

## *Genesis Three*

### *The Temptation by the Serpent*

1 And the serpent<sup>1</sup> was more crafty than every animal of the field<sup>2</sup> which Yahweh Elohim had made. And he said to the woman, Is it certainly so that Elohim said, You may not eat of every tree of the garden? <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, <sup>3</sup>but of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, Elohim said, You may not eat of it, and you may not touch it, or you will die.<sup>3</sup>

4 And then<sup>4</sup> the serpent said to the woman, You certainly will not die, <sup>5</sup>because Elohim knows that on the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened,<sup>5</sup> and you will be like Elohim<sup>6</sup>, knowing good and evil.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Act of Disobedience*

6 And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a pleasure for the eyes, and the tree was to be desired to gain wisdom,<sup>8</sup> and she took its fruit, and ate it, and also gave it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Result of the Act*

7 And the eyes of both of them were opened<sup>10</sup>, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed the leaf of the fig tree,<sup>11</sup> and made for themselves waist coverings.

8 And then they heard the sound of Yahweh Elohim, walking<sup>12</sup> in the garden in the cool of the day.<sup>13</sup> And the man and his wife hid themselves among the trees of the garden from the face of Yahweh Elohim. <sup>9</sup>And Yahweh Elohim called to the man, and said to him, Where are you?<sup>14</sup> <sup>10</sup>And he said, I heard your sound in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, and I hid myself.<sup>15</sup>

11 And he said, Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?<sup>16</sup> <sup>12</sup>And Adam said, The woman, whom you gave me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.<sup>17</sup>

13 And Yahweh Elohim said to the woman, What is this you have done?<sup>18</sup> And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Consequences of the Act*

#### *On the Serpent*

14 And Yahweh Elohim said to the serpent,<sup>20</sup> Because you did this, you will be cursed above all livestock, and above every beast of the field. You will go on your belly, and eat dust all the days of your life.<sup>21</sup> <sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.<sup>22</sup> He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.

#### *On the Woman*

16 To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pain in your childbearing; you will bear children in pain, and your desire will be for you husband, and he will rule over you.<sup>23</sup>

#### *On the Man*

17 And to Adam he said, Because you listened to the voice of your wife, and ate from the tree about which I commanded you saying, You must not eat from it, the ground is cursed<sup>24</sup> because of you. You will eat of it by painful toil all the days of your life,<sup>18</sup> and it will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for you were taken from it. For you are dust; and you will return to dust.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Garments of Skin*

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she is the mother of all who live.<sup>26</sup> <sup>21</sup>And Yahweh Elohim made Adam and his wife garments of skin, and dressed them.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Expulsion from the Garden*

22 And Yahweh Elohim said, Behold, mankind has become like one of us, to know good and evil.<sup>28</sup> Now then, he may stretch out his hand, and also take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.<sup>29</sup> <sup>23</sup>Therefore Yahweh Elohim sent him<sup>30</sup> from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.<sup>31</sup> <sup>24</sup>And he drove out Adam, and he settled Cherubim,<sup>32</sup> and the flame of the turning sword to the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life.<sup>33</sup>

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1 שָׂרָף, (*nahash*) the most common word for snake in the OT. Two other words, תַּנִּין (*tanin*) and שָׂרָף (*saraf*), are also translated *serpent*, or *snake*. *Tanin*, a singular noun, has been confused with *tanim*, the plural noun meaning *jackel*. *Saraf* actually means *fiery* or *burning* and also refers to a class of spirit beings called, in English, *saraphim*.

In this case, the reference is to Satan, the devil (see Rev 20:2). Some believe this was an actual snake, controlled by Satan. Others believe that it is a Mosaic metaphor for the fallen spirit being. The most likely is that it was a serpent controlled by Satan because it is described as a beast of the field. In either case, it is the devil who deceived Eve.

2 Technically, any living thing of the field, hence any beast.

3 Did Eve add to God's requirement as it is generally so taught? In fact, we do not know what Adam told Eve, for it was he who received the initial revelation. It seems unlikely in her *pre-lapse state* (theology-speak meaning *before the fall of man*) that she would deliberately misrepresent the revelation.

4 *Vav* consecutive, indicating a continuation. See Yates and Owens, pg. 104.

5 Metaphorically speaking.

6 Some versions translate *Elohim* as *gods*, which cannot be the meaning in this context.

7 Satan's lie is compounded by the implied imperfection of God. The statement, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" implies that God knew evil by experience, the same way He knew good. Actually, the first couple came to know *about* good and evil just as God does. See 3:22, note.

8 By false analogy, this passage is thought by some (I was taught this fallacy in Bible Institute) to teach the same truth as 1 John 2:15-16, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world."

