and probably not much different from what the unrighteous will experience in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).
- Under such conditions, what would happen if a person's body was crushed and essentially destroyed? We cannot comprehend what it would be like to *not* be able to lose consciousness. Perhaps the non-physical aspect of the human being would experience unending, unrelenting pain. Whatever the case, we can be thankful that God didn't let us find out!

What did God do to *Adam and Eve*, to protect them from this tree (v. 23)? _____

- In the garden, God had provided a plentiful supply of food for them. Now they would have to work much harder to get it.
- This verse is directly related to the judgment of v. 17-19, not only in reference to the issue of "working the ground" (which would become a much more difficult task than before - v. 17), but also in reference to the humans coming from, and returning to, the ground (referring to death - v. 19).

What did God do to *the garden*, to protect them from this tree (v. 24)? _____

- As sinners, it would have been *natural* for them to go after the tree of life, even if they knew the consequences would be horrible. (It's no different than the attitude people tend to have today, when they are tempted to sin.)
- Cherubim (plural for "cherub") are among the heavenly creatures who serve God. Other than the possible descriptions in Ezekiel 1 (compare to chapter 10) and Revelation 4:6-8, we don't know much about them. Up to the time of Noah, when the global flood occurred, anyone who would have traveled to the location of the garden would have seen these creatures standing there, guarding the tree.

This is not the end of the story... but just the beginning. Many horrible things will happen, because of sin and its consequences. But in the end, there will be a *new* (restored) earth... *and the tree of life will be freely available to all the righteous who are there* (Revelation 2:7; 22:2, 14).

What Do We Learn from Genesis 1-3?

Does It Matter? (Or: The Reason People Often Attack These Chapters)

Genesis 1-3 is the foundation for all the rest of Scripture. The early chapters of Genesis not only demonstrate God's *active* involvement in what happens in creation, but they also form the basis for many of the foundational teachings of Scripture. In doing so, they speak directly against many of the lies that are being promoted today, often by people who are supposed "experts" in their field.

This is why these chapters are so frequently attacked by enemies of the Bible. If they can undermine these three chapters (as well as the account about the global flood, in Genesis 6-8), then they can undermine our faith. Of course, they *cannot* really undermine these chapters in Scripture. God's Word stands firm and accurate. But it is just as we read in the introductory lesson (about 2 Peter 3:3-7): The time would come, in which people would *deliberately* ignore the *facts* about the creation and the flood. This *willful forgetfulness* - not reliance on facts - would be the basis for their mockery and attacks on God's Word.

An Accurate Account of Past Events: History

All the rest of Scripture *presupposes* the factual accuracy of these three chapters. All of the apostles and prophets who refer to something in these chapters (directly or by allusion) treat them as *fact* - not as fiction or myth, nor as mere symbolism that shouldn't be taken literally. Though much symbolism was later developed, based on these chapters, the chapters themselves are considered factual, and an accurate historical description of events that happened in the past.

Simply stated, these chapters tell us what happened. Scripture tells us that these chapters are factual history. God has spoken, and any other opinion or "theory" is simply false - a lie.

The Starting Point for Many of the Bible's Teachings and Commands: Doctrine

These chapters provide the foundation for many of the teachings and commands found in the rest of Scripture - explanations and instructions that pertain to truth, reality, and everything else in life. Many statements found here are either directly quoted, or are alluded to, as apostles and prophets revealed further revelation from God.

This does not mean that every doctrine is fully developed in these chapters. Scripture was given to us *progressively*, with new revelation building upon what was previously revealed. As God revealed further truth (a concept called *progressive revelation*), the various concepts found in these chapters (sometimes directly stated, sometimes implied or just hinted at) were further developed. Truth that was already revealed wasn't nullified or cancelled, but was reaffirmed and built-upon, or sometimes (such as with a promise) fulfilled.

