

# The Book of Genesis

## Lesson 6

### *Chapter 3*

Genesis chapter 3 describes the event that led to man's first sin and his expulsion from the garden. We do not know how long the couple remained sinless in the garden because the Bible does not indicate a length of time except for Adam's task of naming all the animals and the age of Adam at the birth of his third son.

In this passage, sin was introduced into the sinless world by a serpent who already knew about sin! If sin did not yet exist, how did the serpent know about evil and sin? Animals cannot sin because they do not have the capacity to know and communicate sinful thoughts. Animals live by instinct which is not sinful. Of all the earthly creatures, only humans have the ability to sin. Of all the heavenly creatures, all angels had the ability to sin! But on earth, Adam and his wife were sinless; yet, they had the ability to sin by transgressing the command of the LORD and eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Was evil created before Adam? The answer is most definitely yes. The ability to know evil and sin was created when God established the heavens. At this point in God's story to man, He had not revealed when sin had transpired in heaven prior to that of Adam and Eve, but later in the Bible, the story is revealed in 2 Corinthians 11:3, Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:2 concerning the sinful snake, the old serpent, the dragon we know as Satan. Rebellion against God began in heaven with Satan and he was followed by many angels who chose to sin with him. Could sin be imported into the sinless world where Adam and his wife live? It did not need to be because He had placed that possibility in the world by planting the tree. Did Adam have the ability to sin? Yes. Did he know he could sin? No. Even though he had the ability to sin because of the presence of the forbidden tree, he really did not know about sin and the evil angel could only tempt Adam and his wife to sin. Adam and his wife had to choose to sin.

#### **Crafty Serpent**

**Genesis 3:1a Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.**

This specific serpent "was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." This passage is not a reference to all the serpents that the LORD made because serpents were not created with the ability to communicate with humans; however, this one had that capacity. He was "more crafty" because he was not a normal serpent; he was possessed by a spiritual being capable of controlling him.

We must not miss the point that this crafty serpent was called a beast; he was an animal that survived by eating the flesh of other animals.<sup>30</sup> Adam named this animal *nachash* meaning *hiss* because of the sound that it made.

### **Serpent Says No Tree**

**Genesis 3:1b** **And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"**

Literally, the serpent asked the female, “Is it true that God has said, ‘You are not to eat of any tree of the garden’?” Was he asking the question because he did not know the answer? No! He was apparently asking the question because he was trying to discover what the female knew about God’s instruction to Adam prior to her creation. She did not hear the instruction directly; she had heard the words only as Adam had conveyed them to her.

### **Woman Says All but the One in the Middle**

**Genesis 3:2** **And the woman said to the serpent, " From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup> but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'"**

The original instruction to Adam is found in Genesis 2:16-17 and says, "**From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.**" In her reply to the serpent she misquoted the original words from God to Adam when she added, “or touch it.” Touching the tree was not a problem; ingesting the fruit from the tree was the prohibition. But the serpent did not bother with the female’s mistake; he directed his next question to the last phrase that God did say.

### **Serpent Doubts**

**Genesis 3:4** **And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

“**You surely shall not die!**” replied the serpent to the female. Much has been made by commentators about the word “surely,” stating that the serpent misled the female by adding that word to the LORD’s instruction. It is not an accurate translation because the word “surely” is not in the original. A better English translation can be found in Young’s Literal Translation, “Dying, you do not die.” The Hebrew words are actually, “Die not die.” We want to conclude that the serpent was indicating that she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit by saying, “surely you will not die,” but the serpent’s original words merely made a statement that caused doubt in

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<sup>30</sup> See notes on Genesis 1:25 of this study.

her mind concerning the reality of a possibility of death. We must ask the logical question here, "Was death a concept or reality that the female understood?" The next logical questions are, "how did she know about death and had she ever seen anything die?" Remember that she was speaking with a beast named by Adam because of his hiss. He was a flesh eater. In order to survive as a snake, he had had to eat the flesh of another animal. All flesh eating animals were made to survive by eating flesh even from the beginning. Therefore, it was reasonable to conclude that Eve had witnessed the death of animals by these beasts. What she had not seen was the death of a human. We must not put any emphasis on the word "surely" as many commentators do; rather, it is more likely that the serpent was saying, "Do you really think you will die?"

