



Lesson 3

The Garden of Eden

Adam in the Garden (2:15)

In our last lesson we thought about the events of the sixth day of creation. At the end of that day God looked at all he had made and saw that it was very good. In that day Adam had been created outside of the Garden of Eden and then placed inside it by God.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”
Genesis 2:15

The angel led the man into the Garden and told him what he had to do.

1. He was to ‘work’ in the garden. Adam’s job was to be a gardener. God had planted trees that were good for food (2:8). Adam had to look after them and collect food for Eve and himself.
2. He was to ‘keep’ the garden (2:15) – to look after it and preserve it. Look at the way this word is used later in Genesis.

“For I have chosen him (Abraham), that he may command his children and his household after him to **keep** the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” Genesis 18:19

We see that the idea of ‘*keeping*’ God’s way in people’s lives is not in the sense of ‘*looking after*’ but in obeying God’s laws. So God now gave Adam a law he had to keep.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.” Genesis 2:16-17

This is an important principle for our own lives. Adam had his gardening, his natural work, to do and at the same time he had to behave in a spiritual way, to remember and honour God in his everyday life by obeying God’s law in all that he did.

This is how we should live. We should not behave in a selfish, ungodly way from Monday to Saturday, then go to church on Sunday and try to behave in a Godly way. God will not accept this; He asks us to practise Godly ways every day in all that we do.

The Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden was a very special place. The word ‘Eden’ means delight or pleasure. Perhaps we should see both God’s delight in everything He had made (He saw it was very good) and the delight of Adam and Eve in their lives together in such a lovely place, living in harmony with God.

And then it all went wrong! It is important that we look carefully at exactly what Genesis 3 tells us.

- The serpent spoke to the woman about the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It told her that God had said that she could eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden.
- Eve told the serpent that God had said they could eat of every tree except this special one – if they ate of it they would die.
- No, said the serpent, if she ate of it she would not certainly die. However this was not what God had told Adam; God had told him clearly that if you eat of it you will definitely die.
- The woman looked at the fruit of the tree and wanted to eat it.
- She took it, ate it and gave some to her husband who was with her, he ate also.
- They both realised that they were naked and made clothes out of fig leaves.
- The angel of God walked in the garden looking for them, they hid from him because they were now afraid of God.





- God spoke to the man, then the woman and then the serpent.
- God told the serpent of its fate but also gave a great promise for the future of mankind.
- God told the woman of her punishment and then the man of his.
- Finally God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and placed a Cherubim (a special angel) there to stop them getting back in.

The Serpent (3:1-4)

The word for serpent that is used in the Bible simply means a snake. It does not mean the devil or satan. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the words ‘serpent’ and ‘devil’ together nor do we find any suggestion that the serpent was a ‘fallen angel’.

- As a snake, or creeping thing, it had been made on the 6th day with the rest of the animals. After God had made them, we are told:

“And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. *And God saw that it was good.*”
Genesis 1:25

So the snake was made by God and ‘was good’. Indeed we know that, at the end of the 6th day, God looked at all He had made and said it was all very good – that must include the serpent!

- It was ‘*more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made*’. By this we understand that it was more cunning than the other animals but it was not made with an ability and intelligence to understand God’s word like man and woman (see Psalm 49:20).
- It could speak. This is not the only time in the Bible that we read about an animal that could speak. In Numbers 22 we read about a donkey to which God gave the power of speech for a little while. Perhaps that is what happened here - God gave to the snake the power of speech so that it could talk to Eve. But it did not tell Eve the truth; it changed words spoken in the garden by God.

The serpent said ‘ <i>you can eat of any tree</i> ’.	God said ‘ <i>you can eat of any tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil</i> ’.
The serpent said ‘ <i>you will not die if you eat it</i> ’.	God said ‘ <i>you will surely die</i> ’.
The serpent said ‘ <i>when you eat it you will become like God</i> ’.	When God had made man and woman, He made them in the image of the angels but they were just living creatures and did not have immortal life as did the angels.

All the evidence in the Bible is that the serpent was just a snake – an animal made by God, living in the Garden of Eden. It was given a power of speech by God and spoke false words to Eve.

Eve and Adam (3:6)

The snake talked to Eve about eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and deceived her with its words. However the Bible makes it clear that it was her own decision to eat the forbidden fruit. It was when she looked at it and thought about it in her own heart that she took and ate it. The Letter of James in the New Testament tells us that ‘*each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire*’ (James 1:14) and this is what happened to Eve.

She saw this tree as something special, different in one way to other trees, and really wanted to eat fruit from it. Unlike other trees it was ‘*a tree to be desired to make one wise*’.





This was her big mistake; she wanted to be equal to God and thought that, by eating this fruit, she would be changed to be like the angels. She thought that she would become wise like God and live for ever.

So Eve took the fruit, ate it and gave to her husband who was with her. What was he doing? God had given a law to Adam and it was his responsibility to tell Eve about it. He should have stopped her, told her that this was wrong and that she was in danger of disobeying God and would be sentenced to death.