Teachings That Are Introduced in These Chapters

Here are some examples of various foundational teachings and answers to basic questions about life, that originate in these three chapters:

- **About God:** 1) Who he is. 2) His relationship to creation and to humans.
- **About Creation:** 1) How it came into existence. 2) Its original condition. 3) The reason that decay and death now exist.
- **About Humans:** 1) How humans - male and female - came into existence, and the significance of this fact. 2) Why people were created; the purpose for their existence. 3) The relationship between humans and the rest of creation; the difference between humans and animals. 4) The relationship between male and female - especially husband and wife; the significance of this relationship, and the effects that sin has had on it. 5) The definition of marriage. 6) The significance of nakedness - before and after sin entered the world.

- **About Sin:** 1) How it originated; whose fault it is. 2) Its seriousness. 3) The reason for pain, sorrow, death and decay. 4) How sin affected all of creation. 5) Its effect on human nature.

Teachings That Start Here, but Are Further Developed at a Later Time

Most of the above concepts are directly stated. Yet there are other concepts that are only implied, or which are present in a rudimentary form - just a basic "starting point" for what would be more fully introduced later. We see some examples of this in the events of chapter 3: Though the immediate focus is on what occurred when sin first entered the world, there was more significance to what happened, than just the immediate event. Various concepts and promises which are expressed in this chapter are later expanded and developed, as more of God's Word became revealed. Adam and Eve probably realized that these events had far-reaching implications, though they wouldn't have understood their full significance.

One of the terms that illustrates this is the word "offspring" (or "seed") in verse 15. Though, at first, there may have been a greater focus on Eve's immediate "offspring," (her children and perhaps the struggle that would occur on a spiritual level), various concepts that grow out of this verse are also implied - culminating in the ultimate conflict between one specific "offspring" (Jesus Christ) and Satan. These additional aspects of the promise, though growing out of these verses, would not be fully understood until they were further explained at a later time. Symbolically, we could compare it to a small seedling that would grow and eventually mature into a fully-developed tree.

Here are some of the implied concepts - introduced in these chapters (sometimes vaguely), but more fully developed at a later date: 1) Our need to trust God and to accept what he says as true. 2) The concept of "rest" from one's daily activities and devotion to God. 3) The concept of sacrifice and atonement. 4) The struggle between the righteous and unrighteous "seeds" - including a specific "seed" who would one day come, known today as Jesus Christ. 5) The promise of a future hope. 6) Judgment and the "end times" - specifically, a "conclusion" to the conflict. 7) The existence of spiritual forces, including evil spiritual forces.

Using These Chapters to Teach about Other Truths: Parallels and Symbolism

There are many instances in which God *designed* physical and non-physical entities to *parallel* each other, so that the one would illustrate or teach us about the other. For example, the *physical* union between husband and wife (chapter 2) was designed to illustrate the *non-physical* oneness that was also to exist. Such parallel concepts were created together, and *both* aspects are important. We need to pay attention to the physical entity and learn from it, so that we will better understand the non-physical entity.

Scripture also uses facts and events in a *symbolic* way, to explain new or difficult-to-understand concepts. For example, the "light" and "darkness," mentioned in Genesis 1, can be used symbolically to teach a number of different concepts. It is important to realize that a *symbolic* use of such facts and events, developed at a later time, does not mean that the original usage of those words is also symbolic! The symbolism *builds on* the physical or historical reality; it doesn't *define* it.

What about Our Unanswered Questions?

The early chapters of Genesis give us just about all we know about the early world - not only before sin entered the world, but after it did, up to the time of the earth's destruction by the global flood. We tend to have a lot of questions and speculation about various things during this part of the world's history. Yet we are given very little information about it - only a few chapters and an occasional reference found elsewhere in Scripture.

We should be content to realize that, as with the rest of Scripture, God has given us what we *need* to know, rather than what we *want* to know. We can find out the answers to any other questions we may have, in eternity (if we really care to ask). We have what we need for life and godliness - and that is all we *need* to know!