However, two passages are not parallel. Genesis 3 identifies a temptation by Satan, while 1 John 2 teaches the content of the world system, a system not yet in existence at the time of this Satanic attack. Furthermore, the three-fold statement of Genesis does not reflect the 3-fold statement of 1 John, which is referring to the material produced by the world, not the appetite of the woman.

One must bend the words out their meanings: 1) to make *she saw the fruit was good for food* identical in kind to *the lust of the flesh*, 2) to make *that it was a pleasure for the eyes* identical to *the lust of the eyes*, and 3) to make the *tree being desired to gain wisdom* identical to the *pride of life*.

Finally, it must be remembered that while the woman acted unrighteously, *she did not sin!* To make unrighteous acts and sin acts identical is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. Also sin, which is a willful violation of a known requirement according to both Paul and John, is not what happened here. According to Paul (and to Eve herself, vs. 13), the woman was deceived and therefore did not sin willfully. She was not held accountable for an act of sin, but Adam was. For he was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14) and knowingly violated God's direct statement. Since Adam was not deceived, he therefore committed a sin. It was, according to Paul, the woman, who was deceived "was in transgression."

Transgression (παράβασις) is a violation of a legal code, whether willfully, or ignorantly. Ignorant transgression is not a sin. And sin is not a "transgression of the law," although the KJV wrongly so translates 1 John 3:4. Correctly translated, 1 John 3:4 says, "Whoever performs sin (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν) also performs lawlessness (καὶ ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ), and the previously mentioned sin is the previously mentioned lawlessness (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία)." (An expanded translation by the author.) Lawlessness (ἀνομία) ignores the law, and willfully violates it.

So, we conclude that Satan deceived Eve, and she acted based on her own lack of experience. Had Adam not willfully sinned, the fall could not have happened at that time.

9 It was this act by Adam that was the first act of sin. Paul states that from Adam to Moses no sin was imputed because there was no law (Romans 12:5-14). Adam's law, *do not eat of the forbidden tree's fruit*, was followed by no more *forensic law of God* until the Mosaic law was introduced. Hence, doctrinally no transgression took place, man violated no law of God, and God charged no sin to any man's account.

10 This common figure of speech is ancient. As people do today, Moses used the figure of eyes being opened to refer to realization.

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- 11 That the couple sewed leaves together is sometimes thought to represent self-effort for salvation. This is simply not so. The reason for sewing fig leaves together was shame because they realized their nakedness. The sewing of fig leaves is sometimes contrasted with God providing covering from animal skins for them. See the note on vs. 21 for a discussion of this issue.
- 12 From the term *walking*, it's clear that God had taken human form temporarily. That there was a physical presence of Yahweh Elohim in the garden, presumably moving toward the couple, is confirmed by the fact that Adam heard the sound of Yahweh walking. This is a *theophany*, an appearance of God in human form.
- 13 There could have been no discomfort from overheating at that time. The *cool of the day* probably means *toward evening*.
- 14 The purpose of this question was not to locate Adam and Eve, which God already knew. It was to receive a response, and therefore, to open a conversation.
- 15 This statement by Adam, which some take to be an attempt at deception so as to not admit eating the forbidden fruit, gave away the fact that something had changed in Adam's nature. New Testament Scripture explains that, as the first man and therefore the head of the race, a new quality of sin entered the world (Romans 5:12), that being the principle of indwelling sin of which Paul speaks in Romans 6 & 7.
- 16 Again, God asked questions not to get information, but to draw out an answer. Adam is being driven toward an admission of guilt.
- 17 There appears to be an attempt to provide secondary responsibility, and therefore to make God ultimately the author of the act. The idea that there were two guilty intermediaries, God and Eve, is the first act of implying secondary responsibility.

The courts of man are full of such fallacious secondary responsibility, that is, attempts to indicate evil done by an individual is not really his fault. It was his upbringing that produced evil. It was his parents, his poverty, his companions, etc. that produced wrong-doing. Secondary responsibility promotes anything to lessen the responsibility of the person who performed the act.

- 18 Again God questions Eve to draw out an admission of responsibility.
- 19 This is a statement of simple truth. Eve was deceived by the serpent (1 Timothy 2:14).
- 20 Yahweh Elohim first spoke to Adam, then to Eve, and finally to the serpent. The first pronouncement of consequences is given to the serpent, as the instigator of the temptation.
- 21 This may be a symbolical act designed to bring to mind the sin of Adam when a believer sees a serpent slithering on the ground.
- 22 Note the progression of enmity.

First is enmity between the woman (Eve) and the serpent. This is not a statement that all women are enemies of serpents, but that Eve was an enemy of that specific serpent at that time.

