

Read Genesis 3:1-5

v1 The original text of the Bible didn't have verse numbers, nor was it broken down into chapters. Scribes and translators added those in the 1500s AD to make referencing it easier. As such, part of reading the Bible in context (an important topic discussed in earlier lessons) is realizing that there isn't always a pause or break between the ideas of one [verse/chapter] and the next...they may be part of a continuous chain of thought.

Chapter 2 ended with a comment about Adam and Eve being naked. Chapter 3 opens with a comment about the serpent being crafty...which in Hebrew sounds very similar to the word for "naked." There's a bit of wordplay here that we miss because of language and chapter breaks.

...that's...probably not really a big deal to you, but I needed an excuse to bring up why and when verse numbers were added and what effect it occasionally has on context. Back to the serpent...

Q (v1): Who was this serpent, and how do we know?

Everyone knows the serpent was Satan. But what proof do we have for the ultra-skeptical/detail-oriented? Well, once we hit the all-but-explicit prophecies of Christ killing the serpent in v15, there's little doubt. But we also have verses like Revelation 12:9 and many many other references to Satan's character that match what we see the serpent doing here.

As some background information on our enemy:

Satan = adversary

Devil = accuser/slanderer

Lucifer = day star (bright star, Latin name for planet Venus, there's a *ton* of really cool science and history involved with Venus that you should look up some time if you have any interest in science or why the planet was such a big deal to ancient cultures)

The Bible says that, among other things, he is a deceiver and the father of murder and lies (*Rev 12:9, Jn 8:44*). He sneaks in and causes division and strife (*Mt 7:15, 1 Pet 5:8*)...as Adam and Eve's marriage will soon find out.

From what we can infer from Scripture (little is explicit), Satan was originally an angel (*2 Cor 11:14*) of immense beauty who, dependent on words that are difficult to translate, was created to worship (*Ez 28:11*). However, pride caused him to seek to take the position of God (*Is 14:13*) and lead a rebellion with a third of God's angels (*Rev 12:4*). This attempted coup was crushed by God, and Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven...some, including Satan, to earth (*Luke 10:18*) and some to prison (*2 Peter 2:4*). All of them are destined, without exception, for eternal damnation (*Rev 20:10*).

We don't have time to go into it here, but the Bible clearly states (book of Job, etc) that even running amok on earth, Satan and his fallen angels (demons) are still leashed by God. They cannot do anything without His permission and are often helping move His plans along, blinded by their rage and ultimate helplessness.

On a related note and getting back to v1, it's likely that God had placed similar restrictions on Satan here. He was unable to harm Adam and Eve directly and so he sought alternate means to ruin God's day (except we already know God planned for this through Christ...remember from previous lessons and that *Luke 10:18* reference that Christ was present before time began.)

Was Satan inhabiting the body of a serpent, or was he disguised as one? We don't know, and it doesn't really matter. Interestingly, though, neither Adam nor Eve appear surprised that an animal was speaking to them. This has led some to speculate that the animal kingdom could originally talk before sin ruined everything.

Q (v1): Speaking of the father of lies, how does Satan introduce himself?

He doesn't. No "Pleased to meet you." No "Can you guess my name?" He jumps immediately to deception and casting doubt on God's Word. Sound familiar? Another big point about Satan: he has a limited set of tricks and uses them over and over again. You'll notice he has done the exact same thing every day of every year throughout the world in religion, science, politics etc: "Did God really say...? Surely, He actually meant...There's no way that rule still applies today...We're smarter than that now...You deserve better" etc.

Q (v1): What word does Satan use when referring to God?

How does that compare to most of the other references in Genesis so far?

"God" is Elohim, which just means god, judge or ruler. We capitalize the 'G' to indicate the one true God.

"LORD" (all capitalized, usually in a special font, as shown to the left) is Yahweh/Jehovah, God's "personal" covenant name, as far as humans are concerned. Don't confuse this with:

"Lord", which is Adonai, a literal lord, ruler or master.

