

AM Genesis 3 The Creator Rejected!

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the Word of God in the Old Testament in the book of Genesis chapter 3. Reading from the beginning of the chapter.

Genesis chapter 3 from the beginning. Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the snake, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.

But God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. And you must not touch it or you will die. You will not certainly die, the snake said to the woman.

For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God. Knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye.

[1 : 08] And also desirable for gaining wisdom. She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her. And he ate it.

And the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. And the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God called to the man, where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked so I hid.

And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done? And the woman said, the snake deceived me and I ate. So the Lord God said to the snake, because you have done this, curse the dew above all livestock and all wild animals.

[2 : 26] You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

To the woman he said, I will make your pains and childbearing very severe. With painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

To Adam he said, because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return.

[3 : 29] Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, the man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.

He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

And after he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim and the flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Amen. And may God add his blessing to the reading of his word. Let us pray. Our gracious Father, as we bow in your presence, may your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. I always remember reading in one of the first books published in the UK by Francis Schaeffer, a footnote that said, if you don't understand the first three chapters of Genesis, you don't understand the rest of the Bible at all.

[4 : 59] You don't understand the first three chapters of Genesis, you don't understand the Gospel. And I want to look particularly at chapter 3 this morning with you, which we read together.

Remember Genesis chapter 1 sets before us God as the creator of the heavens and the earth.

Chapter 2, how he provides for Adam and Eve in the garden.

And then as we come into chapter 3, we find how the creator is rejected. Chapter 3, the story of the fall of man into sin.

We live in a fallen world. That is beyond debate. Sin and death stalk human life. Every news broadcast, every newspaper, is testimony to the reality of a sinful world.

A world of lies and of hate and of broken relationships. A world of greed and crime and lust and death. And people might ask, why is the world this way?

[6 : 17] Well, Genesis chapter 3 tells us why the world is the way that it is. As we come into this chapter this morning, one or two quotations that I quite like.

First of all, from Mark Twain. He said, man is the only animal that blushes or needs to. And so we come to the reality of sin introduced to us in these first six verses of this chapter.

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard said, Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin. Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin.

John Bunyan said, Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, and the contempt of his love.

The reality of sin. And sin comes to us in subtle temptation. There can be something within us, or outside us, that tempts us from without peer pressure, temptation of an image, pressure of a godless culture, can allure us down the road of sin before we know what is happening.

[7 : 52] And we read in chapter 3 here how the serpent is crafty and subtle. We always need to remember that Satan is no comic figure with horns and a three-pronged spear.

And that the way into sin is to misrepresent God and misrepresent what God has said. And that is done with subtlety.

I want just to pick out some of that in this passage. Do you notice the use of the name of God? In verse 1, Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say? Now up to here, the word for God has been the covenant name of God.

The God of love and intimacy. But the serpent uses a general term for God.

[8 : 57] And so the serpent uses that general name and draws Eve away from seeing God as the covenant partner of love. And so our understanding, perhaps, of the creator is subtly shifted from God as this one who wants to be in covenant loving relationship to God just in a general, perhaps, abstract way.

And of course the serpent questions what God has said. Back in chapter 2 at verse 16 we read, The Lord God commanded the man you are free to eat from any tree in the garden with the one exception.

But then in chapter 3 verse 1 we are told the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Did God really say?

You must not eat from any tree in the garden. You must not eat from any tree. And so the serpent paints the God of abundant provision as a God of miserly restriction.

And this all feeds in to a distortion of Eve's understanding. Verse 2 and 3 we find how Eve corrects the serpent but she does so in a corrupted way.

[10 : 36] The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden you must not touch it or you will die.

And it's interesting to note that first of all she follows the serpent in using the serpent's name for God. This generalized name for God. Rather than God as the God of loving relationship.

and she quotes from chapter 2 verse 16 but she drops any sense of the any and she adds the extra prohibition regarding touching.

And God never said anything about touching. And so I suggest to you the passage gives us a profound insight into the dynamics of sin.

Eve has distorted her understanding of God in small ways but in a way that denies who God is denies his generosity and misrepresents his words.

[11:51] And so having opened the door to temptation she steps through and we find that the serpent openly now disputes God's words and challenges his motive.

Verse 4 You will not surely die the serpent said to the woman for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

So God says touch eat of this tree not touch God said eat of this tree and you will die. die. The serpent says you will not surely die.

