

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 3:8-24

“The Consequences of Rebellion”

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Whose world is it anyway? It is God’s world because He made it. The first of the three great questions which the book of Genesis answers is answered in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 (see the introduction to Genesis which accompanies the Exegetical Notes for Genesis 1:1-2 for a fuller explanation of the three questions which Genesis asks). In Genesis 3, the focus shifts to the second great question, “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way?”

Genesis 3:8-24

Beguiled by the Evil One, the humans did not follow the clear command of God. They ate the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden which God had forbidden them to touch. Rebellion against the word of God had consequences.)

Verses 8-10

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

- After the humans had broken the command of God by eating from the tree he had forbidden them to touch, they received what the Evil One had promised (see verse 4). “Their eyes were opened, and they knew right from wrong.” They knew that disobeying God was wrong.
- When they heard God walking in the garden, they hid. The humans enjoyed a special relationship with God in the perfectly balanced world he had created for them. He was physically present with them in the garden. “Walking in the garden” is a poetic way of describing this relationship. He was with them physically in the garden.

- They hid from him because they knew they had sinned. Before they had eaten from the forbidden tree, they welcomed his presence. Now they hid from God. The special relationship that they had known with God was broken. This was the first consequence of their decision to disobey.
- But God sought them out. He called out to them. Though the relationship with God was altered and different because of their disobedience, and they were now afraid of God, God still reached out to the humans (see 2 Timothy 3:13). Even though God knew exactly what had happened, he did not rush upon the humans with judgment. Judgment will fall upon them, but God comes to them gently, even in their rebellion, offering them the opportunity to repent.
- The man answered God by explaining to God what God already knew. Their “eyes were open.” They were ashamed of their nakedness before God. They understood that God knew what they had done. Nothing can be hidden from Him

Verses 11-12

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

- God confronted the man with his rebellion. Though God knew what had happened, he still asked the man to confess.
- The man did confess his sin; he had rebelled against God by disobeying the command of God. But he tried to escape responsibility for his choice to disobey by blaming the woman for giving him fruit to eat from the forbidden tree. The second consequence of the decision to disobey God was to try to escape responsibility for sin by blaming others for one’s personal decision to disobey. The man tried to blame the woman for what had happened.
- The man even attempts to shift responsibility for his decision to disobey God to God himself. “The woman YOU put here with me.” It was because of God’s decision to put the woman in the garden with him. If God had not done that, none of this would be happening. So, in an ultimate sense, God was the one responsible.

Verse 13

¹³ ***Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”***

- The woman followed the pattern set by the man. She tried to put blame on the serpent, the Evil One, for her decision to disobey God.

Verses 14-15

¹⁴ ***So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!***

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ ***And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”***

- But God holds each of the participants in the rebellious act accountable for their own part in it. The Evil One is judged first.
- The consequences of rebellion are outlined specifically for him. He is most cursed. He will be lower than all of the rest of creation. The humans, throughout time, will struggle with him. He will seek to harm them by getting them to rebel against God, “biting their heel.” And they will seek to “crush his head” by seeking to follow God.
- These verses are traditionally explained as the first proclamation of the Gospel in the Bible. They declare that Satan will be defeated. Jesus defeated Satan, the Evil One, by dying on the cross to set humanity free from him. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the beginning of the end for the Evil One.

Verse 16

¹⁶ ***To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”***

- The woman is next to be judged for her rebellion. Childbearing will become painful labor for her. She alone can bear a child. This act is exclusively reserved to her. It should have been sheer joy for her to bear children for it is God's special gift to her. But now, it will be marked with pain and suffering as a consequence of her disobedience to God. The third consequence of disobeying God is pain, and specifically, the pain in childbirth.
- She will "desire her husband" and he will "rule over her." Woman was created as the fit helper for man. The natural order is that a woman will seek a husband and submit to his authority (see Ephesians 5: 22-33). This is the natural order. But now, women will rebel against this order and seek to take control. The fourth consequence of disobedience is the desire in woman to disregard the order God has ordained.

Verses 17-19

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;

***through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.***

***18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.***

***19 By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."***

- The man is the last to hear the consequences of his decision to disobey God. Because of him, the ground is cursed. In the world, as God had created it, the land produced. Man had dominion over it, but its production was automatic. That was the natural order which God had imposed. But now the natural order was broken. Only through the labor of man would the land produce. As with woman, what should have been man's joy, eating what the land produced, was now marked with toil and pain. This seems to be the extension of the fourth curse, the natural order of things is destroyed.

- But now the great curse on the humans is pronounced. Because of their disobedience, they will die. They will return to dust. Death had not existed before. But death was the proclaimed judgment of God for touching the forbidden fruit (see Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:2-3). Death is always the issue in the discussion. It is the issue the Evil One denies (see Genesis 3:4). That God mentions it as the curse for disobeying him before it even existed means that God understood what would happen before it happened. He knew that the humans would choose to disobey him before they did. But he gave them the right to choose. God's love is rooted in our freedom to choose to love Him or not to love Him (see John 13:23-24). Physical death is the consequence of choosing to disobey God.

Verse 20

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

- Adam is the Hebrew word for man. It now becomes the proper name of the first human male.
- Eve is the Hebrew word for mother. It now becomes the name on the first human female.
- Adam gives this name to the woman. Some scholars argue that this is not an act of dominion. But naming is an act of dominion throughout time. The natural order is that a woman will submit to her husband. Though we have already been told that this natural order is of God and that the humans will rebel against it, it still exists. God has imposed it. The act of rebelling against the God-given order is a recurring act of rebellion and disobedience which exists even today.

Verses 21-24

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

- YHWH clothes the human pair to show his forgiveness. However, the consequences of disobedience cannot be revoked.
- YHWH declares that man has gone one step too far. Man cannot be allowed to take the next step. God knows that man will eventually attempt to make himself equal to God in every way. Man cannot be trusted to trust God's provision and to obey God's word. The words which describe this reality are poetic. Man will "reach out his hand" and "take from the tree of life." Man will seek to become equal to God by seeking to make himself immortal. Immortality has been the quest of humanity from the beginning to this day. But humanity believes that they can become immortal through its own efforts without God. But the Bible teaches that eternal life is the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ (see Acts 4:11-12). Because of humanity's sinful nature, barriers must be set for humanity's protection.
- So, the humans are locked out of direct access to the tree of life. They are put out of the garden. Humanity has access to eternal life only through Jesus Christ. The final consequence for disobeying God is spiritual death.

The second great question, "How do we get along in God's world God's way," is answered. We get along in God's world God's way by choosing to trust God and to obey His word.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Genesis 3:8-24. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)