

0311

The first gospel

Genesis 2-3

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Announcement

Kari birthday

Text

the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of

Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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.”

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “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.”**

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

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’?” ²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶So 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. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

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. 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.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

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.”

Prayer

Introduction

It can be very hard to imagine life without something once you’re used to it.

Whenever I talk to people who are about to get married, I say “once you get married, you forget you were ever not married.” It’s all-encompassing. It impacts every area of your life.

I think of the total paradigm shift that kids are. Yeah, you know that there was a time when you didn’t have them. But it becomes impossible to imagine life without them. Kids are all-encompassing.

I think of the absolute revolution that the internet has been on the world. Most of human history was lived without the internet. But now it impacts so much of what

we do, how we find information, how we consume information, how we're entertained, how we interact. It's hard to imagine that Pandora's Box being closed.

The Bible begins with God's good creation and we see a world where there is no sin.

And it's hard to even imagine because our world is so greatly impacted by sin. It touches every area of our lives. And so it's hard to imagine what a world without sin would even be like.

It's a short-lived period of the Bible where all is right and as it should be.

In this passage, we'll see a perfect world vividly described in Genesis 2 before seeing the fall of man in chapter 3. It's a paradigm shift. A world that had been made perfect is now sinful.

But we also see, going all the way back to Genesis 3 a glimmer of hope that this fall is not the end of the story. While God's good creation is no longer sinless, God is still good.

At Christmas, we remember the story of the incarnation and the Christ coming into the world. This was to fulfill what the Lord had promised long ago to a world that had fallen.

Bridge

We're continuing in our advent series: Christmas in Genesis. And today, we look at the first telling of the gospel in the Bible. And we'll look at today's passage in three scenes.

Paradise experienced.

Paradise lost.

Paradise promised.

Thesis

And the main idea of today's passage is: from the beginning, Jesus was the hope for a fallen world.

Paradise experienced

Two weeks ago, when we were in chapter 1, our point was that God created a good world because he is good.

In chapter 2, we're seeing what life in that good world looks like.

Verses 8-9:

the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord has made a space for man to dwell.

We see that this garden offers sustenance.

Two trees are mentioned in the passage. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life is mentioned in three books in the entire Bible. Genesis. It's mentioned four times in the book of Proverbs where the tree is associated with wisdom. Finally, it's mentioned in the Book of Revelation and appears again in the new heaven and the new earth at the end of the age.

The tree of life isn't some magical tree.

The tree is a symbol of the divine presence and the true life which is given by God. The tree can be associated with life only because the Lord God is the giver of all life.

There is a second tree. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Various theologians throughout the centuries have tried to interpret what exactly this means.

This knowledge of good and evil seems to be more a reference to moral autonomy¹. It would give man a sense of entitlement over being able to judge what they think is right and wrong.

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, [*The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 165.

And really, that's so much of the crux of humanity's problems today. We think we know better than God. We think we're a greater judge of righteousness than the Lord. But the reality is that we act out of our own self-interest and desire rather than the wisdom of God.

The passage continues to describe this garden.

Verses 10-14 talks about four rivers:

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

We continue to see the abundance and fitness of this land.

Verse 15:

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

The fact that work precedes the fall shows that work is not a bad thing, nor is it a judgment or a result of a divine punishment. Work is good. It exists in a sinless world.

When I've preached on the subject of heaven before, I've argued that there is work in heaven. Not drudgery and frustration and stressful work.

But labors in which there is fulfillment in service. Heaven is not a retirement community for all of eternity.

One command is given. Verses 16-17:

¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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.”

The command is given not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. No explanation is given. Although no explanation is needed either. God is sovereign.

There's much more that could be said. I want to move us to the end of chapter 2 where it leaves us with a picture of Adam and Eve in a perfect place in a world where there is not yet sin.

2:25:

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

All is perfect.

But it's short lived.

We come to our second scene.

Paradise lost

And we come to chapter 3, and we see the fall.

It's a familiar passage in the Bible.

In Genesis 3, we see a paradigm that so often plays itself out in the human heart in regards to our sin. Doubting, distorting, and dismissing God's word.

3:1:

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’?

Did God actually say

It's introducing the idea that God's Word is subject to human judgment and opinion. It's getting at man to question God's word.

But the word will also be distorted.

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?

As a matter of fact, God had not actually said that.

What God actually said in 2:16-17 was:

“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,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.”

He gave all of the trees.

