

### **Something's Wrong -The Question of The Fall Genesis 3:1-13, 21-24**

One day Adam was out hunting with his two boys and came up to the Garden of Eden where he and Eve had been kicked out for eating the forbidden fruit. Adam was staring at the Garden and one of his boys said, "Dad, what is wrong with you? Why are you crying?" Adam wiped a tear and said, "Boys, that is the Garden of Eden right there... that's where we used to live 'til mother ate us out of house and home!" ...which has to be the ultimate in passing the buck for whose fault it was for being kicked out of a perfect eternal paradise for eating the forbidden fruit because in Genesis 3 is not the real truth of the matter that God blamed Adam, Adam quickly turned the blame onto the woman who then blamed the serpent, who did not have a leg to stand on!

Now we may find it funny and laugh at such a joke until the penny drops and we realise just how serious a matter this was in the initial instance whereby a simple question and the subsequent response that lead to an action was to change the course of human history ushering in evil, suffering and death bringing about the end of eternal paradise on earth. A history that has become for us day after day, week after week, year after year a testament to the affect that the response to this question has had on us as human beings.

We only have to have followed the news this week. For instance I watched on the TV news and also read in the paper last Monday and Tuesday of the 4WD vehicle being recovered from the waters of Curio Bay down south in the Catlin's, minus two bodies that the police are searching for alive or dead. I was sickened by the thought of how could this happen? How could one human being do this to another? How could a step-father drive off a cliff killing himself along with his own step-son to a horrific end in order to deprive a mother, family and friends of the life of an 11 year old boy? Why would someone harm an innocent child? How could someone do such a thing or on an even greater scale how could one man who suffered from a history of depression and other issues, who is a pilot with Germanwings airline kill himself along with the rest of his fellow crew and the passengers numbering 149 on board a flight from Spain to Germany? Why do innocent people have to suffer?

Why have ISIS forces been able to take more ground, taking two more cities this week killing more innocent people?

Why do bad things happen to good people like the young woman who was stabbed to death in Auckland on Friday after sitting an exam?

How can such evil exist in our world? How did it get here?

The truth is that every bad thing that ever happens in this world, whether it is disease, death, depression, or destruction is rooted in the events of Genesis 3 which is about the fall of mankind, about the day sin entered into the human experience through a question and the response to it.

Let's take a look at it together beginning in verse 1.

“Now the Serpent (snake), was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God made”. In the beginning everything that God made was good, very good in fact. That was until Lucifer or ‘Light-bearer’ which is Latin for ‘morning star’, the name given to God’s most influential angel (Isaiah 14:12), arrives on the scene. An angel created by God perfect, blameless, full of wisdom and beauty (Ezekiel 28:12-17) who was to attract followers from among fellow angels. Within Lucifer’s heart the temptation of pride then grew eventually to the point where he was corrupted believing that he was equal to or even above God and therefore should be worshipped in heaven by the other angels along with God (Isaiah 14:13-14). With such a refusal to worship God the Creator and the desire to actually take God’s place in heaven he is driven from and cast out of heaven to earth as the one we know of as Satan the great deceiver. With pride in his heart and a great chip on his shoulder he has failed in his attempt to take control and receive all the glory for himself in heaven, this former highly intelligent angel of God who is now chief of all the fallen angels who have followed his lead, that the Bible labels demons and unclean spirits, in rebellion to God, he has come to earth to the garden of Eden hell-bent on opposing God and all that is good with an appetite for destruction as the prince of evil, Satan the Adversary of every good thing and purpose of God, including mankind.

Genesis 3 does not tell us whether Satan was on earth before or after mankind was created by God but we do know he was there in the Garden of Eden and that he clothed himself as a snake or serpent, one of God’s good creatures. Satan dresses up covering himself in snake

skin in order to deceive the innocent, the naked man and woman, who are as innocent as children are when they are young and feel no shame when they run around without any clothes on. It is interesting to note that the word for “crafty” and “naked” here are almost identical in the Hebrew language. So what’s his plan? How is Satan going to get this shameless couple to become ashamed, guilty and aware of their nakedness?

How is he going to exercise his hostility to God’s good creation and the attitude of “If I can’t rule it why should God so I’ll oppose and destroy it through anyway that I can. And as far as man and woman go I’ll alienate them from God. That’ll teach God. I’ll deceive them in such a way that they will willingly disobey God’s one and only command and therefore be separated from him, just like I was when cast out of God’s presence.”

