

BEGINNINGS: Lesson Four
Creation: The Beginning of Human Rebellion Against God
Genesis 3:1-7

Subject: Adam and Eve sinned by eating forbidden fruit.
Main Idea: We have an enemy who seeks to deceive us.

Principles:

1. *We have a very real and powerful enemy who schemes to deceive us into doubting God.*
2. *Our enemy seeks to convince us that the consequences of our sin will be nonexistent or minimal.*

Introduction

Appearances can be deceptive.

A wolf was having trouble feeding on some sheep, due to the vigilance of their shepherd and his dogs. But one day, it found a sheep's pelt that had been flayed and thrown aside, so it put the skin on over its own back and strolled down among the sheep. The lamb that had belonged to the dead sheep, whose skin the wolf was wearing, began to follow the wolf in the sheep's clothing. Leading the lamb a little apart, the wolf soon made a meal of her. For some time, he succeeded in deceiving the sheep, and enjoyed hearty meals.ⁱ

Perhaps you recognize this as Aesop's fable of "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." Many cultures have stories to teach their children about deception. I don't know about you, but the older I get the more easily I see through some scams, including the deceptiveness of my own heart. Jeremiah 17:11 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

The Bible teaches clearly that we have a cunning enemy in the supernatural realm who makes it his business to deceive us. If I, with my very limited experience and intelligence, can easily rationalize sin and deceive myself, how much more easily can I be deceived by an intelligent being who has studied human behavior for thousands of years?

Genesis 3 tells of Eve's deception and introduces the central conflict in the story of the Bible. In the first 2 chapters of Genesis, creation was in an ideal state. Chapter 3 tells us what went wrong. It explains how sin entered the world and introduces us to our enemy, the one who deceived Eve and who continues to try to destroy us through deceit. Understanding Genesis 3 is crucial to making sense of the rest of the Bible. Chapter 3 also sets up the drama for resolution, hinting at God's solution to our "sin problem," but we will wait to cover that important passage in our next lesson.

I. Temptation Delivered – Genesis 3:1-5

A. The Serpent – 3:1a

- i. A Real Snake: While it may be popular for liberal Bible scholars to view Eve’s encounter with the serpent as figurative, the New Testament speaks of Adam and Eve as historical figures (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14.) There is no reason to believe it was not an actual serpent that engaged Eve. The verse states it to be one of the wild animals God created, and later, a punishment comes upon the species.
- ii. Crafty: The word can be either negative or positive in connotation. In Hebrew, the words “crafty” and “naked” sound enough alike that a play on the words seems to be implied: because of the woman’s innocence (nakedness), she was approached by a shrewd (crafty) creature.
- iii. The Serpent “Said”? Except for the reasonable conclusion that Adam and Eve had a pleasant relationship with the animals prior to The Fall, nothing else is known about their interaction. It seems unlikely that animals, in general (or even all serpents), had the ability to communicate verbally with Adam and Eve. The fact that a real snake spoke to Eve on this occasion is indicative of something or someone powerful at work.
- iv. Satan: Nowhere in Genesis is the power behind the serpent named. Liberal scholarship often suggests the snake merely symbolizes Eve’s own inner voice. But Jewish and Christian traditions insist that Satan is behind the serpent of Genesis 3 (Romans 16:20 with v. 15; Revelation 12:9; 14–15; 20:2; Jewish scholars would also find support in apocryphal works, such as the Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 and Ecclesiasticus 21:2; 4.)ⁱⁱ Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 specifically name the “ancient serpent” as “the devil” or “Satan.”

B. The Origin of Evil: What does the Bible teach about Satan and the origin of evil?

- i. A Summary: Louis Berkhof summarized the Bible’s teachings about the origin of evil in three points: 1) God cannot be regarded as the author of evil (Deuteronomy 32:4; James 1:13), 2) Sin originated in the angelic world, almost certainly due to pride (1 Timothy 3:6, Jude 6), and 3) Sin originated in the history of mankind with the transgression of Adam, for he is the representative head of all his descendants (Genesis 3:7, Romans 5:12).ⁱⁱⁱ
- ii. Satan: But what about Satan? What exactly does the Bible say about him?
 1. His Name: “Satan” is Hebrew for “adversary.” “Devil” is the Greek translation of “Satan.” In the New Testament, he is also called by other names, such as Beelzebub, the Ruler (or Prince) of this World, the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Evil One, the Father of Lies, the Great Dragon, the Ancient Serpent, and the Devil.