Except one.

And again, we can bristle at that. We can question “well why was that one tree such a big deal?” But I’d argue the better question is “why was it so hard to follow that one command?”

The command gets distorted as if it applies to all of the trees.

Genesis 3:2, Eve responds:

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

So far so good.

Verse 3:

³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

She's also distorting the command. She adds the command that you couldn't eat, or even touch the tree.

Lest you die.

Verse 4, the serpent outright contradicts God.

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

In that, he's calling God a liar.

The serpent flatly contradicts God's word and denies the weight of the consequences of our disobedience.

Continuing to speak in verse 5:

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

He's tempting Eve. Telling her of how good it will be to eat the fruit of this tree.

Now he's already distorted and lied. But here, the serpent is telling a half truth. For indeed, Eve will have a greater insight into good and evil. But it will be in realizing her own sin and moral failure.

And how human that's become?

The fall of man is a remarkable story. It's very dramatic. But the thought processes which lead Eve to sin are so unremarkable and typical of us all.

It's the same justifications and distortions and false promises that we also cling to in order to go our own way and go for what we want and to say "my kingdom come, my will be done."

Verses 6-7, we see the fall of man:

"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. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.

They had been persuaded to eat the fruit with the promise that it would make them like God. Instead, they eat the fruit and start to realize that they're not even truly like each other.

Shame is introduced.

And we also see man's first attempt to cover up their sin. Adam and Eve try to cover themselves up. But they are unable. You cannot hide from an all-knowing God and you cannot cover up your sin.

It's not just about the fruit. That's the final straw.

But what drives them to it? It's not hunger. And besides that, there were lots of other fruit bearing trees. They were in paradise.

It's the sin of pride. Thinking that they know better than God. That underlies so many of our sins. We think that we're smarter. All sins that we knowingly commit are an act of pride.

It's the sin of covetousness. Thinking that we don't have enough. That there are things that God has withheld but that we need to be truly happy, or truly fulfilled, or truly joyful.

We convince ourselves that the sin will be better than the righteousness.

They were in paradise, and that wasn't enough.

And it's a sin of failing to honor the Almighty creator of heaven and earth.

They introduce sin to a world that had known no sin. The Pandora's box is opened.

The sin gets uncovered.

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

We see another attempt to hide. Once again, it proves futile.

Verses 9-11: ‘

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.”¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you
were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to
eat?”

John Sailhammer is helpful on this passage. The Lord isn’t reigning down brimstone and fire. He’s not bringing condemnation. Adam and Eve have the opportunity to confess and come forward with what they’ve done².

God isn’t asking these questions from a lack of knowledge. He’s all-knowing.

But it is through God’s questions that Adam is convicted.

² John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 53–54.

Verse 12, Adam kind of admits it:

¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Between Adam and Eve, we've seen pride, covetousness, hiding.

Now we see blame.

Adam takes no ownership. He blames both Eve and God.

The woman you gave me.

So often, we make excuses for our sins. We blame God, spouses, circumstances, family, lack of resources, etc.

We commit our own sins.

I was watching a video online this week from a person who used to go to church but no longer considered herself religious.

And she said that one of the things which had driven her away from church was this teaching that everyone is sinful.

I thought “Uhh...have you ever met a person?”

We sin. The world is a messed up place. There's so much darkness and dysfunction. And we all know it.

God had promised death for the sin. And ultimately, death does come of it but not immediately. Even that is an act of grace. God would have been justified to wipe out Adam and Eve right there.

But he doesn't.

That brings us to our third scene.

Paradise promised

In verse 14, the Lord begins to pronounce judgment:

¹⁴The 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.**

But then in verse 15, the Lord says something very interesting.

**¹⁵I 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.”**

If the Bible ended at Genesis 3:15, there'd be no way to make sense of that verse.

But this isn't the end of the story.

And it's pointing forward.

There are a number of interesting things about this verse.

Genesis never explicitly identifies the serpent with Satan.

But in light of other passages, we see the connection made.

Revelation 12:9:

the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth

Genesis talks about an offspring of the woman. And that word “offspring” in Hebrew also means “seed.” And that’s typically thought of in masculine terms.

Genealogies in the Bible are based on fatherhood. But Genesis is talking about an offspring of Eve.

Tim Keller argues it's the only time in history where we see someone who's an offspring of a woman³.

Isaiah 7:14 says:

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Jesus would be the offspring of a woman.

