**Lesson 6**

**12, 13 July 2021**

**Genesis 3:1-24**

**Comments from Chapter 5: *Study with Patience***

* As you read through the chapter on studying with patience, you saw that Bible study requires patience in three areas. We need to patient with ourselves, with the process, and with our life circumstances. We need to be patient with ourselves when we don’t immediately “get it”. As Jen pointed out, we don’t like feeling confused and we don’t like it when we don’t know the “right” answer to a question. And when we feel those things, we either want to give up or look for a shortcut. Jen obviously feels strongly about the use of shortcuts. In her opinion, “using a shortcut is only marginally better than giving up.”
* Whether you agree with that assessment or not, I thought it would be good to give some clarification about when it is good and helpful to go immediately to a commentary or a study Bible for answers and when it is better to wait a bit. When we just need *factual* *information*, such as when we are trying to answer the “archaeological questions” about a text, then by all means use those resources. But if we are striving for *understanding* as we read or study a given text, and we are not sure *how to apply it* to our lives, then we should allow ourselves time to wrestle with the issues. We need to take time to think about it and pray and ask for help from the Holy Spirit, Who was specifically given to guide us into truth. There is a real joy when some truth suddenly “clicks” with our spirit as we seek guidance from the Lord. Those answers are *ours*, and we will retain them forever, while we may soon forget an answer we found in a commentary somewhere.
* As we read about “studying with patience”, we need to remember that patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23), so we can count on His help in cultivating it. And James reminds us that “the testing of your faith produces patience.” I looked up the Greek meaning of the word James used for patience, and found that it means “cheerful or hopeful endurance”. I like that. We can be cheerful even when our faith is being tested by a lack of understanding, because we have the sure hope that God is using that very testing to produce the fruit of the Spirit in us. James goes on to say that not only will it produce that patient endurance, but it will also be used by God to make us mature and complete.
* Last of all, we want to remember that our understanding of the Bible will *grow* the same way that our “mountain of biblical ignorance” *shrinks*: one spoonful at a time. Tom picked up a copy of Elizabeth George’s little devotional, *One-Minute Inspirations for Women*, at one of the book tables at the Fourth of July celebration yesterday. The introduction to her booklet expressed a similar thought. She says, “I pray these devotions for busy women like you will help inspire you to draw nearer to God and live out His plans for you. How is this done? The answer: via *small steps with big results*—living God’s way…one day at a time. Practicing God’s order of priorities for you…one day at a time. Committing the many different areas of your life to God…one day at a time.”

**Comments about the Text: Jen Wilkin, *God of Creation,* Week 5**

Genesis 3 is such a critical chapter in the Bible as a whole. It is important that we look at it in light of what we have already seen in the first two chapters of Genesis where some really big questions were answered for us. We know where everything came from; it came from God. We know that man was created to bring glory to God. This week we want to answer another fundamental question, perhaps the biggest and scariest one thus far: **why is there sin and suffering?** Genesis chapter three is going to show us how everything got to be so broken. This is a question that *everyone*, no matter what their religion—even atheists—must come to terms with. Why is everything the way that it is? For the believer there is another layer to this question that is even more personal and fearful to contemplate: **why does our God *allow* sin and suffering?** It is not as though God didn’t see sin coming. The God who was proclaimed to us in Genesis 1:1 is all-knowing, all-powerful and sovereign, which means that He did not have to let things happen this way…and yet He did.

No one has “THE answer” to this question, but there are some important things that we need to keep in mind as we consider it.

1. We do not mean to imply that evil is good. Evil is NOT good. But it must *ultimately* be for God’s glory and our good, or evil would not exist. We do not want to make light of suffering, but we do want to put it in an eternal perspective. We cannot understand how evil can ever be for God’s glory, but…
2. We can trust God. If God is who He says He is, in particular that He is infinitely good, then we must trust Him to bring good out of our suffering and the evil we face around us. God holds ALL knowledge; we do not. And so even though we cannot answer the question of why He allows evil to exist satisfactorily at this time, we can trust Him and affirm that He is good. We know that one day we will be able to look back on all of this and say, “I see it now.”

But this is a tough question, and we must constantly remind ourselves that God always does what is best, even if at this moment we cannot see how that could possibly be true.

**Genesis 3:1-7** – We are immediately introduced to the serpent, who, as most of you know, is the Devil. In John 8:44 Jesus describes him as “deceiving from the beginning.” Notice how he makes his approach to Eve. He asks her, “Did God *actually* say that you shall not eat of ANY tree in the garden?” In modern vernacular he would say, “Seriously? Are you kidding me?” In so doing, he is casting doubt on the truthfulness of God. Eve responds by saying that God had said that they could eat fruit from the trees, but they could not eat from the one in the center of the garden and could not even *touch* it. When she says this, she is *overstating* the case—God had not said that—and revealing a hyper-awareness of that particular tree. But in her next statement, she *understates* what God had said. She quotes God as saying, “…lest you die,” when God had actually said, “You will **surely** die.”

