

# Chapter 3

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’

2 And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day

you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

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## 3:1–6 *Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’*

The Fall of man is just as historical as the preceding two chapters. Without a literal Adam, a literal garden and a literal serpent, there is no reason to believe in a literal Christ, a literal cross and a literal resurrection. The theology of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 in this regard is inescapable. These are real historical events. Redemption in and through Christ and His cross is predicated upon a real historical Fall of man in the garden of Eden. The woman should not have engaged in conversation with the serpent. This was an unnatural occurrence. Animals do not generally talk, and Eve should have sought out Adam, to whom the command not to take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had originally been given. By heeding the serpent she moved away from Adam’s authority over her.

She first *listened* to the serpent’s voice and the questioning of God’s word. The question of the devil, ‘Has God indeed said ...?’ is the first

question in the Bible and shows the devil's nature. John 8:44 says, 'he is a liar and the father of it.'

She then, secondly, *conversed* with the serpent. She is now being drawn into his deceit, for she answers his question in verses 2–3 by restating the command concerning the trees. She should not have conversed with him; Hezekiah explicitly told his people not to answer Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18:36. We note that she adds the phrase 'nor shall you touch it' to God's original words to Adam concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is a tendency of us all to misquote or add to Scripture, which we should not do (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18–19). Having now drawn her into his web of deceit, the serpent now states a defiant and bold lie—'You will not surely die'—in direct contradiction to what God has said to Adam. As Zodhiates states in his commentary, 'Satan did not attempt to explain why they would not die; he merely affirmed it! And he said it so convincingly that Eve believed it.'<sup>1</sup> Then the devil arrogantly dares to suggest a motive for God's stipulation concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: 'For God knows that ... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.' This no doubt alludes to why he himself rebelled against God earlier: he wanted to be like God (Isa. 14:12–13).

Eve's conversing with the serpent brings her to the precipice of disaster, for she now *conceives* evil in her own heart. The seed of the enemy has lingered long enough to germinate in her soul. The progression within the mind is by far the most dangerous part of sin, before the act of disobedience is actually engaged in. Sin begins in the heart, as the Lord states directly in Matthew 15:11: 'what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man'; and the apostle warns us in James 1:15, 'when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.' The thinking of the possibility first germinated in her heart, and then she *looked* and 'saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise'. By the time she looked, she was over the cliff. The seed of evil was doing its work. She *desired*, and she *took*. The devil no longer needed to tempt Adam directly, for he knew Eve would influence her husband to do the same. Adam's sin comes right at the end of verse 6: 'She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.' Paul gives us further

insight in 1 Timothy 2:14: ‘And Adam was not deceived ...’ Adam knew what he was doing, whereas Eve was tricked by the deceit of the devil. Thus from 1 Timothy 2:14 we know that Adam took the fruit wittingly; he knew it was from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he rebelled against God’s command.

3:7 *Then the eyes of both of them were opened.* There was an immediate effect of sin: they suddenly realized their vulnerability. If they had had a covering before (as mentioned above, some have suggested a radiance like that of Christ, Moses and Elijah in Matt. 17 on the mount of transfiguration), it was now gone. If it was not a physical effect before, they certainly were now aware that they were naked. This was physical awareness, but it spoke volumes regarding what had happened spiritually. Genesis 2:17 states, ‘... in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’. Something had died. Death is separation, and their souls, which previously had always had communion with God’s Spirit, were now cut off. Spiritual death had come in (‘dead in trespasses and sins’, Eph. 2:1) immediately. Physical death (separation of soul from body) would come nine hundred or so years later to Adam.

As with all sinners, their first thought was to cover their sin up. They were aware of their physical nakedness. The reality of what the devil had led them into now became all too apparent. The devil will lead man into nakedness spiritually and will often also lead men and women to physical immodesty. Adam and Eve immediately sewed fig leaves together to cover up their sin—but their inward vulnerability and nakedness before God could not be hidden. God knew.

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8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’

10 So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’

11 And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten

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from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

12 Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’

13 And the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’

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**3:8** *Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God.* The first consequence of their sin was that they tried to *cover themselves* with fig leaves. But the next consequence was that they tried to *hide themselves* from the presence of God. We notice that ‘they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden’. Clearly it had been God’s practice to seek out fellowship with Adam and Eve in the cool of each day. This shows two things: firstly, that God’s presence was visible in a body walking in the garden. This is similar to the appearance of God to Abraham in Genesis 18 with two angels, and most commentators would see such as examples of a theophany (pre-incarnation appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ). Secondly, it also shows the close communion that Adam enjoyed with God, and that ‘man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever’.<sup>2</sup>

**3:9** *God called to Adam ... ‘Where are you?’* This is the second question recorded in Genesis. God knew where they were, but He asked the question in order that they might acknowledge their sin. God calls the same question down the centuries to all mankind: ‘Where are you?’ The very fact that God searches us out shows His character. He acts first even though He is the one who has been sinned against. Supremely we see this in His providing the means of redemption and making moves towards us. Romans 5:8 says, ‘While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.’ We therefore see here a perfect example of how we ourselves should act when we have been sinned against. Love does not immediately withdraw communication when sinned against by a friend.

**3:10** *I heard Your voice ... and I was afraid.* The voice of God brings fear to the sinner. This is an important first stage in dealing with sin. There is hope when men and women have a fear of God. Many do not hear the voice of God at all, and heed no warning of impending judgement. Notice that Adam admits he hid himself and that he did this because he was aware of his nakedness.

**3:11** *Have you eaten from the tree?* The question was asked by God, not because He did not know the answer, but again in order that Adam and Eve might admit their guilt. There can be no restitution without confession. We must walk in the light (1 John 1:7) and confess our sins (1 John 1:9).

**3:12** *The woman whom You gave to be with me.* In reply to God's question 'Have you eaten of the tree?' Adam admits that he has done so, but blames Eve ('The woman ... she gave me of the tree') and by implication also blames God ('The woman whom *You* gave', emphasis added). This is grievous indeed as Adam does not take full responsibility for his own sin. By blaming Eve and God he is hating her and God, which is akin to murder (Matt. 5:21–22; 15:19). Adam's Fall was deep and catastrophic.

**3:13** *What is this you have done?* Eve again admits the sin of eating the fruit but blames the serpent and his deception. We notice that God does not ask the serpent 'What have you done?' There is no redemption for the devil and his angels, and no bringing to repentance.

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

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.'

16 To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire

shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'

17 Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.'

20 And Adam called his wife's

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name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand

and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'—

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

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**3:14** *You are cursed more than all cattle ... On your belly you shall go.* The serpent is cursed and is brought to the ground, implying that it was possibly able to walk before. Certainly now the serpent would be in close contact with the ground which the Lord was about to curse.

**3:14** *You shall eat dust all the days of your life.* Snakes constantly lick the dust. They have an organ in the roof of their mouths called the 'Jacobson's organ'. This enables the snake to smell by using its tongue. Using its forked tongue the snake constantly samples bits of dust. Once the tongue is pulled in, it inserts the tips of its forked tongue into the two openings of the Jacobson's organ, where the particles are identified and analysed.<sup>3</sup>

**3:15** *Her Seed ... He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.* This amazing statement right at the beginning, and immediately after the catastrophe of the Fall, is the foundation of all the promises of the Redeemer to come to rescue man. The woman would have a Seed: the virgin birth four thousand years later. This was in mind when Abraham looked by faith to the promise to come and it was counted to him for righteousness (15:6; 22:18; Gal. 3:16). Christ, the Seed of the woman, would bruise the serpent's head, but the serpent would nevertheless bruise His heel.

**3:16** *I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception.* Human childbirth is harder than the bearing of young in the animal kingdom. Until the application of modern medical procedures, many women died in childbirth. Though mammals in the animal kingdom can also die when bearing their young, there is generally greater pain, difficulty and danger in human childbirth. Breech babies or babies across the womb

used to pose a great danger to a woman's life; today, techniques including Caesarean operations are routinely performed to save both mother and child. Every birth is a reminder of what happened at the beginning.

**3:16** *Your desire shall be for your husband.* Whereas before the Fall there was always mutual respect, which meant that Eve naturally could follow Adam's lead, now her desire is (subject to) her husband. A collision of wills is now bound to take place and Adam is to 'rule over' her.

**3:17** *Cursed is the ground for your sake.* Adam was to know difficulty in providing for his wife and family. The ground which previously grew produce with little difficulty was now cursed, and thorns and thistles would throttle plants grown for food. 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread' (v. 19). Sweat speaks of the toil due to the curse, supremely seen on the Saviour's brow shortly after He had grappled with the awesome task of carrying our sin in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44). Man cannot take it easy. It will be hard and difficult for him to get his bread to provide for himself and his family. Note that man himself is *not* cursed. This is in contrast to the serpent, who is cursed.

**3:18** *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.* The ground will be significantly altered. The prevalence of unwanted growth and vegetation that were not part of the original good world emphasizes the effect of man's rebellion on the world and indeed on the whole creation. There is an allusion to the curse in Romans 8:21-22: 'the creature itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.' The creation groans under the curse.

There is evidence that thorns are formed from altered or modified leaves. It is an important issue that thorns are found fossilized in rock supposedly 300 million years old. (These dates are not correct; the rock is in fact flood rock which has buried the thorns.<sup>4</sup>) However, the Bible-believing Christian knows from Genesis 3 that thorns did not exist beforehand, and that the presence of thorns presupposes man's existence. This then immediately shows that creatures like dinosaurs, whose fossils are found higher up, were indeed in existence with man and the animals.