2. *His History: When and how did Satan become evil?*
- a. *When Did Satan Fall?* Although many believe the heavenly beings (angels) were created before God created the world, the Gap Theory (outlined in Lesson 1) goes further, suggesting that the “fall” of Satan and his demons is implied by [what the theory calls] the “chaos and waste” of Genesis 1:2. One real difficulty with this view is that according to Genesis 1:31, at the end of God’s creative activity, everything He made was in the state of being “very good.” For this reason, it can be supposed that Satan must have fallen from the good state in which he was created sometime *after* Creation was complete, but sometime *before* Eve’s encounter with him in Genesis 3.
 - b. *Two Enlightening Passages:* The Bible does not give us a clear history of Satan and the origin of evil. However, some Bible scholars believe there is information for us about Satan’s history in two Old Testament prophecies: Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:1-17. As one evidence in support, these scholars point out that Jesus quoted from the Isaiah passage in Luke 10:18, applying it to Satan.
 - c. *The Kings of Babylon and Tyre:* Interestingly, the two Old Testament passages claim be descriptions of the kings of Babylon and Tyre. However, according to some scholars, it wasn’t unusual for the Prophets to link near and distant prophecies together, in this case drawing a parallel between an evil human king of Babylon or Tyre, who would rule in their not-too-distant future, with the ultimate Evil Ruler, Satan. The kings of Tyre and Babylon (and also Antiochus Epiphanes, described by Daniel 11:29-35) thus seem to *prefigure* the future Antichrist and represent the devil himself.^{iv}
 - d. *Application to Satan:* If these passages can rightly be applied to Satan, then Satan was created a “model of perfection,” a guardian cherub known for his great beauty (Ezekiel 28:12-13). His heart became proud and he aspired to be like God (Isaiah 14:13-14, Ezekiel 28:17). As a result, God threw him to the earth (Ezekiel 28:17). The name “Lucifer” comes from the “bright one” or “bright star” in Isaiah 14.
 - e. *The Demons:* 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 speaks of angels who sinned and were sent to hell, saying they “did not keep their positions of authority.” These are the demons of which the New Testament speaks. Matthew 12:24 calls Satan (Beelzebub) “the prince of demons.”

3. *His Person*: Satan is depicted in Scripture as an actual creature, a being – not merely a concept of evil or a vague force. Furthermore, he is always depicted as hostile to God and working to overthrow the purposes of God. He is the enemy of God and of God’s children. Although not all temptation comes directly from Satan, temptation is one prime method he uses to lure us away from God and His good purposes (John 13:2; Acts 5:3).
 - a. Not only does Satan tempt, but he has been granted *limited* power to direct our circumstances (Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Corinthians 12:7), to hinder Christian workers (1 Thessalonians 2:18), to perform signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13), and to hold individuals in spiritual darkness (Acts 26:18, Revelation 2:13).
 - b. He is deceitful (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9).
 - i. As the “father of lies” (John 8:44), he is cunning in his attempts to deceive us about God’s character and nature, about life, and about what is truly good.
 - ii. His use of a serpent (Genesis 3) suggests his deceptive methodology: temptation often comes in disguise and quite unexpectedly (1 Peter 5:8, 1 Corinthians 10:12).
4. *His Future*: The express purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was “to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The New Testament is clear about Satan’s limitations and his defeat:
 - a. He is not omnipotent: he can only do what God permits (Job 1:6-12).
 - b. He is not omnipresent: he can’t be everywhere at once.
 - c. He is not omniscient: he doesn’t know the future, except as God has revealed it in Scripture.
 - d. He is a defeated foe: Jesus triumphed over him at the Cross, sealing his destruction, which God has deferred until the end of human history. Through the Scriptures, Satan knows his time is limited.

C. The Conversation – 3:1-5

- i. The Serpent’s Question: The serpent asked Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You *must not eat from any tree* in the garden?’” (My emphases) In truth, God had said almost the opposite: that they *could* eat from *any* tree – except one.

ii. Eve's Response – 3:2-3

1. *First Mistake*: Once Eve heard the serpent's cynical words, she would have been wise to refuse to talk to him. Adam and Eve were to "rule over" all the creatures, but Eve allowed Satan to usurp her authority over serpents by listening to his suggestions.
2. *Second Mistake*: Eve claimed God told her not to *touch* the fruit of this tree. It is possible that Eve truly believed not touching the fruit was required out of respect for God's command. But in the context of the serpent's cynicism, it seems that he had successfully evoked negative thinking in Eve and as a result, she justified the addition of another restriction to the Lord's command. If so, adding to the words of God was her second mistake.

