



## SESSION 2

# WHY ARE WE IN THIS MESS?

### ▶ **The Point**

We ruined a perfect relationship with God through our sin.

### ▶ **The Passage**

Genesis 3:1-7,14-19

### ▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Do you have a favorite game you like to play? Mine is *Monopoly*. My wife objects to my strategy. I tuck away a few of the larger bills I've earned when she isn't looking. She sells properties to me thinking I have no money to spend on houses or hotels. But as soon as she sells me her properties, I pull out my hidden money and it's "game over." She blames me for cheating. I blame her for not catching my stealth-like moves. We teasingly point fingers at each other.

You may have noticed the world we live in isn't a perfect place. But it was in the beginning. God created a sinless, spectacular world for us to enjoy. Adam and Eve chose to ignore His instructions for living, and sin entered the world. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Adam even tried to blame God! Adam and Eve played the "blame game." Our world is in a mess because we sinned against God. Sin always devastates. Our condition is nobody's fault but our own. We should point fingers at ourselves.

### ▶ **The Setting**

God created the first man and woman and placed them in the garden of Eden. There the two enjoyed perfect fellowship with God, experiencing life as God intended. However, the man and the woman were not robots; they could obey God's commands and continue to experience life in paradise or they could reject God's commands and suffer the consequences. Genesis 3 describes the interaction of the man and the woman with the serpent, a created being who raised questions about God's intentions and encouraged the man and woman to disobey God's command.

## What does the Bible say?

**Serpent** (v. 1)—The Hebrew term means “snake,” and it comes from a root word meaning “to hiss.”

**Knowing good and evil** (v. 5)—This phrase refers to the ability to discern between right and wrong. Essentially it is divine wisdom, which is a good thing when obtained through a right relationship with God.

### **Genesis 3:1-7,14-19**

**<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. <sup>3</sup> But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” <sup>4</sup> “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.**

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**<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel. <sup>16</sup> He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you. <sup>17</sup> And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’: The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust.”**





## Genesis 3:1-7 Commentary

**[Verse 1]** As the first man and woman learned, and has been the case with every human being since then, we sin when we fail to keep God's commands. **The serpent** was one of the **wild animals** created by **the Lord God**, all of which God declared were "good." (See Gen. 1:25.) It was **the most cunning** of all the animals God created. The Hebrew word for *cunning* means crafty, sly, or shrewd. The Book of Revelation links the serpent with God's adversary Satan when it refers to "the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9).

The serpent's first question to the woman indicates that the serpent was fully aware of God's instructions to the humans about what they could eat. His use of the word **really** provides a clue to his deceitful intention: he wanted to create confusion and doubt in the woman's mind.

**[Verses 2-3]** The woman noted they could **eat the fruit from the trees in the garden**. The woman then mentioned the only prohibition God had made—not eating **the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden**. This was "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). God had specifically stated the dire consequences of eating the prohibited fruit: "on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die" (v. 17). While the woman correctly noted they could not eat from that tree, she added something God had not said: she told the serpent that they weren't even allowed to **touch** the tree or its fruit.

**[Verses 4-5]** The serpent directly contradicted God's words: "**No! You will not die.**" The serpent then countered with an alternative to death, impugning God's character in the process: "**In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" His ultimate motive was to get the woman to doubt the goodness of God, to think He was holding out on them, and thereby to get the woman to disobey what God had said.

**[Verses 6-7]** As a result of the serpent's words the woman gave in to the temptation to eat the fruit. **The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom.** The Hebrew term translated *good* can mean both that which is beautiful and that which is morally right. In this case, what the woman saw as being good was anything but morally right. It is also the same term used by God in Genesis 1 to pronounce the goodness of His creation. However, here the woman put herself in the place of God, going against His command and choosing to do what she thought was "good," seeking wisdom apart from God.<sup>1</sup>

The woman and man ate the fruit. True to the serpent's words, their eyes were opened; they gained a knowledge they had not previously possessed. The knowledge they gained led to the realization they were naked. It also brought embarrassment and shame. In an effort to cover their shame, the man and woman made garments from fig leaves. However, while they could cover their nakedness, in the end they could not cover their sin.



## Genesis 3:14-15 Commentary

**[Verse 14]** Despite his initial victory in the garden, the serpent (Satan) will ultimately be defeated. In their shame, the man and woman attempted to hide from God. When confronted, the man blamed the woman and God for what had happened, and the woman blamed the serpent. (See 3:8-13.)

The name **LORD God** is a combination of the names *Yahweh* (LORD) and *Elohim* (God). *Elohim* emphasizes God as Creator, highlighting His majesty and power. *Yahweh* emphasizes that God is the One who has always existed and causes all that is to exist. This is also the covenant name of God. The use of the dual title for God reflects the loving, personal nature of the mighty Creator. Even when pronouncing judgment against sinful humans, He would not fully abandon them.

The LORD God issued His initial judgment against **the serpent**. He would be **cursed**, relegated to moving on its **belly**. God also cursed the serpent to **eat dust** all the days of its life. The dust most likely refers to the humiliating nature of where it would eat—on the ground. In light of the future pronouncement of death to the man, the serpent’s curse may have served as an ongoing reminder of its sin in its being forced to exist in the realm where human bodies would be placed to decompose after death. God’s mention of **all the days of your life** may have been a certain promise of the serpent’s eventual death, in contrast to its false promise to the woman that she would not die.<sup>2</sup> (See v. 4.)

**[Verse 15]** God’s judgment on the serpent was in fact a judgment on Satan, the true adversary who prompted the humans’ sin. God noted there would be **hostility between the serpent and the woman**. The Hebrew term translated *hostility* is often used of conflicts between nations and reflects an ongoing battle in which death is the ultimate objective. This struggle would extend through the ages, to the **offspring** of both the woman and the serpent. In Hebrew, the term translated *offspring* is ambiguous. It can refer to either a single individual or a group. This term captures the ongoing hostility between Satan and humanity throughout history. But it also speaks of the ultimate defeat of Satan.

**“He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”** In this description, *he* and *his* are both singular pronouns. God noted that a certain male individual would *strike* (or crush) the *head* of the serpent even as the serpent fought back by striking *his heel*. Many see this as the first prophetic promise of Satan’s defeat (known as the *protoevangelium*), since it likely refers to the ultimate battle between Jesus and Satan. In Galatians 3:16 Paul clarified that Abraham’s “seed” (not “seeds”) was a reference to Christ.

Even though Jesus has won the victory over Satan at the cross, there will be ongoing hostility between Satan and the forces of evil on one side and Jesus and His church on the other. This strife will continue until God brings a decisive end to the conflict when Satan and all those who oppose God are judged and consigned to the lake of fire, where they will suffer torment and everlasting separation from God. (See Rev. 20:10-15.)





## Genesis 3:16-19 Commentary

**[Verse 16]** Sin brings consequences, thus the woman and the man were next to hear God's pronouncement of judgment on their disobedience. God first addressed **the woman**, highlighting the suffering she would experience in childbirth—God would **intensify** her **labor pains** and she would **bear children with painful effort**.

Another part of God's judgment of the woman dealt with her relationship to her husband. **"Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you."** Interpreters debate the meaning of the term *desire* in this verse. Taken in the context of the rest of the verse, the best interpretation seems to refer to the woman's desire to dominate her husband. God noted, however, that her husband would *rule over* her. This reflects a submission of the wife to her husband, though it was not a consequence of her sin. Her submission is presented in the created order (where she came from man. See Gen. 2:21-23.). But now, as a result of the fall, she would also possess the desire to be the leader over her husband. In addition to marring the relationship between God and humanity, the first sin of the man and the woman introduced conflict into the marriage relationship of the man and woman as well.

**[Verses 17-18]** **The man** should have exercised his leadership responsibility by obeying God and encouraging the woman to obey God, as well. But instead, the man listened to his wife and ate the fruit, deliberately doing exactly what God had commanded him not to do. As a consequence of the man's sin, the ground was **cursed**. It would no longer effortlessly yield a harvest as a result of the man's labor. While the task of working and caring for the ground which God had given him may have initially been easy (see v. 15), from this point on the man's work would be **painful labor**. The land would no longer yield only a bountiful harvest, but now would produce **thorns and thistles**, as well. This would bring the man pain, frustration, and exhaustion. The severity of the man's sin is brought out by the permanence of this curse. This painful labor would continue **all the days** of the man's **life**.

**[Verse 19]** God again noted that the man's work would be difficult—his **bread** (food) would only come from **the sweat of his brow**. His sin had brought a curse on the land that would make life difficult for him. His sin also meant that one day he would **return to the ground**—he would die and be buried in it. Just as God created him from the **dust** of the ground, the man's body would become dust again after his death.

The sin of the first man (Adam) and woman (Eve) brought tragic consequences not only for them but also for all of creation. That was not the end of the story, however. The same gracious God who created humans out of His desire for a relationship with them did not abandon them nor did He leave them alone to endure the consequences of their sin without any hope. Before God created the world He had the solution in mind (see Eph. 1:3-6), which would ultimately come about through a second Adam. (See 1 Cor. 15:22,45.)



5 minutes

# LIVE IT OUT

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to page 28 of the PSG. Encourage them to follow God’s way by doing the following:



## Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Memorize 1 John 1:9.** Our sins can be forgiven if we confess them to God. Memorize 1 John 1:9 as a promise and source of encouragement as you confess your sins to God: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- ▶ **Seek forgiveness.** If your sin involves someone else, ask their forgiveness. Seek to make amends for your part in hurting another person or harming your relationship.
- ▶ **Avoid sin.** If certain sins are a constant struggle for you, determine what makes it easy for you to give in to the temptation. Make a plan for removing those things from your life. If specific individuals encourage or enable your sin, stop associating with them.

## Wrap It Up

**TRANSITION:** Read or restate the final paragraph from page 28 of the PSG:

God created a paradise for us to enjoy, but we messed it up. Rejoice that God is gracious and had a plan to redeem us!

**PRAY:** Conclude by praising God for the redemption He offers through Christ. Thank Him for His undeserved grace.



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