

International Bible Lesson Commentary
Genesis 3:8-21

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, September 15, 2013
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 15, 2013**, is from **Genesis 3:8-17** (for context, I have added Genesis 3:18-21 below). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the *International Bible Lesson Commentary* website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Genesis 3:8-21

(Genesis 3:8) They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

As the keeper of the garden, Adam had the responsibility to teach the woman (his wife, helper, and partner), not only about the animals and birds and their names, but also about the one and only law that God had given them to obey. When they both disobeyed God, they both learned evil by experience. For the first time they experienced pain, shame, and separation from each other and God. They lost their ability to reason clearly and thought they could hide themselves from God, their Creator.

(Genesis 3:9) But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

God loved the man and the woman that God had created in His image, and they communicated in an open and natural way until the man and woman sinned. Just as happy children will run to loving parents when they hear them come home, Adam and Eve had probably run to God, their heavenly Parent, whenever they heard God walking in the garden. The LORD God could be God the Father and God the Son walking together or the One or the Other based on what the New Testament teaches about Jesus' role in creation (see John 1 and John 17). God knew perfectly well where they were hiding, but for the first time God needed to ask, “Where are you?” His question would reveal to them more of the nature of evil and the death of a relationship that they had brought upon themselves when they sinned.

(Genesis 3:10) He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Adam answered God honestly and expressed his new feelings about himself, feelings of fear and shame. His new experience of knowing evil, and his knowledge that he had disobeyed God and his fear of the consequences (his fear of what death might mean for him) motivated him to try to hide from God. Death means separation. At physical death, our soul separates from our body, and our body returns to the ground until the resurrection. The moment Adam disobeyed God, he separated himself from God and that had both immediate and lasting consequences. He immediately experienced the spiritual death of his loving and open relationship with God and the woman. The process of death began in him, and someday his human body would die.

(Genesis 3:11) He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

God continued to ask Adam questions as part of helping Adam come to terms with and understand the consequences of his disobedience. No one told Adam that he was naked; Adam’s conscience that God had built within him accused him of being naked, of having something (his actions) to hide, a pain that

Adam thought he could cure himself by hiding a part of himself (his skin). Adam now experienced sin, shame, and guilt, but he transferred these feelings to now being ashamed of the way God had made him physically. In some sense, Adam blamed God for having made him naked. If he had not sinned, he would have been open and totally honest before God. Because he had sinned, he hid and would not admit to God, “I was afraid of You, because I disobeyed You and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree.” Instead, God had to ask Adam directly to take personal responsibility for his choices and actions by asking Adam in so many words, “Did you disobey me?”

(Genesis 3:12) The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

First, Adam blamed God for not making him “good,” for Adam said he was naked. Adam and the woman probably hid from one another too, because they were naked and tried to cover themselves in front of one another (see Genesis 3:7). He knew that when God saw him that He would see that he had disobeyed God, so he both covered himself and hid from God. God had made the man good and God had made the man naked. Though made good, Adam freely chose to disobey God and then thought his being naked was bad. Second, Adam blamed God for not giving him a “good” woman, for Adam said that she was the one who gave him the fruit to eat. However, from reading

Genesis 1, we know that God made everything good, and God had made the man and the woman good in His image. The fact that Adam had misused his abilities and blamed God for not making him and the woman “good” in his opinion revealed something of the depth of the separation between Adam and God, between Adam and the woman, and the growing experience of evil in the lives of the man and the woman in their relationships. The evil that the woman experienced led her to try to deceive her husband into eating the forbidden fruit rather than warn him not to eat the forbidden fruit because she had eaten and had suffered damaging results.

(Genesis 3:13) Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

God knew all the facts in the situation, but He examined both Adam and Eve through questions because both the man and the woman were responsible for their choices, and as their Parent and Teacher, God needed to bring this awareness to their consciousness. When Eve learned what evil was by experience, she became morally and spiritually corrupted; therefore, she wanted to involve Adam, her partner, in evil too (this is unreasonable, but it is part of the nature of evil in people; they try to spread their evil infection to others: see 2 Timothy 3:13). Rather than take responsibility for her choices, Eve blamed

the serpent. The New Testament reminds us that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not deceived (see 1 Timothy 2:14).

(Genesis 3:14) The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

We know from other scriptures that the serpent is Satan. Satan later tempted Job to sin, but Job did not fall for Satan’s tricks. Satan also tempted Jesus in the wilderness, but Jesus defeated Satan when He chose not to disobey God, His Father. God knew that Satan was not teachable, so God passed judgment against Satan immediately without discussion (there is no need for us to discuss anything with Satan, who is a deceiver). God judged that Satan would have a miserable life all the days of his life.

(Genesis 3:15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

God declared that Satan with his demonic offspring and the woman with her children would forever be enemies (whether all of the woman’s children would admit that Satan was their enemy or not). Jesus spoke about the characteristics of the children of the devil

(see John 8:44). Filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul called the magician Elymas a “son of the devil” (see Acts 13:8-12). Satan and his demonic offspring do all they can to destroy women and children (both male and female) physically, morally, mentally, and spiritually. God declared this to warn men, women, and children not to make peace with Satan, who is evil and who would require them to be and do evil as a condition of peace with him. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the only One who can bring true and lasting peace to people. Those created in the image of God must always fight against Satan and evil. In this verse, God speaks for the very first time of Satan’s ultimate defeat. Satan would strike the heel of the Messiah, Jesus, when Jesus died on the cross. On the other hand, Jesus would strike Satan’s head. Because Jesus defeated Satan and death when He rose from the dead, Jesus will someday decisively and publicly strike Satan’s head. One spiritual consequence of sin is people must never make peace with Satan, but fight him whenever he or his offspring tempt people to do evil. This battle will last until Jesus Christ comes again.

(Genesis 3:16) To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

A physical consequence of sin was God's direct punishment for the woman's disobedience, and this consequence will have an effect on all women until Jesus Christ comes again. However, her desire for her husband would overcome her shame at being naked before him and her desire to avoid the pain of childbearing, so the human race would continue. These consequences serve as reminders to people not to sin again, because there are both natural and judicial consequences when people sin. There are natural painful consequences to sin, because we have violated our human nature as created by God. And there are judicial consequences to sin, consequences that God judges we must suffer for sin.

(Genesis 3:17) And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

God did not curse the man or the woman; God designed suffering from sin to restrain the growth and spread of sin, and also give people a reason to fight against Satan's temptations rather than continue to follow his suggestions to disobey God. Sinners will often try to mislead others into sin, as the woman misled her husband, so believers must think, pray, and rely on God to avoid being misled. God punished man for his disobedience by making his work difficult

and tiring. In order to survive, people would now need to fight against weeds, struggle, and toil to make the ground grow food to meet their needs. With less leisure time and more effort needed to survive, some people would be less likely to waste their time in sinful activities and the misleading of others.

(Genesis 3:18) thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

God cursed the serpent and the ground. The serpent (Satan) and the ground will make life difficult for man and woman for as long as they live or until Jesus Christ returns to earth. At this point in biblical history, Adam, Eve, and their children could eat vegetables. After Noah, God permitted people to also eat meat. Thorns and thistles (or their substitutes) will always interfere with man's efforts to be productive in this life. No occupation on earth will be perfect, but those who trust in God can find true happiness in their work on earth (see the Beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew 5).

(Genesis 3:19) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Adam was beginning to learn more about death; death brought separation (and lack of open, honest

cooperation) between man, woman, and the ground. Sin led to God's needing to punish or discipline man for man's own benefit and future. Sin and death meant that life would be different from then on for everyone. Nature was changed. Some of the animals and plants were changed in their nature along with the ground itself. Finally, man and woman would die physically and their bodies would return to the dust of the ground.

(Genesis 3:20) The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Adam first called his wife "Woman." After she began to bear children, Adam named her "Eve." God drove them out of the garden of Eden so they could not eat of the tree of life and live forever in sin and shame. After Jesus came to save those who died and would die with a biblical faith in the true God, believers now have access to the tree of life (see Revelation 2:7; and Revelation 22:2, 14, 19). Jesus needed to come and change people before they could enjoy eternal life.

(Genesis 3:21) And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

Other than eating plants, Adam and Eve had never seen or experienced death, so they did not know what physical death meant until God taught them the meaning by experience. God graciously put an animal

to physical death instead of Adam and Eve, an animal had to die to cover them, and they saw what death was for the first time. Their sin brought about the death of an animal, and someday they would die too. They could not clothe themselves to cover their shame successfully, only God could do that with the sacrifice of an animal. They learned about animal sacrifices from God, and would later make and teach their children to make sacrifices approved by God (see the incident between Cain and Abel). Later, Jesus, the Son of God, would die to remove our sins, our guilt, our shame, and rise again to clothe us with His righteousness so we could enter the kingdom of heaven and spend eternity with God in open, honest, loving communication.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some of the ways sinners try to hide themselves from God?
2. When God already knew the answers, why do you think God asked the man and woman questions?
3. Why do you think the man was afraid of God?
4. Who did the man and the woman blame for their having sinned against God? How did sin have an effect on their relationship?

5. What two types of punishment did the man and woman experience? Do people today still experience these two types of punishment?

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