What is more important is what the serpent added to his reply, "**For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" The serpent was more cunning than all the other beasts of the field because he knew about the difference between good and evil and he knew that by eating from the tree, her eyes would be opened to see the difference between good and evil. He knew that she would not die a physical death immediately; he knew that she would learn about evil and that knowledge would allow her to know what God knows about evil and she would begin to do evil things that would ultimately lead to physical death; he knew God's eternal plan for those who do evil and that included physical death. How do we know that? By his own words, the serpent exposed the fact that he knew about evil. Neither Adam nor Eve knew about evil because it had not begun in Eden at this point in the story, but we can be assured that evil existed for two reasons. First, evil existed because the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had been planted by the LORD in the garden. Second, evil existed because the serpent understood evil and was able to use it to tempt Eve. Eve's eyes did not need to be opened to see all that was good; the serpent was tempting her to allow her own eyes to be opened to all the evil that already existed in the LORD's creation. The serpent was attempting to lead Eve astray from all that was godly and good. Paul references his attempt in comparing the serpent's interaction with Eve with the attempts of false teachers to lead the Corinthians Christians astray.

**2 Corinthians 11:1-4** I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of *devotion* to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully

The old serpent, the dragon, Satan, had done all he could do to cause Eve to sin; he could not make her sin, she had to do that on her own; he could only suggest to Eve that she would not die by eating the forbidden fruit and he sweetened the temptation by suggesting that her eyes would

be opened and she could be like God. The serpent did not have the authority to make her sin, and that is true for every human that has ever lived. Even today, only through cunning craftiness is he able to tempt a person to commit an act of sin.

Would she be like God when she ate of the forbidden fruit? No! She would not be all-knowing like God; she would only expand her knowledge to include those things that are evil. Eating the forbidden fruit would turn on the instinct in Adam and Eve to know the difference between good and evil.

### **Woman Desires**

**Genesis 3:6a 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 desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate;**

As the female looked at the tree, the fruit must have met all the qualifications set by the LORD concerning their food resources established in Genesis 1:29. Furthermore, had the fruit of the tree not met the qualifications for human food, why would the LORD forbid them to eat of that one certain tree? Its fruit looked no different from all the rest. Why could that fruit not be eaten? So it is with sin. On the surface, most sinful things seem harmless. To the innocent mind, why is something sinful and something else not? The fruits of all the trees looked the same and they were all a “delight to the eyes” and desirable. The difference with this tree and its fruit was she knew from the words of Adam that it was off-limits and that the moment she ate from the tree, she would gain knowledge concerning things she knew nothing about the moment before. Once the act was consummated, sin could never be undone. The line had been crossed and there was no turning back. The serpent had completed his task. We can only wonder if he stayed around to watch the show. She took the fruit and she ate! She had been deceived by the serpent.

### **Husband Disobeys**

**Genesis 3:6b and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.**

It is not enough that she sinned; she sought to include Adam in the sin. Were her eyes opened to instinctively know sin before Adam ate the forbidden fruit? If she did, it is not indicated in this passage; however, we must notice that she did not die immediately from eating the fruit. We have to wonder what Adam thought when she brought him the fruit. He had heard the words of the LORD directly; he knew the fruit was forbidden; he must have wondered why she was not dead. She gave the fruit to Adam and he ate! He was disobedient to the LORD.

### **Eyes Opened**

**Genesis 3:7a Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked;**

After they had both eaten the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened. By instinct, the first thing they noted was their nakedness. For the first time, they were uncomfortable with each other and their bodies. Was their nakedness a sin? No! But it was the first thing they noticed in response to their new unhappy state of mind; they were alike in this new mindset.

We must not miss the very nature of sin and how we were created as indicated in this passage. Once we sin, we should immediately feel shame for what we have done; we should immediately know that what we have done is wrong and a sin against God; we should immediately seek a remedy for that sin. The question is, “Do we seek God’s help for the remedy or do we try to cover up the sin by our own actions?”