And the answer is: Satan dressed up as this one snake, the serpent ‘who was more crafty than the other animals’ because it was Satan controlling the snake in disguise. *Crafty* here actually means cunning in a bad sense because it refers to a subtle and sly type of shrewdness. Imagine if you will this serpent hanging around man and woman in the Garden of Eden getting to know them and allowing them to familiarise themselves with him. Now you would think the man and the woman would be suspicious of this one and only single creature that spoke, of which they had dominion over and were to rule and subdue as God’s managing deputies on earth, but they didn’t. Rather than dismiss and send away this aberration of a rational talking animal, the woman is so distracted and deceived that she actually stops to listen to the talking animal. The morally innocent, naked, free and shameless woman listens intently to the crafty serpent’s question, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The crafty serpent with the shiny flickering tongue has engaged her attention at last with a question designed to begin the process of sowing doubt in her faith in God’s own word. We know that she is rattled because although she manages to repeat what God actually said, crafty serpent knows he’s pressed the right buttons and his subtle challenge is working it’s poison because she adds her own word’s to God’s therefore distorting it by saying “and you must not touch it” in reference to the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Not bad for speaking just once because the serpent has unearthed what was perhaps the greatest inner temptation that the woman was struggling with, and had now verbalised, the thought of extending and getting her hands on the fruit from this tree in the middle of the garden. There it is revealed. So crafty subtle shiny and flickering tongued serpent only ends up needing to speak just once more in order to reach his goal to offset the balance of trust and obedience between the man and woman and their Creator when he says “You will not certainly die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Satan dressed up as Crafty Serpent wasn't presenting this temptation as a general rebellion from God's authority but rather as a quest for wisdom and the knowledge of the “good” which the serpent implied that God was keeping from them. With his words he strikes at the very heart of human vanity artfully suggesting that the woman could doubt the very goodness of God. *If I can just get them to disbelieve in God's love, just a little, then I can turn them,* thinks the serpent. *Turn them to be just like me in my desire to exalt myself over and above God.* This ladies and gentlemen is what we call ‘pride’ and pride goes hand in hand with scepticism just as disobedience and doubt do the same thing. The teaching throughout the Bible maintains that faith is a virtue and unbelief is a sin which I know is a difficult doctrine for people of our generation brought up under the false notion that ‘everyone has the right to believe what they like’.

Soren Kirkegaard was right when he said, ‘It is so hard to believe because it is so hard to obey.’ When the inherent desire of humankind is to assert then free ourselves from obedience to God's commands.

From the beginning God has demanded that we worship only him, not ourselves. It seems that from the very beginning this command served to have the woman and man listen all the more eagerly to the sceptic who provided excellent reasons why they should doubt God's goodness, today we could add even his existence. Such self-assertion is the parent of unbelief and the existent pride is the father of doubt.

Crafty serpent suggests to the woman that God did not forbid the eating of the fruit from the tree of knowledge out of any concern for human well-being but because of God harbouring unworthy motives in wanting to

keep His divinity all to Himself not wishing to share it with any of His creatures therefore God has only pretended that there was a dreadful penalty attached to eating of the fruit, namely death! When actually the opposite was true which reveals to us the fatal weakness in this story of human nature which is humankind's desire to give the glory to self and not to the Creator, to usurp the place of God and put yourself at the centre of the universe, to set yourself up in the position which belongs to God alone, which is the sin of pride that got Satan kicked out of heaven to earth to tempt the man and woman who when they took the fruit and ate it, having their eyes opened to realise their nakedness, no longer innocent like children, producing within them a sense of shame because pride had now firmly rooted itself within man and woman which is the essence of all human sinfulness and rebellion against God.

Crafty serpent's question to the woman and her subsequent response, along with her man's, changed the course of human history because they doubted God's word. Their sinful disobedience to God's command due to the pride in their hearts brought about a response from God that affects the whole course of human history.

Man and woman lose their moral innocence and move from a state of freedom to shame because of their sin which served not only to have them banished from the Garden of Eden in judgement but alienated from God as well. Satan's plan to bring evil into the world had succeeded, the affects of which we continue to experience to this very day and will forever be affected by until the Lord returns and removes evil forever.

For whatever reason that I don't know, God allowed evil but did not create it. I know that all that God made was good, very good and that evil is not a thing but it is something that Satan desired to use to destroy God's creation starting with those who were nearest and dearest to God, man and woman made in God's image. They chose to doubt God and with the sin of pride rebelled against God ushering evil into our world. It was their responsibility and yet remains our human responsibility today to not give into it, to do evil to one another. We have the knowledge of good and evil as we do of a loving Creator God who has redeemed us from the power of sin and death. May our eyes be opened to this truth today and may we choose to live in faith and not doubt God.