

# Learn to Read Genesis Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 3



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## **SESSION 3**

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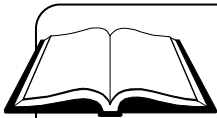
# Genesis 3 – The fall of man

## Introduction

We saw in the last session that God’s creation covered all the needs of our first parents – Adam and Eve. We summarised these as:

- Life itself
- Water
- Food
- Work and responsibility
- Holidays
- Friendship and companionship
- Rules
- Love and marriage

This session looks at what happened to Adam and Eve subsequently.



Read Genesis 3  
before you start this session

## v 1 to 3 – Doubt cast on God’s command

At the beginning of chapter 3 we are introduced to “the serpent”, the description of which is rather different from that of the snakes we are familiar with today.

### The serpent



Who or what are we to understand by the “serpent”?  
What facts does the record give?

The Bible record tells us the serpent was:

- More cunning than any beast of the field (v 1)
- Capable of speech (v 1)
- Described as “very good” along with the other beasts (1 v 31)
- After the events of Genesis 3, condemned to go “on its belly and eat dust” for the rest of its life (v 14)
- Cursed more than all cattle (or beasts) (v 14)

The serpent was clearly a “beast” of some sort which was “cunning” or “subtil” as the *Authorised Version* says.



Look at the meaning of “subtil”  
in the *Strong’s Concordance* entry  
on page 12

The serpent was apparently more intelligent than the other animals. It was capable of reasoning just enough to think it understood its Creator, but not enough to realise the possible consequences of disobeying God.

It was also given the power of speech so that it could communicate its observations. We can train animals by reward and punishment, but without such teaching they appear to have little of the idea of right and wrong which we have. The instincts given by God are the rules they live by. Perhaps this is the reason why the serpent was not given any commandment by God.

## The serpent’s observations

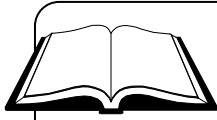
Using its ability to weigh up a situation and see some of the implications, the serpent considered Adam’s and Eve’s situation and began to speak:

*3 v 1 ...“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat from every tree of the garden’?”*

The serpent could see how the situation could be turned to Adam’s and Eve’s advantage, but this command they had been given was an obstacle. By posing this question, the serpent was casting doubt on the authority of God. This was the first time this had happened. Before this, all creation had been in harmony with God’s wishes, but now God’s

authority was being questioned.

Eve confirmed to the serpent what the command was:



Read Genesis 3 v 2 to 3

Note the following points:

- This conversation took place between the serpent and Eve alone
- Without Adam's support Eve was more susceptible to temptation
- Eve was aware of the commandment which had been given to Adam (2 v 17) before she was made (2 v 22)

## v 4 – The first lie



Read Genesis 3 v 4

The serpent contradicted God. It asserted that God was wrong, and gave an alternative explanation of God's motives for not wanting them to eat the fruit from the tree. But the serpent had no evidence to support his claim – it was just words.

God's command was, however, supported by what Adam and Eve knew about God. God had put Adam in the garden. He created Eve from Adam after putting him to sleep. They had conversations with God's representatives, the angels. So there was abundant evidence from their own experience that God knew what He was talking about and did what He said He would.

There was no evidence whatsoever that the serpent knew what it was talking about! Perhaps if Eve had asked what authority the serpent had to contradict God, she would not have eaten the fruit. The question of authority is just as relevant today as it was then:



- Surely it is vital – if we are considering important matters in our life – that we check the authority of our information
- Basing our lives on false assumptions can be dangerous!

## v 5 – The appeal to pride



Read Genesis 3 v 5

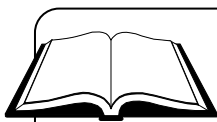
We see that, after the false assertion, the serpent put temptation in Eve's way. The serpent pointed out the advantages of challenging God's word. Adam and Eve would no longer be answerable to the angels, they could be equal to them!

The idea was obviously appealing to Eve, so she thought about it, and believed and trusted the serpent rather than God.

**Echo -**  
Genesis  
3 v 5

There is an echo from here in Philipians chapter 2.

The various ways in which different versions of the Bible translate this passage reflect different theological standpoints. However, it is clear that the main aim of the passage is to point out that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but rather chose obedience. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ reversed Adam's and Eve's rebellion.



Read Philipians 2 v 1 to 11

Now if we assume that God knows everything from the beginning to the end, then He knew what would happen between Eve and the serpent before it took place. Why then did He allow the serpent to tempt Eve? It looks as though **God wanted to see if Adam and Eve would obey Him out of choice**. If this is so then God arranged this encounter with the serpent to see how they would react.

Our own experience teaches us that it is far more satisfying if people do things for us out of choice rather than being forced to do them. It may seem unfair that God should test Adam and Eve in this way. The Bible, however, is full of examples of God testing people. Those who passed the test were given great blessings, those who failed often **learned** by their mistakes. There are several examples of this later in this course.



## v 6 and 7 – The rebellion



Read Genesis 3 v 6 and 7



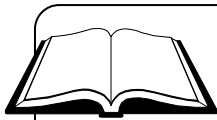
What three things were attractive about the tree?



- The tree was good for food – it would satisfy the natural desire for food
- It was pleasant to the eyes – it looked good and appealing
- It was a desirable tree because it could make one wise – it would “boost the ego”

These principles have been at the root of temptation from that day to this. If you think about it, these are the methods used in advertising today to tempt us to *buy* things! Advertising tries to make a product appealing and desirable, and often implies that the product will “boost our ego”.

The same three aspects of temptation are mentioned in the New Testament.



Read 1 John 2 v 15 and 16

So Eve made up her mind what to do ... *she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*



- Eve allowed herself to be persuaded to challenge God’s authority
- She listened to an assertion which had no backing, and gave in to her own desires
- She talked Adam into doing the same thing

They received part of what they hoped for in that they gained knowledge, but there were some unexpected results as well.



Read Genesis 3 v 7

Adam and Eve expected to receive the wonderful world of knowledge such as the angels have, but in fact they received the devastating knowledge of their own human nature.

For the first time they knew they were naked, and this made them want to cover their nakedness – they were ashamed of their situation and wanted to do something about it. Their solution, however, was totally inadequate.

## **v 8 to 13 – Results of the rebellion**



Read Genesis 3 v 8

Adam and Eve were afraid and hid from God. Fear of discovery is our natural reaction whenever we do wrong. From our childhood, we always want to cover up anything we have done wrong.

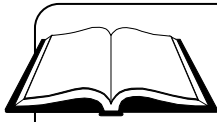
We may sometimes succeed in hiding from other people, but, as Adam and Eve discovered, we can't hide from God:



Read Genesis 3 v 9

There is more in that question than may first appear. It was more than just a question inquiring about Adam's whereabouts. There was a second meaning implied in asking Adam to consider his new situation. By hiding from God, Adam was showing that he had lost the close relationship he formerly had with God.

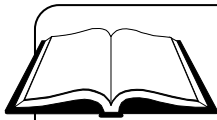
Adam told God why he was hiding:



Read Genesis 3 v 10

Rebellion against authority always brings fear, even if we try to ignore it.

So God questioned Adam about his situation:



Read Genesis 3 v 11

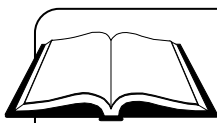
These were two straight questions requiring two straight answers, ie: “I realised I was naked after I ate of the forbidden fruit”, and, “Yes, I have eaten of the forbidden tree”. Adam’s answer is the first example of the classic human reaction to guilt:



Read Genesis 3 v 12

Adam said it was Eve’s fault really, with an insinuation that God was partly to blame as well. If God had not created Eve all would have been well. He conveniently forgot that he was the one to whom the command was given. It was his responsibility to ensure that Eve kept it as well.

Eve was then questioned:



Read Genesis 3 v 13

Eve blamed the serpent, claiming she was deceived by the serpent. God didn’t dispute this and it is confirmed in the New Testament.

**Echo -**  
Genesis  
3 v 13



1 Timothy 2 v 14



Read 1 Timothy 2 v 14

There was therefore a subtle difference between the sin of Adam and that of Eve. Eve was deceived by the serpent, but it would appear that Adam sinned with his eyes open – he knew what he was doing.

## **v 14 to 21 – Consequences of the rebellion**



Read Genesis 3 v 14 to 21

Neither Adam nor Eve confessed their guilt. They maintained they were right and that, by implication, God was at least partly in the wrong. This was rebellion against God. As we saw in the first course (in Sessions 8 and 10), God cannot just ignore disobedience. So He had to take action to remedy the situation. We shall see how God remedied the situation without compromising His principles.

God began with the serpent:



Read Genesis 3 v 14 and 15

Note that no questions were addressed to the serpent – it was not regarded as a responsible creature, like Adam and Eve.

Verse 15 is the beginning of much that happens later on in the Bible. As it contains so much, we shall look at it in detail in the next session.



Read Genesis 3 v 16

Under the terms of the curse, Eve would now have increased fertility. This would, of course, enable the earth to be populated despite the fact that they were now dying creatures. God was arranging a balance between fertility and mortality so that the earth would still be populated. The pain and trouble associated with having children would also be increased.

*3 v 16 “ ... Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”*

This is in contrast to what had just happened when Eve “overruled” Adam and persuaded him to eat of the forbidden fruit. To prevent the same kind of rebellion occurring again, Adam was made the head of the family unit.

**Echo -**  
Genesis  
3 v 16



Numbers 30 v 1 to 16

Throughout the Bible we are taught that the roles of men and women in the family are different. Numbers 30 shows that in the law given through Moses the decisions made by a woman could be reversed by her father or her husband (depending on her marital status), illustrating the fact that God considers the man to hold the final responsibility. The modern interest in “equal rights” for women seems like an echo of Eve’s temptation in the garden of Eden: striving for the good things of life. However, as we saw in Philippians 2, Christ shows both men and women what God wants. Christ did not strive for equality – instead he humbled himself.

Adam was then addressed:



Read Genesis 3 v 17 to 19



- Adam was the only one held guilty of ignoring the command
- The ground itself was cursed because of Adam

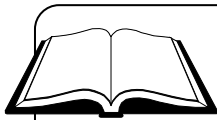
Verse 14 told us that the serpent was cursed or restrained from being able to incite rebellion any more. The ground was restrained in a different way – it was restrained from being so fruitful. Living was now going to be hard work. From that day to this, growing food has been an uphill struggle against pests, famine and weeds. We all have to put effort into keeping ourselves alive.

**Echoes -**  
Genesis  
3 v 19

Genesis 18 v 27; Psalm 104 v 29; Ecclesiastes 3 v 20; 12 v 7

All of these verses confirm that we return to the dust when we die.

Adam then named his wife:



Read Genesis 3 v 20

Adam was reacting to God's comments in verse 16 about his wife's increased fertility. She would be the mother of all future generations.



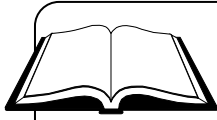
Read Genesis 3 v 21

God made "tunics" or "coats" of skins for Adam and Eve. The fig leaves were Adam's and Eve's answer to the situation. But God had more in mind than just covering up their physical nakedness. Have a look at page 10 of the *Additional Notes* booklet to find out more.



- Animals were killed to provide these coats
- They were killed as a result of Adam's and Eve's disobedience
- This would be a reminder to them of the seriousness of what they had done and that they also deserved to die

## v 22 to 24 – Removal from the garden



Read Genesis 3 v 22 to 24

We are not told much about the “tree of life” mentioned in verse 22. It would appear that before their disobedience they may have had free access to the tree of life. This would possibly mean that it kept them from ageing as long as they kept eating it. God knew it was not a good idea to have a world full of deathless people continually rebelling against His will:

*3 v 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.*

So Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Eden. Note that Adam and Eve were “driven” out of the garden – they didn’t want to go! Not surprising really, since they were being driven from a place where everything was produced for them in idyllic surroundings into a world that would be hostile to them in every way – where living would be hard work!

*3 v 24 ... He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden ... to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Cherubim are always associated with God, His majesty and purpose. We meet them at various stages throughout the Old Testament (eg Exodus 37 v 7 to 9; 1 Kings 6 v 23 to 35; Ezekiel 10). On this first occasion they were placed at the east of the garden to prevent Adam and Eve reaching the tree of life.