Satan appears to have intentionally left off God's proper name or title...just referring to him as "oh you know...that god guy." This is like intentionally calling your physician "mister" or a police officer "hey you." It's a snide remark. Kids today (who should get off my lawn) would say it's "throwing shade."

v3 God never said that they couldn't touch that tree. It's possible that Eve is fibbing, but it's also possible that Adam & Eve made it a rule to avoid temptation (we could learn from this when separating ourselves from unavoidable things that tempt us).

v4 Satan is either telling a boldface lie (i.e., calling God the liar) or he's telling a half-truth. That is, Adam and Eve really wouldn't die...immediately. However, a half-truth with the intent to deceive is still a no-no.

Q (v5): In tempting Eve to sin, Satan appealed to her _____.

Pride. What Satan was saying was, "God's holding out on you. He has secret knowledge and freedoms that you should also have." This was the exact same sin that caused Satan to fall. Further, the lure of hidden knowledge is still a problem for humans today (see any cult or "secret order" or bit of apocrypha etc. In the NT times, it was called gnosticism).

Read Genesis 3:6-13

v6a puts us in the helpless position of watching this tragedy occur, step by step. But it also reminds us of our mindset when we choose to sin...we give sin an inch, and it takes a mile and before we know it, we're in up to our necks.

Q (v6a): Looking back at the good trees in Genesis 2:9, what was so different here?

Not much. She just wanted something different. Sin does this. Even when we're perfectly content, it finds a way to lure us into wanting something else.

Q (v6b): So wait, where was Adam this whole time?

Right next to her! Silent. Just going along with it. We'll get into this a little later.

v7 If you ever wanted to know where the cliché of covering private parts with leaves comes from, here it is. We also see how Adam and Eve’s relationship immediately suffers...they now experience shame (due to vanity, pride, etc). The openness they had to one another at the end of chapter 2 is now lost. Their relationship is broken.

v8 And now their relationship with God is broken, too. They fear their Creator, Provider and Parent. The openness they had with God is also lost.

Q (v9-11): Did God really not know where His kids were and what they were doing?

No, just as we do as parents or pet owners, we ask our wards rhetorical or pointed questions to start dialog and give them to the opportunity to think/feel/respond appropriately. God had the right to wipe them out on the spot. Yet He wanted to salvage the relationship with the children He still loved.

Q (v12-13): In these verses, Adam and Eve played the first _____ game. Whose fault was it really?

When confronted with their sin, the guilty Adam blames Eve, then God. Eve blames the serpent. It was ultimately Adam and Eve’s fault (and as we’re going to see, more Adam’s, believe it or not).

Read Genesis 3:14-19

v14 God first directs his judgment on the serpent, who is the recipient of the first curse: to crawl on its belly and have the appearance of eating dust. This has led to another bit of speculation that snakes originally had some other means of locomotion. It’s possible that this may be flight, based upon a few other vague references in Scripture. Once again, if you wanted to know where the idea of winged serpents came from in mythology etc, this is it. But this isn’t really about snakes is it?

v15a While it’s true that man and snake are rarely anything but enemies, there’s more meaning and prophecy here.

Q (v15b): Who or what is the woman’s seed? (Easier question for NKJV readers)

Even in punishing the rebellion of His creation, God promised a seed (“offspring” or descendants”) to Adam and Eve, meaning they’ll still live some time. But as hinted at in the NKJV translation (which capitalizes references to God), Eve’s Seed is a promise of Christ, who ultimately descends from her (*Lk 3:23-38*). *15c* confirms what most of us already know: that Satan would cause harm to Jesus at the cross (metaphorically “striking His heel”), but Jesus would return from the dead to ultimately deliver a deathblow to Satan (metaphorically “crushing his head”). Read *Is 53* for more information.