A direct contradiction. But it comes after that subtle pulling of Eve into the situation.

The work of Satan is really outright attack but subtle luring and corruption. I don't know if you've ever read C.S. Lewis a screw tape letters where he envisages correspondence between a senior devil if you like and a junior devil in the field and the senior devil is instructing the junior devil in the field how best to lead their client astray and into sin.

[13:22] And it's all very subtle and seductive and it's interesting that C.S. Lewis was often asked by his publishers to produce more letters and C.S. Lewis refused because he said he found it the easiest book of all the books that he had written to write how to tempt and lure people into sin.

Verse 1 subtle temptation verses 2 and 3 a distorted understanding and 4 and 5 the art of seduction and these small initial steps of verses 1 to 5 are replaced now by the desire and the act of sin.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom she took some and ate it and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it.

So sin is here represented as the saw she took she ate she gave and she and Adam ate again.

And perhaps we note that the temptation had material value it was good for food it had aesthetic value pleasing to the eye it had intellectual value for gaining wisdom what could be wrong with it?

[15:03] Material value aesthetic value intellectual value and all that set above the spiritual value of obedience and so Adam and Eve created in the image of God like God to be in a relationship with God in a foolish attempt in their distorted understanding to become like God become less like God they sin and drag the world into sin with them there's an interesting little book by Horatio Bonner I don't know if some of you may have read this little book it's entitled How Shall I Go to God How Shall I

Go to God and the first paragraph is this it is with our sins that we go to God for we have nothing else to go with that we can call our own this is one of the lessons that we are so slow to learn yet without learning this we cannot take one right step in that which we call our religious life and backing that up with another couple of quotations from first of all from J.C.

Ryle he says I am convinced that the first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realise more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin and John Wesley says this as a very little speck of dust will disorder a clock and the least grain of sand will obscure our sight so the least grain of sin which is upon the heart will hinder its right motion toward God chapter 1 of Genesis tells us of God creating man Genesis 2 depicts man as the dependent creature but chapter 3 sees man as the defiant creature in verse 1 there is the issue of doubt doubting the word of God did God really say verse 2 introduces us to the distortion of God's word as Eve adds that word touch to God's prohibition doubt distortion outright denial verse 4 the serpent says you will not die doubt distortion denial defiance she saw she took she ate doubt did God really say and it is so easy to minimize the seriousness of sin just a little sin doesn't really matter that much doubting that salvation comes by faith alone in the finished work of Christ plus nothing doubt that distortion of God's word

I always remember in my younger days I was born and brought up in Motherwell and the Baha'i movement were quite strong and they were drawing lots of the young people away from the youth fellowships of the churches in the town and a friend and I asked if we could have a meeting with the leaders of the Baha'i and it was interesting how much they quoted the scripture but it was always quoted with a distortion and I can always remember my friend eventually sort of losing his patience and saying look for once finish the quotation because finishing the quotation reversed what the Baha'i were trying to say they were only quoting the little bit that suited them that distortion of God's

word so easily done denial denial that Jesus is the only way to the father denial of Jesus warning about hell and judgment and defiance having doubted and distorted

God's words it is so easy to defy it someone once said sin is self coronation sin is self coronation and so the chapter having introduced us to the steps by which Adam and Eve are led into sin the rest of the chapter is given over to the consequences of sin and the consequences of the sin are of course disease and death and pollution and arguments and crime and I think we can see these consequences of sin as a series of separations or deaths and the word death is closely related to the idea of separation you can look at a vase of flowers and they look lovely in their vase but the flowers are dead because they've been separated from their roots well we see here in this chapter the separation of man from man broken relationships verse 7 the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves the promised pleasure and wisdom turned out to lead only to shame and to guilt their eyes are opened but what they see is something of a let down and the dynamics of sin are pictured well there sin that seems so attractive does not ultimately deliver and so the relaxed intimacy of [22 : 05] Adam and Eve that we read of back in chapter 2 becomes one dominated by shame and further we have the classic it's not my fault Adam does not accept his responsibility and tries to shift the blame onto Eve pushing both God and Eve further away as it were verse 13 12 and 13 the man said the woman you put here with me she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it it's not really my fault God it's partly your fault you put this woman here with me and it's certainly not my fault because it was her that gave me this fruit to eat and then the Lord God said to the woman what is this you have done and the woman said the serpent deceived me and I ate who me wasn't me it was her and when