Second is the enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. The most common interpretation of the serpent's seed is reflected in the BKC, which makes the word *seed* plural, and refer to all the evil beings, demons and men, who follow Satan's path. The BKC also makes the seed of the women plural, referring to Cain, then humanity at large, and finally to Christ.

The traditional approach here is difficult, given that the word *seed* (זֶרַע, *that which is sown*, hence *seed*) is a common noun which can be used collectively, referring to more than one seed. However, it can also be singular and not collective. See Paul's statement in Galatians 3:16, where he states that the singular use of Abraham's seed can only be applied to Christ.

If in Genesis 3:15 both uses of seed are singular, then the implication of Satan's seed is a specific individual. By some it is assumed that this refers to the man of sin at the end time. Others, however, have assumed it to be a collective of those who crucified Christ.

If both uses are plural, then the next sentence becomes problematical. The idea that the woman's seed is mankind in general, starting with Cain and culminating in Christ may not be the best approach. But the question arises, is it neces-

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sary to make both uses of *seed* collective, plural or singular?

Indeed, there is no contextual reason to make the seed of the woman plural or collective. Perhaps the serpent's seed is collective, but the woman's? Rather, the context seems to indicate it is singular, referring to the ultimate defeat of Satan through the seed of the woman, which is what the first couple, as well as Moses' readers must have understood. This can only apply to Satan's ultimate defeat by the work of Christ. See the note on the next sentence.

- 23 Debate exists about this statement and how far it can be applied. Some teach that only that part that deals with pain in childbirth is universal to all women, and that the other two parts of the statement were for Eve only. However, the mistake is that all women are involved in this statement. It is intended for the marriage state, and is applicable to wives only. Unmarried women, who (ideally) remain virgins, have no pain in childbearing, and no husband to whom one can apply the second and third statements. Hence the application is not universal, but applies only to married women. While the *potential* to apply this is possible for all females, in practice the application is indeed limited.
- 24 This curse will be removed during the millennial period.
- 25 The judgment on Adam is purely physical. Physical toil to make a living from the ground, physical death thereby returning to the dust from which the physical body is made.
- 26 חַיָּה (*life*). This appears to be from the participle of the root. If this is true, it may indicate one who is living, rather than just *life*.
- 27 One wonders how far this act of clothing can be taken symbolically. The statements of BKC seem to go beyond an exegetical understanding of this passage: "God is a saving God, however, and the fact that He clothed Adam and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel's animal sacrifices would be part of God's provision to remedy the curse — a life for a life. The sinner shall die! (Eze 18:20; Rom 6:23). Yet he will live if he places his faith in the Lord, who has provided a Substitute. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God's provision. Similarly in the fullness of time God accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and on the basis of that atonement He clothes believers in righteousness." At best this is a questionable interpretation, as it causes later Scripture to support it.

The question of interpretation and understanding must be addressed from the perspective of the first readers, as well as that of Adam and Eve. It's certainly unlikely, if not impossible, for the first couple to have come to such conclusions. Nor is it likely that the initial readers of Genesis, the wandering Israelites, would have drawn such broad-based conclusions, and application. So, any interpretation from later revelation read backward must abandon the normal process of determining meaning and the intent of the first writer to the first readers.

- 28 The most likely meaning of the phrase *to know good and evil* (לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע) refers to the ability to distinguish between the two, to know what is good and what is not good. God knows only good by experience, not evil. Therefore the traditional view that Adam and Eve got to know evil by experience cannot be true. They came to know the distinction because of an understanding of evil, which, though they experienced it, did not automatically cause them to know about the distinction in the same way God does. Rather, they came to understand that there was a distinction in a similar way that God understood. Prior to this, the word *evil* (רָע) could not have meant wrong-doing, if the word existed at all in the first couple's vocabulary.
- 29 This is the reason for the expulsion. Some have attempted to say that the first couple continued to have access to the garden. The text is clear. They were not to have access to the tree of life, whose properties were still in force.
- 30 Why *him* and not *them*? The reference is to mankind, which included Eve.
- 31 Probably within the garden, because it had been planted by God, there was no need to toil. How long did the garden exist? This is unknown, though it must have not survived the Noahic flood.
- 32 *Cherubim* is plural, though the number of cherubs assigned is unknown. The cherubim are not angels, but a separate order of spirit beings, as are *Seraphim*. They are mentioned some 91 times in the Hebrew text, and seem to be personal servants of God who perform whatever tasks they are given. Cherubim are pictured with wings (Exodus 25:20), likely as symbols of their travels, while angels, which also travel, always appear as men without wings. In fact, no spirit being has a physical need for wings, so the purpose for wings visible by human beings must be symbolic.
- 33 Some have foolishly concluded that the Cherubim were set to guard for keeping the access open to the garden. This is not consistent with the teaching of verse 22.