Jesus is the only one born in history without earthly father. Divinely conceived of the Holy Spirit. But he does have an earthly mother. It's necessary that Jesus is human, because it's in his humanity that he is like us and able to atone for our sins.

Adam and Eve tried to cover up what they had done. But they could not.

The offspring of the woman could because he is man like us but he is also the Lord.

³ Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

**¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;**

Now who here loves snakes?

Most of us don't. Not really.

Some people do, and that's fine. But most people aren't really snake lovers.

My mom can't even look at a snake on TV.

But the purpose of Genesis 3 is not to give some origin story of a phobia of snakes.

It's instead referring to two groups who will be at odds. The children of Eve and the children of the serpent. It's not about reptiles. It's about God's people against the devil and his minions.

It's plural here.

But then it shifts into the singular.

**he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”**

The first gospel. The first telling of how God will bring redemption. The text points to an ultimate offspring of the woman who will crush Satan.

But it will come at a cost.

Because to crush Satan, the son will be bitten by the snake. Metaphorically.

He'll experience death. That's what it means with his heel being bruised.

But he will crush the serpent.

Because Jesus has died and risen, the future victory is already known.

Romans 16:20 says:

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

In the Bible's closing chapters, we see the final defeat of Satan.

Revelation 20:10 says:

the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

That is the final crushing of the head of the serpent through the offspring of the woman.

It's the defeat of evil. It's the restoration of the perfect.

Closing

The offspring of the woman, promised so long ago came into the world.

The Old Testament will pick up from this promise and teach us about this offspring who is to come.

It's interesting that the very next chapter is Genesis 4. Cain and Abel. We see the continuing decline of a now sinful world.

Abel is a good son but he gets murdered. Cain is not the promised son.

It's through their third son, Seth.

The Lord is working his promise.

We see a continual fall and decline of humanity. The Lord brings judgment on the earth through a flood but he spares one man and his family.

Eventually the Lord calls Abraham and makes his great promises to him. We talked a bit about that a couple weeks ago. From Genesis 12 all the way to Genesis 22, we spend 30 years with Abraham and this continued promise of offspring, then that of a son, then it gets narrowed to a son who will be birthed by Sarah.

Isaac is born and the Lord asks Abraham to sacrifice this son. Unimaginable.

But it points to how the Lord will not spare his son who is still to come. Isaac is a promised son but he's not the ultimate promised son.

Genesis 22:13-14:

Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Isaac fathers Jacob and Esau. Jacob is the one chosen to continue on the family line through which the promise will be fulfilled. Jacob has 12 sons, who become the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel.

The longest story in Genesis revolves around one of those sons. Joseph.

But it's interesting. Because Joseph is not the promised son.

Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, but he's also put in a unique position where he attains a high office in the Egyptian court and is in a position to save his family in a time of famine.

Why is Joseph's story the longest? Is it because it's a great story? It is a great story but that's not the reason. Is it because it shows us God's ability to work evil for good? It does show us that but that's not the reason.

The reason why Joseph's story is almost one quarter of the Book of Genesis is that those actions save his brother Judah. And that's what keeps the line going.

At the end of Jacob's life, he's pronouncing blessings on his sons and he says to Judah:

**⁸“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.**

In Genesis 49:10:

**¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,**

And so in the immediate aftermath of the first sin, we see this promised offspring.

And as Genesis ends, it's taken us from Adam and Eve ultimately to Abraham ultimately to Judah. It's looking forward to what God is doing.

And the rest of the Old Testament will continue to point forward.

Moses pointed to a greater prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15:

¹⁵“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

I think of a book like Ruth. Great story. But the reason why it matters to the Bible is the end when her and Boaz have a son named Obed, the grandfather of King David.

In David's reign, we see more prophetic language. He's a king, but he's not the ultimate king.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 says:

I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The scriptures bear witness to the coming son. He's the coming king, he's the coming priest, and he's the seed of the woman.

the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

God with us.

The Old Testament is the story of God working through people and through nations to bring this child into the world.

Christmas is the time when we celebrate that he has come.

The world is sinful, but that is not the last word.

The word is fallen, but it isn't without hope.

And because Jesus came into the world, we can have hope that the Lord is going to finish what he has promised. That the gospel is not just some quaint story but it's the reality of the divine plan that God is working in real time and space, in human history where the Lord will finally and ultimately crush the serpent and restore his creation to the perfect world that it was created to be.