



Script of The Eden Podcast Episode 4. Genesis 3:1-13, Attack and Responses, by Bruce C. E. Fleming

Intro:

Welcome to The Eden Podcast where we think again about the Bible on women and men and we start with a correct understanding of what happened in the Garden of Eden back in the beginning.

I'm Bruce C. E. Fleming, Founder of the Tru316 Project and a former Academic Dean and Professor of Practical Theology.

The focus of this episode is:

Genesis 3:1-13, One Attack and Two Responses in Eden

Let's get started.

Body:

One day my professor took all of us who were his doctoral students on a walk over to the magnificent cathedral in Strasbourg, France. There arching over the giant right portal is a series of figures carved in stone standing out from the façade. The figure on the very end is holding out a piece of fruit in her hand.

"This is Eve," our professor said with his thick Alsatian accent. "See! She is holding out an apple and has a smile on her face. She has been standing like this for 700 years."

He motioned to us to step up close and look behind her. We were shocked to see stone snakes imbedded in her shoulders, writhing down her back! The professor commented, "This shows what the sculptor thought of her motivation. He thought she was the Temptress. In front she looks beguiling. But in back she shows signs that she is in league with the serpent!"

This medieval idea is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible says the Tempter in the Garden was the serpent. That is why God cursed the serpent Tempter. And that is one of the reasons why, when we look for a curse on the woman in the Hebrew text, we find none.

Let's think more about that serpent-tempter. He perpetrated the second worst crime in history and also the worst crime in history!

The 2nd worst crime in all history was Satan's murderous attack on the humans in the Garden of Eden. The worst crime in all history was Satan's murderous attack on the sinless second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, which resulted in his crucifixion at Calvary.

According to Jesus in John 8:44, the Devil has been a murderer since the beginning. He attacked the first woman and man in order to bring about their deaths and he succeeded. Later, he attacked the offspring of the woman, Jesus on the cross.

Did he succeed with that? The Bible says he managed to strike the heel of Jesus, so to speak. But that Jesus would crush his head.

Let's dig deeper.

When Satan spoke to Jesus and tempted him at the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus answered Satan. Jesus knew he was speaking to Satan. To do so was not sin.

Eve answered Satan too when he spoke to her. When he made an outrageous claim about God's word, she corrected him.

Some people blame the woman for dialoguing with the Devil. Ahh. But that was part of his deceptive attack. The angel Satan had hidden himself using the serpent as a mask.

Had he appeared in the Garden as himself, the most glorious of all the angels, he could have said to her, "I am a godlike creature am I not? My will is the opposite of your creator, your heavenly Father. I say eat the fruit that God has prohibited. Follow my words and not those other words." That would have been honest. That would have been fair.

We learn something right away about Satan. In addition to calling him a murderer from the beginning, Jesus also called him the Father of Lies. Satan began his criminal acts with his masquerade using the serpent. Then he startled the two humans in the Garden with his outrageous suggestion that God had prohibited them from eating of any of the trees in the Garden. His words are found in Genesis 3:1.

Satan was an equal opportunity tempter. He tempted both the woman and the man. The Hebrew text in Genesis 3:1-5 shows him using plural pronouns each time he says "you." In other words, he wasn't aiming his words at just the woman. He was saying you-two, y'all, you-both. And the man was right there listening to all he said.

When the woman defended God's words, Satan made a more frontal attack denying the truth of God's words. In Genesis 3:4 he says, You won't die. Then, in verse 5, he attacks more than God's words. He attacks God and again twists the truth! He denies they were really made in God's image and likeness. He makes a counter offer. Eat this fruit and then you will be like God. He pretends to offer her good knowledge. What he really is offering is for her to know good and evil!

What a pack of lies! Having never heard a lie before she turns to her senses for help. Well, the fruit should be good for food. It looks good. Knowledge is good. So she takes the fruit and eats it and offers some to the man who was with her. So what did she do?

What she did stands out in comparison with the man who also ate. Her intent and motives show up in sharp contrast with the man's motives and intent.

Twice in the New Testament we read that she was deceived. Not so for the man. He was different. Perhaps because he wasn't in the middle of Satan's torrent of words as she was, the man was able to look on, so to speak, and evaluate for himself just what was being offered.

Satan camouflaged as an animal was asking the woman to eat something ... good. Satan rebelliously lying about God and setting himself up in the place of God, following his own will, really acted as a model for the man to follow. One modern translation of John 8:44 has Jesus calling Satan the Father of ... Liars." When I read this I began to think of who might have been Satan's first lying offspring. Who would be his first lying child in this way? And then I asked was Satan successful in birthing in the man the seed of a lying heart?

We can get distracted by the fun facts of what happens next. But we should defend against that. The man and the woman end up making fig leaf aprons for themselves. In far back regions of the rainforest I've seen people clothing themselves in simple coverings like that. They make no great fashion statement but it gets the work done. A string of twisted grasses here, tied to a leaf or piece of bark there and voila.