### **Cover Made**

**Genesis 3:7b they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.**

Adam and Eve were ashamed of their act of disobedience to the LORD and although their naked bodies were not sinful, their new instinctual knowledge of the sinful acts that can be done by the body became paramount in their minds. They did not humble themselves before the LORD as they should have; they did what every sinful human after them will do; they sought a solution on their own, without the LORD, and they would specifically use fig leaves to hide their sin. Several different kinds of trees are called fig trees throughout the Bible. The most common is a variety we are accustomed to in the United States. However, the second most common variety is one that resembles a sycamore that grew in Egypt and Israel, one of such stoutness that Zacchaeus was able to climb into it during the life of Jesus. The first had large rough leaves but little strength in its branches. The latter had small leaves but strong branches. It is most likely that the first was used by Adam and Eve because leaves were large and the branches were flexible enough to sew or weave, into a covering for their private parts. The word “loin” indicates that it was a belt around their waist that allowed the leaves to hang down and cover that with which they were uncomfortable. This passage indicates that the parts of their bodies that they were uncomfortable with were those that were different, one specifically male and one specifically female, both being in the loin area.

The LORD knew that the couple had sinned because nothing happens that He does not see. He could have immediately struck them dead had He desired. Even had He not desired to strike them dead, He could have punished them immediately in some way. The LORD’s action at this point in the Genesis story shows us how He reacted to their sin. Since that time, the LORD has not changed how He deals with sin in human life! What did He do after the couple sinned? He waited! Why did God wait? He wanted to give them time to either seek Him because of their sin or try to cover up their sin without Him. He waited to see what they would do! Nothing has changed. The LORD will always wait to see what we will do to remedy the sin that we have just

committed. Will we immediately turn to Him for forgiveness or will we commit another sin in our attempt to hide the previous one?

### **Lord Walking**

**Genesis 3:8a And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,**

This verse seems to indicate that the LORD was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Why would the LORD be walking in the garden without the couple? A literal translation of the Hebrew helps to clarify the action of the LORD. “They heard the sound of the LORD God coming into the garden with the wind that day.” The LORD was not just walking in the garden, He was coming into the garden and His entrance caused a wind to blow through the garden. This passage does not in any way indicate the time of day for this event. It does introduce one way the LORD often makes His physical presence known. In some cases, it is just a breeze as in this passage; in some cases, it is the sound of a whirlwind as with Job; in some cases it is the sound of a mighty rushing wind as on the day of Pentecost.

### **Couple Hide**

**Genesis 3:8b and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**

As the wind began to enter the garden with the entrance of the LORD, Adam and Eve hid from His coming. Before, they did not run to the LORD; this time, they ran from Him. It is an all too often response of sinners to the convicting work of God; they hid.

### **Lord Calls**

**Genesis 3:9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"**

The English says, "**Where are you?**" In our way of thinking, it seems to indicate that the LORD is not all-knowing. Why would an all-knowing LORD need to ask such a question? It is not a good translation because the Hebrew word means to speak. A better translation would be, "Where utter." In other words, He was saying to Adam and Eve, "Speak to me from where you are."

### **Adam Answers**

**Genesis 3:10 And he said, " I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."**

Adam heard the instruction to speak from where he was hiding and he responded. He did not have to be any nearer to the LORD than where he was; the LORD could hear him from his

hiding place. Adam indicated that he was afraid of the LORD. Why should he be afraid of his Creator? Had he ever been afraid before? This time he was afraid because he was naked. What does being afraid have to do with being naked? Nothing! The problem in this case is that for the first time Adam knew that he was naked. Something had changed in Adam's knowledge. He was not like he was before; he was not like he should have remained had he followed the LORD's command; he was different because for the first time in his life he knew about evil.

### **Lord Questions Adam**

**Genesis 3:11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"**

Immediately the LORD identified the problem, "**Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?**" Could someone have told Adam that he was naked? Yes! Any of the LORD's angels could have delivered that message to him, but they were loyal to the LORD and would never do so unless they were instructed. Another group that could have told him was the fallen angels whom we call demons. Any of them could have delivered the message to this innocent man; nevertheless, no one had told them they were naked. One of the demons enticed Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit and she gave it to Adam and their eating ignited the natural instinct of evil that the forbidden tree delivered. "Have you eaten," the LORD asked. He knew! The LORD always knows. Another sin will immediately follow with Adam's answer.

### **Adam Defers to Wife**

**Genesis 3:12 And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."**

Adam did not accept responsibility for his sin; therefore, he sinned again by blaming his disobedience on the LORD for giving him the female and on the female for giving him the fruit. Adam was just doing what his gift from the LORD asked him to do, he ate the meal that she provided. Notice that he sinned twice in his answer, once blaming the LORD and once blaming his wife.

### **Lord Questions the Wife**

**Genesis 3:13a Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"**

It is just as proper to translate the Hebrew of "**What is this you have done?**" as "Why have you done this?" Both are correct. In our thinking today, "**What is this you have done?**" causes us to question if the LORD knew what she had done, but that is not the case. He knows everything! The word translated "What" is just as often translated "Why." Had this question been "What have you done?" we would not need to change it to "Why have you done this?" because the two questions render the same result. However, the LORD uses the word *zeh* in the question and that is translated "this" or "here." With the first English translation by William Tyndale in the early

1500s, the way people said, “Why have you done this?” was “What is this you have done?” The question asked for a reason for the action, not a definition. Eve’s answered with a reason, not a definition of the act which reinforces how we should interpret the LORD’s question to her.

## **Wife Blames Serpent**

**Genesis 3:13b And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."**

Adam answered the LORD by blaming Eve and she passed the blame to the serpent. It was his fault. Just as Adam sinned in his reply, so did Eve. The sin of eating the forbidden fruit was only made worse by their replies to the LORD.

## **Lord Condemns Serpent**

**Genesis 3:14 And the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life;**

The serpent was not without sin in this matter. Eve was right, he was the one who deceived her. He did it purposefully. He knew about evil because he had committed evil in heaven already; he was a sinner with no possibility of redemption. The serpent was guilty; he was not questioned by the LORD about what he had done. He was a sinner in rebellion to the LORD and he was to remain that way as the old serpent, the dragon, Satan.

The actual serpent had been possessed by Satan; therefore, was it the serpent’s fault that Satan used him to deceive the woman? If Satan was the guilty one in this event, why was the serpent being punished? We must not forget that even the innocent parties in a sin are scarred by its occurrence. In this case, the serpent will be more cursed than all the other cattle and beasts of the field. Does that mean all the other cattle and beasts were cursed too? What was their curse? They were part of the food cycle of life and they were to be under the dominion of humans. Here the serpent is going to be cursed more than the cattle and beast. What is the curse? He would go on his belly and eat the dust! The Hebrew word “curse” actually means to speak or be spoken of with disdain. “Cursed are you more than all cattle … every beast of the field,” means that throughout all generations to come, the serpent will be spoken of with dislike and disdain. He already slithered on the ground before this event took place, but now, when people see a serpent, they will remember his part in this sin.

## **Serpent’s Penalty**

**Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

What is enmity? Think of it as hostility. At the LORD's bidding, Eve became hostile to the serpent. He had deceived her and she would never forget it or forgive him. Furthermore, the offspring of the serpent will always be at odds with the offspring of Eve. It continues to this day!

The Scripture, "**He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel,**" would be almost impossible to interpret if it were not for Paul. In Romans 16:20 he says, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." The seed of Eve, the LORD Jesus Christ, Who is the God of Peace, will one day bruise or crush Satan on the head, but until that time, Satan will bruise the seed of Eve on the heel. The first is deadly; the second is annoying.

### **Woman's Penalty**

**Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."**

Is this a condemnation on all women throughout all generations? We know about the pain of childbirth and that is not in question. We must ask the question, "Is this penalty on Eve alone or the females that will follow from her seed?" In the previous passage, the penalty was on the seed of Eve and the seed of the serpent, but this passage does not mention the seed of either; therefore, we must conclude that this punishment was for Eve alone and does not pass on to the females that will follow.

The English says, "In pain you shall bring forth children," yet, the original says, "In pain you shall bring forth a son." The LORD was preparing Eve for her first child; it will be a boy and he will enter the world and bring great pain to Eve during his birth as well as with the choices of his life. Eve, would have a longing for Adam and he would need to govern their home and her desires.