What a terrible comment this is on Adam; Eve was deceived by the serpent but Adam knew what he was doing. He took the fruit from her, ate it and deliberately disobeyed God.

Sin and its Consequences (3:16-19)

As soon as they had eaten the forbidden fruit a number of things happened.

They knew that they were naked and tried to cover themselves by making clothes of fig leaves. They became aware that the angel of God was walking in the garden and looking for them, so they hid themselves. They did not want to talk to God because they were now afraid of Him. When He asked them what they had done each of them tried to blame someone else – Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Note that God **did not ask the serpent what it had done**; Adam and Eve alone were responsible for what had happened, not the serpent.

God then told them of the punishment they would have. Eve would have pain in child bearing. Adam would have to work very hard to produce food. They would both die. But there was something else. God sent them out of the garden:

“Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.”
Genesis 3:23

From this we can learn important principles for our own lives.

1. Sin is disobedience of God’s laws and is completely unacceptable to Him.
2. Our natural reaction when caught out is to try and cover up what we have done and to blame someone else (this is why people like to believe in a devil, it gives them something else to blame rather than accepting the blame themselves for what they have done).
3. God will not allow people to get away with this. He asks ‘*what have you done?*’
4. The consequence of sin is death. It is a punishment, not a time when an immortal soul leaves a body and ascends to heaven as taught in some churches. It is the end of life and dead people have no consciousness and no awareness of God (Psalm 6:5).
5. Some of the problems we have in our lives are a direct consequence of sin. The pain of child bearing, the struggle to grow enough food for us and our families all come from the time when sin first entered the world.
6. We cannot solve the problem of sin ourselves; we cannot provide a covering for sin that is acceptable to God. Adam and Eve’s fig leaf clothes did not cover them up and hide their sin from God. They could not escape His punishment of them.
7. Sin separates us from God just as Adam and Eve were sent away from Him out of the garden.

The Promise of Forgiveness (3:14-15)

However, the most wonderful thing about the Bible is that it tells us that God is a loving and forgiving God. He is the One who provides a way for sin to be forgiven and for people to find the way back to Him.

We have seen that God punished Adam and Eve as soon as they sinned. Yet at the same time he gave them a promise of hope for the future. This was the first of many promises God made to men and women who believed in him. Some of them are found in Genesis and we shall look at them in later lessons. They tell us how God will provide a way to overcome the effect of sin in our lives. God said to the serpent:

“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.





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.”
Genesis 3:14-15

Eve (the woman) realised that the serpent had deceived her. It had told her a lie. The offspring, or children, of the serpent are people who act as the serpent did. They oppose God’s laws and change His truth into lies. Jesus described men who opposed him as offspring of vipers (serpents). They were ruled by sin in their lives (Matthew 12:34).

The offspring, or child, of the woman is Jesus. Only one child is mentioned here. Jesus is the only one who had a human mother, Mary, and no human father. He is the Son of God.

The wicked men, who are described as the serpent’s offspring, killed Jesus. This is what is meant by *‘strike his heel’*. It was only a small wound because God raised Jesus from the dead. However by his death Jesus crushed for ever the power of sin in the lives of men and women who believe in him. This was a fatal wound. It is described as *‘crush your head’*.

This first promise from God looked forward to the Lord Jesus Christ and the great battle he would win when he defeated sin in his life and death.

We are told that God then provided a covering for Adam and Eve.

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”
Genesis 3:21

They had tried to make clothes from fig leaves but this was unacceptable to God. He provided clothes for them and this represented the way in which He would also provide a covering for their sins, only He could do this. It needed the death of an animal, the very first sacrifice, to provide their clothes just as it would need the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the *‘lamb that would take away the sin of the world’*, to provide the true covering for sins.

Finally we read that when God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden He placed a guard there.

“He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard (to keep) the way to the tree of life.”
Genesis 3:24

The cherubim or angel was put there to stop Adam and Eve getting back into the garden; their sin prevented them from returning into the presence of God. But the cherubim had another role; it was to keep (to look after) the way to the Tree of Life. God wanted to preserve the way back to Him until He would provide a way to overcome sin. Without help sinful people cannot return to God but we have seen that He gave a great promise about how sin would be overcome, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once Jesus had lived and died as the one great and true sacrifice for the forgiveness for sin then the way back to God was opened up again. So we end this lesson with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ about this.

“Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
John 14:6

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned the following key points.

- God taught Adam how he should honour God in his everyday life and work.
- The serpent was a snake that could talk. It was not the devil or satan. Eve, then Adam were responsible to God for their own disobedience of Him.
- Sin brings both the sentence of death and also separation from God.
- God provides a way of escape from sin; He gave a wonderful promise of forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ who defeated sin by his perfect life and his death.
- God has kept open the way back to Him; it is made available to those who believe in the life and death of Jesus Christ for their sins.