We learn much more of what is in the heart of the first woman and the first man when they speak to God who comes and questions them about what they have done.

After eating, they both knew good and evil. They saw past their nakedness and were ashamed. Their eyes had been opened but not in a desirable way. Their actions showed terrible changes had happened to their one-flesh unity with each other and to their friendship with God.

They used leaves to try to cover themselves from each other! And when God approached, they ran the other way and tried to hide themselves from God! How sad!

When God called, as recorded in Genesis 3:8-12, the man answered as if the woman wasn't there at all. He spoke only of himself: "I heard" - "I was afraid" - "I was naked" - "I hid." It is not like he was used to thinking only of himself. He had not been alone for so very long on the Day they were created. His normal state was together with his wife, as a member of the first family. So why this focus on himself?

Prompting the man by asking pointed questions God asked the man to reveal two facts, "Who told you...?" and "Did you eat...?" The man's evil response revealed many things about him.

There had been three at the Tree. Two of them, the man and Satan-in-the-serpent, were rebels against God's word. But the man didn't tell God about the strange voice that told them to eat. He didn't report what evil lies it had said.

Think about it. God asked, Who told you that you were naked. The answer should have been, Well, actually nobody told me about that. But there was a strange voice at the Tree that told me something. It said you were not good and we could get further than you had brought us.

But the man didn't refer to that voice - at all. Instead, the man disobediently did a new evil deed. He blamed both God and the woman as being responsible for the evil he himself had done! He said, "The woman you put here to be with me, she gave me some fruit from the Tree, and I ate it."

God's warning to not eat from that Tree had been deadly serious. The penalty for disobedience was death! The results of death and evil had only begun to show themselves in the man.

God asked the woman, as recorded in Genesis 3:13, "What have you done?" She answered God with no deflection. She answered God with no accusation. She spoke in a very different way from the man.

She was deceived no longer. Perhaps as she heard God question the man it all became clear to her. At any rate, now she saw what had happened. In her new wisdom, she recognized evil and said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

In that reply, she unmasked the evil serpent as the source of her deception. And she confessed to the evil she did while deceived - "and I ate."

Had she just committed more evil like the man had just done? No. Did she blame the man who was with her? No. Did she accuse God? No. Yet what the Bible tells us about her is not the way she is often presented. And this misrepresentation of her has been going on for a long time.

What if what happened next took place in a courtroom. Picture God as the judge and the woman and the man as the accused. How should God judge each of them?

People are always judging or misjudging who did what in the Garden of Eden. We can gain insight into what happened there by thinking about the differences between 1st degree and 2nd-degree offenders.

The Father of Lies deceived the woman. After she was deceived, the woman took some fruit and took a bite. She gave some to the man who was right there with her and he took a bite. Two bites! These bites were not taken in the same way.

Because the woman ate only after being deceived, she was a 2nd-degree offender. Because the man was not deceived but ate anyway, he was a 1st-degree offender. He sinned on purpose.

There is a clear distinction drawn between first- and second-degree sinning in the Bible. God makes that distinction in the judgement of the three that comes next in the Garden of Eden. And God does so at other times later in history.

When the people of Israel occupied the Promised Land, God set apart six Cities of Refuge. These were for those who had killed people but were not first-degree, pre-meditated murderers. They were punished. They had to flee their homes to escape the avengers and live in a City of Refuge. But, they were spared swift execution which was reserved for those who had willingly committed 1st-degree murder. So there was a distinction in how punishment was meted out for those who killed another person. On-purpose, or premeditated 1st-degree murder received a death sentence. Unplanned or 2nd-degree murder received a lighter sentence. The intent of a person's heart was taken into account by God in Israel and in Eden.

In Eden, each one took a bite. But, their levels of disobedience were different. What was going on in each one's heart was not the same.

Because all of us have been tricked by someone's lies at one point or another what happened at the Tree in the Garden of Eden makes us uncomfortable. When it comes to seeing Satan's outright hostility we shudder and want to turn away. That fits somebody's plan. I'm sure Satan was glad not to be mentioned by the man. And the deceiver Satan doesn't want us to clearly identify him as the source of his ungodly attacks on us in the spiritual realm.

But God sees all of it clearly. And God next judges each of the three at the Tree with perfect justice. God wants us to see clearly too. That's why it is important to think again about the Bible and get a true picture of what happened in the Garden of Eden.

Close:

I invite you to visit our website at Tru316.com for links to our books and our YouTube Channel with more than a dozen in-depth Workshops on the 7 key Bible passages on women and men from Eden on.

You can also receive a study guide on this episode for use in small groups and more. You can find it in the blog posts on Tru316.com or write me at Bruce@Tru316.com. And thanks for listening to The Eden Podcast!