From the time of *v15* on, Satan has lived on borrowed time. His furious attempts to destroy the followers of Christ and distract the lost have only increased since. He has nothing to lose and will fight to the very end (*Rev 20:7-10*).

v16a Eve is punished, but not actually cursed. Unfortunately, the joy of a mother’s childbirth will now be marred by pain (I know my mother loves reminding me on a regular basis of her 21 hours of labor, ended in vain with a c-section and a scar souvenir!).

v16b The second part of her punishment isn’t very clear in most translations which say that “your desire will be for/towards your husband.” However, in the context of the next part of the verse, “but he will rule over you” indicates that there will now be a power struggle between men and women, husbands and wives.

The ESV translation is clearer: “but your desire will be contrary to your husband.” Women will attempt to dominate men, and men will attempt to act as tyrants over women. Again, sin (and the pride and selfishness inherent to it) has damaged relationships. God made men in charge of women. That’s the natural order of things and it works well when done by His rules...except now it’s a struggle on both sides because of sin.

Remember the picture of the marriage triangle I used last week? God is needed by both husband and wife to overcome this relational hurdle (and all the other conflicting differences between men and women).

v17a The issue with Adam is that he “sinned with eyes wide open.” He was not deceived. He caved to peer pressure. He was given God’s rules personally before Eve was created. He was given authority over all of creation, including his wife. As such, he was held to a higher standard and was accountable for not stopping his ward from disobeying (*). It’s not always “good to be the king”, more often than not, “heavy is the head that wears the crown.” (*Ez 3:16-21, Jm 3:1*)

(*) Biblical commentator Matthew Henry adds, “...men’s frivolous pleas will, in the day of God’s judgment, not only be overruled, but turned against them, and made the grounds of their sentence.”

v17b-18 Just as God did not actually curse Eve, He did not directly curse Adam. The earth becomes the recipient of the second curse instead. Hereafter, Adam’s work will be far less pleasurable as the environment will be against him. No longer will crops effortlessly yield sustenance. No longer will the weather be cooperative.

v19 Finally, death is confirmed. Our originally immortal bodies will now age, become ill, fall apart and perish. (We’ll also be capable of biting our tongues, getting zits on date nights, choking on our own spit and stepping into the corners of furniture!)

It should also be noted that the earth will now age, become ill, fall apart and perish as well.

Read Genesis 3:20-24

Q (v20): Why would Adam give his wife a second name now; specifically one about being a mother?

One would assume it was in acknowledgement of their only hope...the promised children to come from Eve. Through Eve (meaning “to live”) our only hope of everlasting life and reconciliation with God would appear.

v21 Oh right, no longer will animals be our trusted friends, either. Here we see the first animal sacrifice for the purpose of covering Adam and Eve’s sin (represented by their shame in nudity). This had to be an absolutely horrifying experience for a couple that had never experienced the shedding of blood...much more a flaying. This of course foreshadows God sacrificing His Son’s blood to cover our sin.

v22-23 God quickly removed Adam and Eve from the garden, not only as a punishment, but to keep them from the tree that would keep them alive forever in their sinful state. Further, this exile was representative of the relationship they had broken with God...sinful beings cannot remain in His holy presence.

v24 However, the next verse shows that the tree of life remained...granting some hope that we would once again be granted access to it and the God we rejected. This verse also makes the first explicit reference to angels.

Review and Application:

Q: God's creation was originally "good." Who is at fault for its downfall?

Q: Do you now have a better understanding of where sickness, death, natural disasters, war etc come from?

Q: Do you now have a better response (at least in part) for the common question, "If God is good, why is there evil in the world?" or "How can a good God allow something [bad] like this to happen?"

Note: A "good" God's justice demands punishment for sin...and that sword cuts both ways!

Would you be happy if a judge let the murderer of your child or spouse off the hook because he looked sorry? We are the ones who bold-face rebelled against God. We are the ones needing correction and redemption. God owes us nothing. We deserve nothing. The sooner we acknowledge that fact, and then recognize how His justice has been tempered by love (offering unmerited mercy and grace through second and third and fourth chances and the ultimate offer of reconciliation through Christ), the sooner our hearts become more at ease. *cf. Lk 17:7-10*

Q: Can you point out multiple examples of God's patient, merciful and self-sacrificial love in the OT so far?