

JMBC Bible Study #2 Genesis 3 “The Fall of Man”

Some Possible Objectives:

- 1) The student will understand how they were created in the image of God, and appreciate their own value.
- 2) The student will understand the purposes for which God created man, and be able to apply them to themselves.
- 3) The student will understand Satan’s strategy of temptation, and the Christian will be stronger in spiritual warfare.
- 4) The student will understand the curse better, and how Satan will be destroyed in the end (Rev. 12). We need to emphasize hope here.
- 5) Lastly, the student will know that God cared for man even after man’s rebellion, but that he had to put limits on man’s existence.

Resource Materials:

Introduction: Genesis 1 tells the general story of Creation. It begins with summary of all that will happen in Chapter 1, verse 1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This summarizes the whole story to follow. It may or may not include the angels, who were created before the creation of man. Job 38: 4-7 says:

Where were you when I laid the
Earth’s foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions?
Surely you know
Who stretched a measuring line
Across it?
On what were its footings set,
Or who laid its cornerstone—
While the morning stars sang
Together
And all the angels shouted for
Joy?

God has created man in his own image (likeness). Since God is spirit (John 4:24), this does not mean a physical image. But if it isn’t a physical likeness, what is the image.

- A. Some have pointed to Gen. 1: 26 “then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground,” and have said that since God rules over all, the image of God in man is his ability to rule over the earth. This is very similar to the Muslim view that man was created to be God’s vice-regent (ruler) here on earth.
- B. Others have pointed to God’s ability to speak and referring to Genesis 2: 20 “So man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field” suggested that the image is the ability to communicate.
- C. Perhaps the truth includes these points of view and much more. God created man for a relationship. The most important relationship was with God himself, but he also created him for a relationship with woman (other persons) and a relationship with the earth. Man was to “fill the earth and subdue it..to rule over all the other living creatures. The image of God in man made all these relationships possible, the relationship with creation, with woman, and with God himself. The key to this understanding is a later verse, Gen. 5:3 “When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.” Babies do not look like adults (though there are physical similarities); but even the youngest newborn had the ability to relate to his or her parents.

God created man for a relationship with himself and gave man all the abilities (to think, to feel, to reason) that he would need to carry on that relationship. Though Scripture does not directly say it, we know from Hebrews 11 that that relationship was based on faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the rest all live by faith. And when Eve says in Gen 4:1 “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man,”(NIV) we know it is by faith.

The chief of the angels who were created was the angel Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12; “O morning star” NIV). Lucifer has come to be known as Satan from the Jesus’ comment in Luke 10: 18. It was Satan who came as the serpent to attack the faith of Adam and Eve. He does this in three ways:

He first attacks using lies. “He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1) In fact, God had told them that they could eat from all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan knew that the lie would provoke Adam and Eve. He loves to provoke us into doing wrong.

Secondly, Satan created confusion. Eve became confused. Perhaps she had not listened to God very well. Perhaps she was very curious about the fruit. Her response to Satan was that God had said “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.” God did not say exactly this. Eve exaggerate, and is deceived. Satan does tell her half-truths. It was true that they would not physically die that very day. That would not come for hundreds of years later.

Thirdly, Satan created mistrust between man and God. The temptation was an attack on Adam and Eve’s faith. The implication of what Satan said was that God was withholding something good from them, and that they deserved that which God had prohibited. Satan wanted to “steal” their faith, and they let him do it!

They rebelled against the God who had created them. They wanted to be god and to take control of the Garden. The results of this “fall” from faith and obedience was not obvious at first. But they were dramatic. Adam and Eve wore no clothes in the Garden. Apparently they had no need for clothes, and they were not ashamed of their nakedness (Gen. 2:25).

But when they chose to eat of the forbidden fruit, they also chose to make their own decisions about what was right and wrong. They decided that being naked was shameful because they were ashamed of their own guilt. And they hid from God. This was the sign of their spiritual separation from God. They no longer trusted him completely and were afraid. Their sin also created bad feelings between persons, between the man and the woman. The man said “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Both put the blame for their sin on someone, or something else. The woman blamed the serpent “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

These were tragic consequences of man’s sin. But the curse was still to come. In chapter 3, verse 14 God first curses the serpent. He is to crawl on his belly and eat the dust of the earth for his entire existence. His life will be the lowliest of all the animals on earth. But the climax of the curse is still to come God decrees that “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers;” While this could of course refer to the natural hostility that man has to snakes, there seems to be more to this curse than it first appears. The book of Revelation helps to understand the ultimate meaning of this ancient text. It tells us that Satan is the ancient serpent of old ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that *ancient serpent* called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ¹ It also tells us that the son to which the woman gives birth is Christ, who will be victorious over the Devil. “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” ² Chapter 12 of Revelation shows that Satan will be defeated by Christ. Whether, as some have said, this happened at the crucifixion, or it is certain that Satan will be decisively defeated at the end of history. If Christ’s heel was only bruised in the crucifixion, Satan’s head will be crushed beyond all hope.

Now an interesting thing happens. God does not directly curse man and woman. To the woman he says “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (3:16) While some might think of things as a curse, God pronounces them more as a consequence of the fall. Because he has commanded man to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, he does not directly curse man and woman’s relationship or the childbearing that would come from it.

However, God does curse the ground from which man was taken and from which he takes his living. And that has terrible consequences for Adam and Eve. Their work will be painful; thorns and thistles will be constant enemies; Food will come their fields, not from the gracious abundance of fruit trees that they had in the garden. And finally, physical work will end with death because “from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

The story did not end there. God still cared for man, and made “garments of skin for Adam and his wife”. But he could not allow man to remain in the Garden because he might eat of the tree of life and live forever. Thus man was banished to the east, and the way to the Garden of Eden was closed forever.