### **Adam's Penalty**

**Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.<sup>18</sup> "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field;<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."**

In Adam's penalty we find the fulfillment of the curse of his livelihood and ultimately his death. Because he ate of the forbidden tree, Adam would start the process of dying a little every day. No longer would he dine on the delicious food in the garden, readily available at all times; no longer would he be the executive over all creation, directed to be adored by the mandate of the

Word of God; no longer would he live forever, destined to return to the dust of the ground. From this declaration on, Adam would have to work like he had never worked before. Life's necessities would be provided but not in the same way that they were in the garden. Adam would have to sweat to feed his family!

### **Adam Names Wife**

**Genesis 3:20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.**

Adam had been promised a son, and he would soon be born outside the garden. In the beginning, one of Adam's chores was to name all the animals. How suiting it was that he would give his female the name of "Eve" at this time. "Eve" means life-giver. Soon in the story, Adam would see his son born from the body of his wife and he would recognize her with the appropriate name of life-giver, Eve. She was not the mother of all living animals, but she was the mother of all living humans.

### **Lord Covers Couple**

**Genesis 3:21 And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.**

The penalties for the sins of all the participants had been instilled, but the remedy for the sin had not. No remedy existed for the serpent. Satan had already been removed from his place of power in heaven; the serpent used by Satan would be a reminder for all generations of the sin that it had participated in, but animals do not sin and there was no need for a remedy for him. Only the couple needed a remedy for their sin and the fig leaves were not a suitable covering, so, the LORD made clothes of animal skins for them to wear. Did they actually need clothing? No. Even so, why would the LORD make clothing to replace what they had already prepared? The properly prepared skin of an animal would last much longer than the leaves of the fig tree. But that does not answer the question. The moment Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their instinct caused them to recognize their differences as male and female. The LORD could have removed their fig leaf garments and instructed them to live on as they had before, but part of their penalty was to be reminded of their original sin of disobedience to the LORD. Therefore, He formed a more permanent covering that would protect them from all the elements but would sting, stick and bite but would also be a constant reminder of their sin. As we know, Adam and Eve will pass on their knowledge of clothing to their seed and it has continued throughout all time. Why do humans wear clothing to this day? To cover the differences between males and females.

### **Lord Removes Couple**

**Genesis 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the**

**tree of life, and eat, and live forever" -- <sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.**

On the sixth day of creation, the LORD had placed two special trees in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of the first, they could eat all that they desired; of the second, they were not to touch. The first provided eternal life with each bite; the second enlightened man in all matters of good and evil and promised death. Once Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a death penalty loomed over their lives authorized by the LORD. In God's plan, the fruit from the tree of life was a remedy that could eternally overcome the LORD's death penalty. Notice that the whole council and essence of God is involved in this process when the LORD says, "the man has become like one of Us." Adam and Eve are not gods and will never become gods because they are mere creatures made by the LORD God; yet, after eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve had instinctively obtained an understanding of what the LORD considered good and what He considered evil. Prior to eating the forbidden fruit, the couple knew only about good; after eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, the couple knew about all the evil that the LORD had created and was labeled as evil by Him. Because the LORD is all-knowing, this occurrence had to be part of His eternal plan. Why would He place the forbidden tree in their presence if it was not part of His plan? Adam and Eve were created by God, they walked with Him in the garden, He provided for their every need, He chose them and they had no choice. In His plan He wanted His creation to choose Him, to worship Him of their own free will. To accomplish that goal He planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in their presence and brought attention to it by commanding that its fruit cannot be eaten without a penalty of death. For some period they obeyed, but in His plan, they eventually failed and ate of the fruit. Together, the LORD God with God the Father and God the Spirit acknowledge that they had obtained the knowledge of evil and together They enacted the rest of Their plan by removing them from the opportunity to eat of the good and powerful tree of life. After the couple was removed from the garden, Adam was directly instructed to cultivate the dirt from which he was made.

### **Cherubim Guard Tree of Life**

**Genesis 3:24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.**

Common theology teaches that the entire garden in Eden was hidden from man, but that is not what the Scripture indicates. Only the tree of life was guarded by the cherubim. At first glance we might think that only one cherubim was guarding the tree, but cherubim is plural and it indicates more than one. A single angel is a cherub; therefore, the wording in this passage indicates that the LORD placed several angels around the tree to guard it from Adam, Eve and all the generations that will follow.