iii. The Serpent Counters – 3:4-5

1. *Defying God's Words*: In blatant contradiction to God's warning to Adam and Eve ("you will surely die"), the serpent told Eve, "You will not certainly die." Satan still outright denies God's truth. He loves to suggest we can sin and escape the consequences.
2. *Impugning God's Motives*: The serpent took what was true (that their "eyes would be opened") and implied that by forbidding this fruit, God was somehow withholding something from them.^v He sought to portray God as selfish.
3. *Truth and Falsehood*: Satan spoke in half-truths.
 - a. *Regarding Death*: It was true that Adam and Eve did not experience physical death immediately. They did experience an immediate death to their relationship with God as they had previously known it, as well as the certainty of impending physical death. The process of physical decay must have begun immediately.
 - b. *Regarding Their Eyes Being Opened*: It was true that Adam and Eve would have their eyes opened by eating the forbidden fruit. The deception was in the serpent's suggestion that having their eyes opened would be to their benefit.
 - c. *Regarding Being Like God*: Satan's promise that Eve would be "like God" may have been partly true, if the knowledge gained by eating the fruit was more than just experiential knowledge of evil. But he deceptively suggested it was to Eve's advantage to move out from under God's authority and gain this knowledge by her own devices and that the knowledge was something to which Eve was entitled.

- iv. The Doubt Planted: Satan's intention was to plant seeds of doubt about God's words and God's motives. God had given liberally to Adam and Eve, but Satan sought to make Eve discontent. He appealed to her pride and caused her to doubt God's love and goodness.

Principle: *We have a very real and powerful enemy who schemes to deceive us into doubting God.*

The apostle Peter compared Satan to a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is a skilled deceiver. Jesus said Satan "was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Since Satan is a created being who cannot be every place at once, it is unlikely that you will personally face Satan in your lifetime. But according to Ephesians 6:12, there are many evil rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil in the invisible heavenly realms. They are part of Satan's kingdom, they are most certainly working against each of us, and they are eager to deceive us into doubting God.

Application: You and I may think that we have settled our doubts about God. We believe that He exists. We have trusted Jesus to save us. We believe the Bible is God's Word. Is it possible that we doubt God more than we realize?

- What were your immediate thoughts this week when circumstances arose that seemed to thwart you? Did you fail to believe that God works all things for your good (Romans 8:28)? You may not have consciously disbelieved, but what did your behavior reveal about your beliefs?
- What do our anxious thoughts reveal about our beliefs? Do we sometimes doubt God's goodness?
- How did you respond to God's call to obedience in some area of your life this week? Do we fail to believe that God really knows what is best?

Maybe Satan deceives us (or we deceive ourselves) into doubting God more often than we realize. Satan's first recorded words in Scripture are, "Did God *really* say..." Since then, he and his cohorts have continued to use this line (in one form or another) to deceive us into doubting God.

Application: The next time we face a difficulty, challenge, decision, or concern, what will we choose? Will we trust our *own* judgment? Will we (like the lamb carried off by the wolf) trust appearances? Will we listen to the voice of doubt? Or will we recall God's word and choose to believe Him?

Transition: After the temptation was delivered, Eve indulged it and ultimately, ate the fruit.

II. Temptation Indulged – Genesis 3:6-7

A. Eve’s Deception: The New Testament tells us that Eve was deceived (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14).

- i. Evaluation by Human Judgment: Eve found the fruit appealing as a source of food, attractive to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom. Scripture says she “saw.” In other words, she used her own senses to evaluate of the fruit’s worth. It *seemed* good to her for the body, soul, and mind. Don Carson writes, “Throughout Scripture, the essence of sin is to put human judgment above divine command.”^{vi} Eve trusted her own judgment, rather than looking to her Creator to be reminded of what He had already told her about it. A conscious decision to examine and lust over the fruit sent her plummeting down the slippery slope of temptation until ultimately, she ate it.
- ii. God’s Evaluation: Unlike Eve, Jesus evaluated temptation on the basis of God’s Word. His example highlights the importance of knowing Scripture, so we can use it as our final authority when faced with temptation. The word of God is a sword for fighting our enemy (Ephesians 6:17).

B. Adam’s Participation

- i. Adam’s Presence: Verse 6 tells us that after Eve ate, she gave some to her husband, *who was with her*. We can’t know how much of the conversation with the serpent Adam overheard, but since the serpent used the plural “you” in his address, Adam probably heard the entire exchange.
- ii. Adam’s Sin: Whether or not Adam overheard the conversation, he *chose* to eat, and he did so without being deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). There is no explanation in Genesis 3 about why Adam ate the fruit in Genesis 3. Since Adam named the animals, it seems he would have known it’s “crafty” nature. The only possible conclusion is that Adam simply did not believe God’s word!
- iii. The Transmitted Sinful Nature
 1. The New Testament says it is *through Adam* that sin has entered the world (Romans 5:12-14). As the first created human being, Adam is the representative of the race (Romans 5:17-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Since we come from a single ancestral lineage, every human being has inherited a sinful nature. Yet, each of us is also responsible, because we have personally chosen to sin. Romans 3:23 tells us that *all* have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard.