Satan counters with a direct lie: “You shall not surely die.” So in this brief dialogue we have seen adding to the truth, diminishing the truth, and now a flat contradiction of the truth. And once this progression gets going, Satan goes on to say, “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Is that true? Yes, it is—at least partially. Adam and Eve *are* going to have an awareness of their own sin, and they *are* going to understand good and evil in a way that they didn’t prior to their disobedience. But will they be like God? No! They are finite and limited. Only God is able to fully hold all knowledge of good and evil.

So Satan has used a partial truth to achieve his ends. He does what the best liars always do: he doesn’t flat out lie, but he mixes just enough falsehood with the truth to cause great harm. **Any time someone decides to misuse God’s Word, they will follow this pattern. They will add to it or diminish it or directly contradict it.** That is the “recipe” for false teaching and false reading of the Scripture.

* **Adding to the Word** – This is what the legalist does. This is what the Pharisees did. They created a whole set of additional laws that were very burdensome, and these “extras” became an absolute lie.
* **Diminishing God’s Word** – This will lead to license and heedless, loose living. People will excuse all kinds of God’s commands, saying, “Well, yeah, the Bible does say that, but it’s okay if I ignore it. After all, I’m not a murderer and what I’m doing isn’t that bad.”
* **Flatly Denying God’s Word** – When someone outright denies God’s Word—a bold step—they rely on a willing listener to take it in.

Sadly, Eve was that “willing listener”. Satan had implied that God was withholding something good from her, and she believed it. Then she followed **the common pattern of sin**: she SAW the fruit, she WANTED the fruit, she TOOK the fruit, and she ATE the fruit. It is an outside-to-inside progression. This is an anti-gospel pattern. We think that if we just take in “external thing x”, it will change us or fix or help us. But the gospel says that true change begins in the heart. Then the change of heart works its way out to what our hands are doing. What Eve did is the opposite of the way the gospel works, and it is the lie that our culture believes: if we can just fix the outside, then we will fix the inside.

So Eve looks at the fruit, and she saw that it was *practical*, i.e. it would feed her. It was beautiful to look at, and it was beneficial. But even though the fruit was practical, beautiful and beneficial, it was not necessary and it was not allowed. Often we scold ourselves when we want something we shouldn’t have. But there is a step that precedes the wanting, and that is *looking* at it. How many desire-enhancing sources do we invite into our lives? The problem is that desire is inflamed by *seeing*.

But what about Adam? Eve has spread her sin by inviting Adam to join her. In fact, she actually hands some of the fruit to him. Why didn’t he decline it? After all, he was the one who actually heard God say that they were not to eat the fruit of that particular tree. He has watched Eve pluck the fruit, take a bite . . . but she does not die. Adam apparently thought that God was lying about death. But was He? No. The moment Eve took a bite, she was surely dying. (Just as a branch cut off from a tree is dead, even though it may still look fresh and green. Dying takes time.)

What do Adam and Eve do when they start feeling the shame of their nakedness? They construct flimsy garments of foliage to try to cover it up. And that is what we do, too. When we sin and then start feeling the shame of it, we try to cover it up with flimsy acts of “righteousness”.

**Genesis 3:8-13** – The Lord God was walking in the garden, the protected place, the sanctuary. He was “God with them” in that garden. But instead of running to greet Him, Adam and Eve hid themselves, hoping He wouldn’t notice them. So He initiates a dialogue with Adam by asking, “Adam, where are you?” He wants to draw Adam to repentance. But instead of confessing his sin, Adam tries to sidestep the issue by saying that he was afraid because he was naked. So God gives him another chance to confess by asking him, “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” And instead of confessing, Adam blames God for his wrong doing: “The woman YOU gave me caused me to do it.” Eve heard what Adam said, and for the first time, she fears him. So when God asks her what she has done (i.e. gives her a chance to confess), she blames the serpent.

**Genesis 3:14-15** – At this point, God turns to the serpent, but notice that He does NOT ask the serpent what he has done. He does not give the serpent the opportunity to confess and repent as He had done with Adam and Eve. Why? Because **there is NO redemption for the serpent!** God pronounces sentence on him and says, “You shall eat dust all the days of your life.” This was not just a low position, it was humiliating. From now on he will lead a life of humiliation and despair. And it meant that he would perish. (We get our expression “so-and-so bit the dust” as a colloquialism for dying from this passage of Scripture.)

Then God says “I will put enmity (ill will, hatred, mutual antagonism) between you and the woman…” He is creating a new thing. The serpent had already expressed enmity toward the woman, by tempting her to sin. But now the woman will feel enmity toward the serpent. She will no longer regard him as a potential friend, but she will do everything she can to produce an offspring that will kill him. So the gospel is being revealed right here in Genesis 3. Though the woman was the one who reached for the forbidden fruit, it will be through the woman that the chosen Seed (Christ) comes, the One who will deliver us from sin and death. And notice that this first proclamation of the gospel comes *immediately* after the sin. God cannot wait to say, “I will make provision.”

**Genesis 3:16** – God now turns to Eve and says, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.” This is so much more than just the physical pain in giving birth. Think of who Eve’s first child will be: Cain. She will give birth to the first murderer and suffer the pain of losing her second son because of him. She had been charged to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, but now, as a result of the fall, fulfilling this command will be a frustrating, difficult thing for her. And whereas God had specified that the “two shall become one flesh”, now her desire will be for her husband, and he will rule over her. The two of them had been created to be co-laborers, they were to collaborate in their work together. But now, instead of collaboration, there will be competition. Each of them will try to dominate the other, and instead of partnering together to advance the Kingdom, they will live in an adversarial relationship.

**Genesis 3:17-19** – God tells Adam that there will be consequences because he listened to the voice of his wife and disobeyed God’s direct command. God was *not* saying that men should never listen to their wives. What He is saying is that Adam was wrong in listening to someone else, instead of heeding what God had told him. So now the ground will be cursed because of him, which means that his ability to joyfully work the ground and keep the garden will be subverted. In essence, God tells Adam that he was formed from the dust, he will work the dust, and then he will return to the dust.

**Genesis 3:20** – Adam’s response to all that God has said to is touching and encouraging. He immediately gives his wife a hope-filled name. He names her “Eve”, which means “life-giving”. She has brought death, but now she will bring life and from her will come One who will give eternal life.

**Genesis 3:21-24** – “God made garments of skins and clothed them.” Notice that animals had to die to provide these garments. God provided the very FIRST sacrifice to cover our shame, and God will provide the LAST sacrifice that will remove our sin completely. And then God expresses His concern that man may eat from the tree of life and be trapped eternally in a state of sin, so He takes steps to prevent that from ever happening. God sends Adam out of the garden—out of the sanctuary, where there was peace and communion and “God with us”—to work the ground from which he was taken. In fact, God *drove* him out. Adam and Eve had to be driven from the garden because they understood exactly what they were losing. They must have been clinging and trying to hang onto what they had, but they were forcibly removed. And then God places a strong guard to prevent them from sneaking back inside. **God defends His holiness**, even when we do not.

So there is a sanctuary guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword. Does that sound like anything else you have read about? When the tabernacle was built (in Moses’ day), a design of cherubim was worked into the curtains of the eastern gate. (See Exodus 26.) Cherubim were also pictured on the thick veil that hung between the holy place and the Holy of Holies, the veil that shielded the children of Israel from the shekinah glory of God. When Jesus Christ came to earth, Paul referred to him as “the new Adam” (Romans 5:12-18). He is the one who comes and does what the first Adam could not do. The first Adam gives physical life to the human race, and the second Adam gives eternal life to the human race. The first Adam was given dominion over the earth, and the second Adam was given dominion over all things. The first Adam is given a bride after being put into a deep sleep and brought back to consciousness. The second Adam is laid in the ground in the sleep of death and, raised to life, is given the bride of the Church. The first Adam endures a pivotal testing, and he fails; the second Adam endures a pivotal testing and is perfectly obedient, obedient even to death on a cross. In the garden of Eden there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and at the cross of Christ the knowledge of good and evil was displayed as never before when the perfect goodness of Christ was born down to the dust by the wickedness of man. It was a tree that separated us from the presence of God, and it is a “tree” that restores us to the presence of God. On the day that Christ was crucified, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom, showing that the cherubim no longer guard the way to God. Revelation 22:1-3 give us a word picture of the New Jerusalem. There we see that the gates of the city are thrown open wide to us because of the finished work of Christ.

Much was lost in the garden. Some has been regained for us. We have access to God, and we enjoy some of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. But we still endure the war with sin. The first Adam literally *inhaled* the breath of God and came to life. The New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, *exhales* the Spirit of God, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We should live like we believe this is true; we should live with an eye toward Eden returning to earth. How precious becomes the life and death of the One promised in Genesis chapter three!

**TAKE AWAYS:**

*Lesson 3 of Bible Study Fellowship’s course on Genesis contained some comments that I thought were good “take aways” for this week.*

* “The damage inflicted by sin cannot be overstated. Sin brought sorrow and death into what God had designed for joy and life.The sin in the garden infected *every gene* of *every human* and *every relationship* in *every age*.” (page 3)
* “The brokenness of people and society reflects the loss suffered in Eden. Praise God that Genesis 3 is not the end of the story. Sin *never* gets the final word. God has the final word…Only Jesus can restore what sin cost and lost. God covers our sin with Jesus’ perfection. **When God looks at a believer, He sees only the righteousness of His own Son.**” (page 4)
* Humanity’s death penalty manifests itself in five primary ways. (page 5)
1. **Spiritual death** – broken peace with God (Genesis 3:8-1, Ephesians 2:1)
2. **Physical death** – broken peace with self (Genesis 3:19)
3. **Relational death** – broken peace with others (Genesis 3:16)
4. **Covenantal death** – broken peace in relation to God’s blessing (Genesis 3:14-19)
5. **Cosmic death** – broken peace across all creation (Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:20-23)