God turns to Eve no God no it wasn't me it was the serpent and isn't that so true of life today people trying to shift the blame to others not my fault you might want to think of politicians whatever happens it's not my fault somebody else's fault circumstances something that happened in another part of the world but we can be no different not my fault and so we're introduced to broken relationships Adam and Eve blaming one another go into chapter Genesis 4 the next chapter what do we find the story of two brothers falling out

Cain and Abel we go on into chapter 6 and we have a story of hatred and war and greed all begun in this garden separation of man from his fellow man and then a second separation a separation of man from God intimacy verse 8 and 9 the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden but the Lord God called to the man where are you the lovely picture of God walking in the garden shows us what sin does to our relationship with him instead of ease of communication full of shared responsibility and celebration that we find in chapter 2 is now replaced with Adam and Eve seeking to hide from God the trees that were good for food now a hiding place sin breaks the intimacy of our relationship with the Lord God separation of man from God separation of man from himself and I think we see that in two different ways in the passage we see it first of all in man's broken psyche no longer is Adam in psychological and emotional balance verse 10 he answered I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid I was afraid fear had now laid its clammy grip on Adam's heart instead of joy and peace but then separation of man from himself the separation of body and soul physical death a consequence of sin verse 19 by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken for dust you are and to dust you will return disease and death are a consequence of sin not that a specific individual suffers some specific disease because of their specific sin that can possibly be the case and we might think for example in drug related diseases but we are part of a fallen humanity stamped with the curse of the fall and death is one of the consequences of that fall separation of man from his fellow man breakdown in relationship between Adam and Eve separated from God that relationship also broken separation of man from himself body and soul rent asunder in death separation of man from his environment verse 17 to Adam he said because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which

I commanded you you must not eat of it cursed is the ground because of you cursed is the ground because of you sin has an effect on the very fabric of creation it might seem a stretch how does the sin of one person affect everything as it were I will give you an example I find it sort of helpful you can go back to Rhodesia those of you who are old enough to remember Rhodesia and Ian Smith who was the Prime Minister of Rhodesia in Africa declared unilateral declaration of independence

one man's decision but it dragged a whole country into years of misery and death and deprivation separation of man from his environment

[29 : 06] Romans reminds us how the whole of creation groans waiting for its own redemption man made to work in harmony with the world now in a struggle with it in Genesis 2 17 Adam's told that the day that he sins he will die well he doesn't die physically yet he lives many years but nevertheless death has laid its cold hand upon him his relationship with God dead his relationship with Eve dead his relationship with himself psychologically dead his relationship with the world dead and the dust of death was on him and one day body and soul would be separated and it's quite interesting as you go on

Genesis 4 is the story of Cain and Abel and how they fall out with one another this broken relationship and chapter 5 could be called the litany of death it's basically a list of names they lived so long and died they lived so long and died and the refrain running through chapter 5 is and he died and he died and he died separation of man from his fellow man separation of man from God separation of man from himself separation of man from his environment and the last separation I would draw attention to is the separation of the father and the son and a broken Godhead in verse 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers and he will crush your head and you will strike his heel and in verse 21 the

Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them and these two verses envisage the gospel verse 15 is speaking of the battle now to be waged between the son of God the Messiah and Satan verse 21 is speaking of sacrifice for of course animals had to be killed to provide these garments to clothe Adam and Eve and we see the broken Godhead on the cross and that central cry of the cross of our Lord my God my God why have you forsaken me separation of father and son the price of sin and our redemption from sin and so we can look back and understand the root of all our problems is simply sin and that we are part of a fallen humanity but we need to also look around acknowledge that we sin repent of our sin and seek to live more obedient lives to repent and believe that Jesus is indeed the only antidote to sin and to look forward to our Lord coming back to finally resolve all the consequences of sin and establish a new heaven and earth let me read from the last book of the Bible then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband I heard a loud voice from the throne saying now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God he will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and he who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new and then he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true he said to me it is done I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cause from the spring of the water of life and he who overcomes will inherit all this and I will be his God and he will be my son let's pray our father god we thank you for the reminder that the ultimate problem of human life is not governments or economics but sin sin that stalks the hearts of men and women all as a consequence of the fall of Adam and Eve we pray that you would help us to recognize our sin to confess it and to rejoice in the forgiveness that comes through the sacrifice of our Lord upon the cross enduring that separation of father and son for us that we might be reunited with you our father god in Jesus name we pray amen