Significantly, thorns would be upon the brow of the Saviour as He took the curse for our sin upon Himself (Matt. 27:29). The day will come when the curse will finally be rolled back (Isa. 11:6-9).

**3:19** *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.* Whereas beforehand the work that Adam did was easy and light, henceforward life would be very difficult and he would be constantly reminded that the ground he was tilling was cursed. His livelihood would now depend on his success. Adam is told he will return to dust. This is the penalty for sin. Adam had already experienced spiritual death (separation); now he and Eve would face physical death (separation of body and spirit).

This is the first mention of the word ‘sweat’, from the Hebrew *zeah*, which describes the effect of violent motion. It is connected to the word translated ‘sweat’ in Ezekiel 44:18, where the priests are told that ‘they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat’. It is significant that the Saviour sweated heavily in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44), such that ‘His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground’—the very ground that the Lord cursed in Genesis 3:17. The imagery and symbolism are powerful both in Genesis and in the Gospels, as having in sweat touched the cursed ground, He then shortly takes the crown of thorns, the symbol of our curse for sin.

**3:19** *For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.* This shows that Adam was made literally from dust and *not* from pre-existing living material. It is a sad fact that when we die, our bodies rot and decay, and go to dust. God is therefore confirming in this sentence that Adam was made literally from dust. There was no pre-existing pre-Adamic race. Adam was made unique and different from all the other animals. He did not appear as *Homo divinus* after a long line of evolutionary development. Even the great John Stott stumbled in not recognizing that this verse does indeed require Adam to have been formed literally from dust.<sup>5</sup>

**3:20** *The mother of all living.* Adam names his wife Eve, literally, ‘life’.

**3:21** *The LORD God made tunics of skin.* This is the first recorded instance of an implied sacrifice, since to have coats made of animal skins it is probable that a goat or lamb was killed; God thus provides a sacrifice symbolic of the Lamb to come, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whereas in Genesis 2:25 they were naked and not ashamed, Adam and Eve now know that they are naked and are ashamed before God (3:7). Clothing was essential, for lust and greed needed to be restrained. The reason for clothing is difficult to justify if we accept the tenets of evolution



and deny the historicity of Genesis. The animals are essentially unclothed, so why shouldn't we be? The ultimate appeal can only be to Genesis 3. It is noteworthy that it is always of the enemy, the devil, to bring confusion and moral degradation by unclothing men and women. An example is the disaster of the worship at the golden calf in Exodus 32 (see particularly vv. 6 and 22).

**3:22** *Lest he ... take also of the tree of life ... and live forever.* Man is denied the eating of the tree of life. Before the Fall, the tree of life would have kept him alive for ever. Now he is denied it. Lest evil men and women live a long time and cause extended vice and brutality, God disallows them access to the tree of life. Dictators and evil people in every generation, though powerful, are limited by death. Death comes now to all. Only through Christ, our Substitute and Saviour, the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6), can we receive back the eternal life we lost in Eden.

**3:23–24** *So He drove out the man.* Adam now has to gain his bread outside Eden, and the cherubim with the flaming sword guard the way back to the tree of life. Only in Revelation 22:2, 14 does the tree of life reappear and become accessible again; it is used for the healing of the nations, with the curse finally removed (Rev. 22:3). Before the Flood, the cherubim and the sword would have been a constant and visible witness of what man had fallen from and of the need for repentance. At the Flood, all that early world was swept away, but the new world has never been without a witness of the prophets. That constant witness to us is now preserved in the Scriptures.

#### Notes

- 1 **Spiros Zodhiates**, *Hebrew–Greek Study Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1986), commentary on Gen. 3:1–7, p. 5.
- 2 **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, answer to question 1: 'What is the chief end of man?'
- 3 See this article about the Jacobson's organ and the curse on the snake: **Gary Vaterlaus**, 'Left in the Dust', *Answers in Genesis*, 6 April 2009, <https://answersingenesis.org/contradictions-in-the-bible/left-in-the-dust/>.
- 4 **Ken Ham**, *Answers Book 4* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2013), p. 18; and see 'Genesis 3 and the Meaning of the Crown of Thorns', *Genesis Apologetics*, 4 April 2015, <http://genesisapologetics.com/genesis-3-and-the-meaning-of-the-crown-of-thorns/>.

5 'But my acceptance of Adam and Eve as historical is not incompatible with my belief that several forms of pre-Adamic "hominid" may have existed for thousands of years previously. These hominids began to advance culturally. They made their cave drawings and buried their dead. It is conceivable that God created Adam out of one of them. You may call them *Homo erectus*. I think you may even call some of them *Homo sapiens*, for these are arbitrary scientific names. But Adam was the first *Homo divinus*, if I may coin a phrase, the first man to whom may be given the Biblical designation "made in the image of God"' (John R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible: Special Edition* (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 2011), p. 43.