2. Just as all sin came into the world through one man (Adam), one man (Jesus Christ) is the sole source of salvation (Romans 5). Even after we trust Christ for forgiveness of sin, we still carry our sin nature with us until our body dies. At our conversion, a new nature is birthed, but the old nature also remains. This is reason every believer experiences conflict within.
3. Augustine used the following Latin terms to describe his understanding of man's relationship to sin:
 - a. *Posse Peccare* – Before the Fall, we were innocent but capable of sinning.
 - b. *Non Posse Non Peccare* – Since the Fall, we are not capable of preventing ourselves from sinning.
 - c. *Posse Non Peccare* – Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for believers to chose not to sin
 - d. *Non Posse Peccare* – One day in heaven, believers will no longer be able to sin!^{vii}

C. Their Eyes Were Opened – 3:7 Verse 7 indicates that after Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened. What did this fruit actually grant Adam and Eve? What was the nature of the “knowledge of good and evil?”

- i. The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
 1. Many suggestions have been offered about the nature of this fruit. They range from the conclusion that the fruit had no inherent property to grant any special benefit to Adam and Eve, to the conclusion that the fruit granted some real measure of wisdom, beyond the experience of sin.
 2. Satan suggested that by disobeying God, they would gain wisdom. The Bible says that humility and the fear of the Lord lead to wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 11:2). Adam and Eve proudly sought to gain this wisdom independently of God. Had they chosen *not* to eat from the tree, each and every refusal of the temptation would have resulted in growth in their potential to understand the blessing of choosing good over evil. They insisted on learning by personal experience rather than being tutored by God.
 3. Most significantly, any advantage Adam and Eve may have gained in eating this fruit was far outweighed by the negative consequences.

ii. Guilt and Shame

1. Adam and Eve's sudden awareness of their nakedness indicates that something within them had immediately changed. For the first time, they felt exposed, and they experienced fear and shame. Their eyes were opened to the experience of evil.
2. Sin always brings guilt, fear, shame, and ultimately, death – knowledge that God had never intended us to be burdened with. In our postmodern world, we are told that all truth is relative and that there is no such thing as “sin.” We are told that we don't need to feel guilty or ashamed. According to the Genesis record, guilt and shame are the natural consequences of disobedience to our Creator. Adam and Eve attempted to cover their shame by sewing fig leaves to hide their naked bodies. As we will see in the next lesson, their guilt and shame couldn't be hidden.

Summary Statement: Adam and Eve could never have imagined the full impact of their sin. The entire human race inherited their guilt and innumerable atrocities have been committed throughout history.

Principle: *Our enemy seeks to convince us that the consequences of our sin will be nonexistent or minimal.*

Temptation and doubt are not in and of themselves sin; but once we indulge them, we have wandered onto sin's slippery slope. Sin always takes us further than we ever intended to go. It always affects those around us. Even sins we think we can keep private will end up hurting others.

- Have you believed that you can steal just one thing from your employer and get away with it? Even if your theft is not discovered, aren't those around you at home affected when your guilty conscience leaves you impatient and likely to lash out? Whether your sin is revealed in the short term or not, there will eventually be some consequence.
- Have you believed that you can ignore the needs of your parents without consequence? Do you think your own children will not notice this and one day treat you the same way? There are always consequences.
- Is that occasional peek at pornography, or the occasional swearing when you are with others who swear, or your “inoffensive” little lie, or the slightly inappropriate touch of someone other than your spouse really of no consequence? If we have believed so, then we are indeed deceived.

Once we have indulged temptation, we have no control over where it will take us or who will be affected.

Conclusion

Onto what “slippery slope” have you been venturing? Will you believe God’s warning that the destruction from falling into this sin might be greater than you can imagine?

We have a cunning enemy who seeks to deceive us, a roaring lion posing as an angel of light, a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Let us heed the warning, for we are easily deceived.

ⁱ Tales with Morals. *The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing*. Retrieved from www.taleswithmorals.com/aesop-fable-the-

ⁱⁱ Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26. The New American Commentary, 1A*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Berkhof, L. (1938). *Systematic Theology* (220–222). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

^{iv} Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (303). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

^v Mathews, K. A. (1996). *Genesis 1-11:26. The New American Commentary, 1A* (237). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^{vi} Carson, D.A., France, R.T., Motyer, J.A. & Wenham, G.J., Ed. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. (1994). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

^{vii} Shedd, W. G. T. (2003). *Dogmatic Theology* A. W. Gomes (Ed.) (960). Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub.