

This Changes Everything

Genesis 3: 1 – 8ⁱ

Everything was Very Good

In Genesis 1, verse 31 through chapter 2, verse 3, Moses wrote:

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. ¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. Genesis 1:31 – 2:3 (ESV)

So, for one brief shining moment (to borrow a phrase from Broadway), the heavens and the earth—the universe and everything in it—existed in perfect harmony with itself and with the God who created all things. Adam, the first man, and Eve, the woman who had been created from his side, knew their Creator and honored Him, living in obedience to His commands. Their relationship to God, to creation, and to one another was completely unmarked by sin and by the shame that rightly accompanies it.

We cannot, of course, even imagine a world in which everything is very good because that would be like someone who has only ever seen in black and white trying to imagine the concept of colors, or maybe like one of those fish who lives in the blackness and cold five miles deep in the ocean trying to imagine the concept of air and light. There is no frame of reference. There is no adequate analogy. We cannot press our fallen and broken imaginations into service to let us see a world that did not include fallen and broken imaginations.

By way of example, consider the final verse of Genesis chapter 2:

²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:25 (ESV)

Have you ever noticed that outside of certain so-called works of art, when people (especially Christian people) create a visual representation of Adam and Eve in the garden we strategically position trees and shrubs to make it less obvious that they were “dressed in His righteousness alone” so to speak. That’s not because they were ashamed of their nakedness; they were not. It’s because sin has so infected us that when we try to imagine the world in which they lived, we experience shame ourselves (or, at the very least, embarrassment).

In spite of our reaction, we can believe that everything was very good, because God not only saw that it was so, He said that it was so. And that’s where we plant our flag throughout this discussion. When God speaks by His spirit through the word, we need to hear and believe what He says. So, for some period of time after the sixth day of creation (we don’t know how long), all things continued in this state which God described through Moses as very good.

The Tempter

Which brings us to chapter 3, verse 1:

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

Now, before someone objects, “You can’t really believe in a talking serpent...” let me just say, yes, I absolutely do. Why? Because God’s word says that a beast, described here as “the serpent”,

...said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

Having said that, I do not believe in the talking serpent of renaissance art—a common if large snake as we know them today, probably coiled around the branch of the tree in question and speaking with a lisp like Sir Hiss in the cartoon version of Robin Hood. Again, we cannot assume that the world before the fall of man was just like this world, and we shouldn’t try to go behind or beyond what is written. All we really know of the serpent here is that it was not a creature who slithered around on its belly—that was part of the curse that God pronounced on creation as a result of the fall. Genesis 3, verse 14:

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.” Genesis 3:14 (ESV)

We also know, from this passage taken in context with the rest of Scripture, that the serpent in Genesis 3 was merely a host, in some sense, for another power. Revelation, chapter 12 speaks of

⁹ ...the great dragon...that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world... Revelation 12:9 (ESV)

and Revelation 20 uses similar language, so, the serpent here is a physical form taken in some way by Satan in order to interact with the woman in the temptation.

Temptation and Fall

Of course, we talked about this last fall when we focussed for a time on our ancient foe, but notice again that in Genesis chapter 1 we have heard God speaking over and over, and then in chapter 2, we heard Adam speaking, declaring on behalf of the human race,

²³ ...“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:23–24 (ESV)

Now, in chapter 3, Satan enters the discussion, speaking through the serpent and saying to the woman in verse 1:

¹ ...“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

Now, what God actually said was not only more positive, but also more forceful. Genesis 2, verses 16 and 17:

¹⁶ And the **LORD God...**

(that’s important)

commanded the man, saying, “**You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,**

(every tree less one, that is),

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16–17 (ESV)

So, even in prohibiting the one tree, God puts the emphasis on all the others that were available, presumably even the tree of life. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will carry a significant consequence, but with the entire garden before them, why focus on that. Satan, on the other hand, wants Eve to consider not what has been granted, but what has been denied, and he also wants her to question even that.

¹ ...the serpent...said to the woman, “**Did God** [not, the Lord God] **actually say**, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

So, “the Lord God” is now merely “God”, and the command has become more of a guideline, and then, the serpent flat out denies the Word of the living God, saying:

⁴ ... “**You will not surely die.** ⁵ For [elohim] knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like [elohim], knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4–5 (ESV)

And it’s at that point that Eve starts judging the matter for herself. Verse 6:

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

This is what the Apostle Paul was describing in Romans, chapter 1, when he said,

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:21–23 (ESV)

And this was the fall of man. They couldn’t claim not to know God. They did. Evidently He walked with them in the garden in the cool of the day. They knew God. They just didn’t honor Him as God. They made an intellectual construct of the Lord God, and after pushing Him to a distance, they wondered if their God might really be lying to them and denying them joy, satisfaction, beauty, and knowledge. It’s like they were thinking, “Surely a loving God wouldn’t deny us all the best that this world has to offer, and if He would, then who need’s Him.” They became futile in their thinking, and (I believe) even before they took the first bite, their foolish hearts were darkened.

All that Is In the World

This has been the strategy of Satan all through history. John, the Apostle wrote:

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. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the **desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life**—is not from the Father but is from the world. ^{1 John 2:15–16 (ESV)}

And isn't this what our first parents saw in the fruit of the tree?

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [**the desires of the flesh**], and that it was a delight to the eyes [**the desires of the eyes**], and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise [**the pride of life**], she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ^{Genesis 3:6 (ESV)}

So, caught between competing truth claims—the command of God and the lie of Satan—and with no objective method for testing those claims, the man and the woman decided to just do what they thought would best please them, instead of doing what God had commanded. They chose to love this world, and the things in this world, instead of loving and obeying God. The fall into sin truly was (and is) that simple, and (as we'll see in coming weeks, if the Lord is willing) this changes everything.

This Changes Everything

It changed their relationship to God. Verse 8:

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ^{Genesis 3:8 (ESV)}

But even before that, it had already changed their relationship to one another. At the end of chapter 2,

²⁵ ...the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed... ^{Genesis 2:25 (ESV)}

but now,

⁷ ...the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths... ^{Genesis 3:7 (ESV)}

a clear indication that shame has come into the world; and with shame, fear. Verse 9:

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ^{Genesis 3:9–10 (ESV)}

So, man's relationship to God, man's relationship to himself, man's relationship to others, and—as we'll see later on—even man's relationship to the planet, all of this was changed by the fall into sin. The world that is—the world that we know—is not the world that was, for

¹² ...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread

to all men because all sinned... Romans 5:12 (ESV)

The harmony that once existed between creation and its Creator has been broken as it says in Romans 8, verses 20 – 22:

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. Romans 8:19–22 (ESV)

In other words, sin—the fall of man—changed everything, not just for man, but for the creation itself, and restoration will not come through human progress in science, technology, and government. That which was broken by human effort cannot be fixed by human effort. We cannot even imagine the world that was, much less restore it, and in our idolatrous attempts, I think we often make matters worse.

Jesus is the Answer

But, in verses 14 and 15 of Genesis 3 we get our first glimpse of the answer.

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Genesis 3:14–15 (ESV)

It's called the protoevangelium, and it's the first promise found in Scripture of the coming of Jesus our Redeemer. In the very moment of humanity's fall—a fall which consisted of listening to the voice of the adversary and rejecting the Word of God—the Lord God spoke once more promising life to the dead and calling things which did not exist as though they did. At the very moment when it seemed that sin, rebellion, and darkness would overwhelm God's good creation, grace abounded still more. In the very moment when the creation was subjected to futility, the Creator Himself offered hope through His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

If the Lord is willing, I'll speak more on this in the weeks to come, but for today let me end with the promise as spoken in one of the texts we've looked at a couple times already in our study of creation. Colossians 1, verses 15 – 20:

¹⁵ He [**Jesus**] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:15–20 (ESV)

This is the promise of God to all who believe, and God always keeps His promises. He always has, and He always will.

i All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).