

GENESIS—WEEK 5

GOD JUDGES



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*The Cover Picture is The Creation by Michael van der Borch (~1300 – 1370)
On display at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague, Netherlands*

God sees their sin and brings the hammer down on Adam and Eve, culminating in God kicking them out of the garden. Yet there is grace and hope in this.

Sin enters man, but so does the awareness of it. The stage is set for the Gospel.

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Thank you.

Genesis 3:11–22a — God Judges
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1 Genesis 3:11–13 (ESV)

He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Compared to Adam, Eve sounds like St. Francis of Assisi. Adam sounds like a 5-year-old boy trying to talk his way out of a broken cookie jar lying on the kitchen floor.

Eve actually gives a pretty straight answer—and a humble one at that. This adds to the contrast between Adam’s sin and Eve’s. Yes, Eve has fallen into sin too, but given that Adam was with her the whole time, her error was partly in trusting Adam and the serpent—who were both dreadfully untrustworthy.

But there’s another clue here that’s easy to miss, yet important to understanding what just happened. How did Eve figure out that the serpent had deceived her? Nobody told her that the serpent’s words were deceptive. Besides, her eyes were opened exactly as the serpent predicted they’d be. So far, it just looks like the serpent was right.

But as soon as Eve’s eyes were opened, she knew that something was wrong. Suddenly, she knew that she was naked and this made her afraid. And, just as suddenly, she felt shame—an emotion she knew nothing about just moments ago.

Now, fear and shame overwhelm her. She has defied a direct command from God, and, since she now knows good and evil, she knows that what she did was evil.

The serpent’s deception wasn’t mainly in the details; it was in the general idea that it’s feasible to disobey God’s command to not eat the fruit. Feasible—yes, but now Eve realizes that it’s terribly wrong.

So now Eve’s trust in the serpent’s words, “You will not surely die,” is shot. Yikes. She’s filled with stomach-turning dread.

But Eve is now smarter than before.

She knows that what the serpent said was deceitful.

The fall was a disaster like no other. The sum total of the misery caused by the fall is unfathomable.

And at the heart of the whole thing is pride.

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. — Proverbs 16:18 (KJV)

Adam and Eve weren’t content with paradise. They wanted the one thing God withheld from them.

That’s pride.

2 Genesis 3:14–16 (ESV)

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.”*

To the woman he said,

*“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”*

Was God referring to snakes or Satan when He said, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.”*?

Note that, *“he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel,”* is all in the singular—and the “he” is masculine singular. That strongly points to a specific “he.” That “he” is Jesus Christ.

Genesis 3:15 is the first direct reference to Christ in the Bible.

Thus doth the plot thicken. The “catastrophe” of the fall sets up something else, something wondrous, something that glorifies God.

Remember, the purpose of everything is God’s glory. The fall of man looks, at first glance, like a huge setback.

But something bigger is going on.

This is important. The gospel isn’t just fixing or ameliorating something bad; it’s bringing the grand plan to a glorious conclusion. Even when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, things were not going off the rails.

Everything was on track.

The “he” in Genesis 3:15 becomes flesh in the incarnation. We can never fully understand this, but we can celebrate it.

Thank God for Christmas. Thank Him especially for the magnificence of His plan. He did something no one expected.

That’s part of why the first century Jews didn’t recognize Christ for who he is—despite all the miracles. It was just too fantastic to make sense.

There’s a reason that Christmas carols are some of the greatest hymns.

They’re trying to do justice to the glory of it all.

3 Genesis 3:17–19 (ESV)

And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

If you ever doubt that God’s patience is infinite, study this passage. When Adam said, “*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate,*” God could have smacked him half way to next week. Instead of reacting harshly to Adam’s lame attempt to blame Him, God does something subtle.

In fact, His reply isn’t easy to understand. “*Because you have listened to the voice of your wife ...*” Listened to what? She didn’t say anything. Her only line was to quote (misquote) the command to the serpent. Adam *listened to the voice* of his wife, hearing his own words.

See what God is doing here? Adam is going to have a lifetime to think about this. He’s also, at this point, clearly unsaved. He needs to learn and to grow. God is playing the long game.

Adam claims that it’s Eve’s fault, and God plays along. He describes it in terms of Adam losing an argument. But since the only thing Eve said were Adam’s own words, who’s the argument with?

God’s mocking Adam! Adam either has to accept that he lost an argument with himself or get into the details of what happened, which wouldn’t go well.

And God doesn’t give him the chance anyway. He pronounces judgment and ends the conversation.

Adam will have 930 years to figure this out.

Adam was undoubtedly wracked by guilt. So are we. We all make mistakes we regret, but Christians are more sensitive to this because we have been awakened to our sinful nature.

Thus, being a Christian has a surprising element of pain, though it’s a healthy pain. We are mindful of our mistakes and thus we learn. At least we’re less likely to repeat them.

It’s important to deal with baggage from the past. If you harbor regrets, turn them over to the Lord. As we’ve seen in our study of Genesis, God has plans that incorporate even our worst blunders and sins.

Yes, we should strive to do the right thing and to learn from our mistakes.

But there are things in God’s plans that are more important than the consequences we can see.

4 Genesis 3:20–24 (ESV)

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 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 the way to the tree of life.

This passage raises three tough questions:

- 1) Why is Eve called the mother of all living when she's only the mother of people?
- 2) What does it mean when God says, "*Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.*"?
- 3) What can we learn from the way that God sentences man to surely die?

Curiously, the answer to the first is important to the third.

Calling Eve the mother of all living is a Hebrew idiom that conflates all of humanity with all of the world. It can't mean she gives life to plants and animals; there's nothing anywhere in scripture that supports that view. Note that the Hebrew word "Eve" (חַוָּה) is similar to the words for living and life-giver. So, as the mother of the future, she's given the name Eve.

In calling Eve the mother of all living, this passage honors her. That's important.

This was written in a time of extreme patriarchy; women got little respect. This passage counters that. While not written as a command (that will come later) it lays the groundwork.

Christ continued this pattern by making women the first eyewitnesses to the most important piece of evidence in history—His resurrection. At that time there was no official respect for a woman's testimony.

The New Testament will go on to directly command that respect (e.g., in Ephesians 5:25 and 1 Peter 3:7).

Like virtually all other commands, the commands to respect women are regularly disobeyed.

The second question raises huge theological issues. We begin by noting that the, "*like one of us*," is perfectly clear in the Hebrew. The Hebrew word for "one" (אֶחָד, ekhad, where the kh is a hard, throat-clearing, h sound) is in there, and the "of us" (מֵעַמּוֹתָיִם, me-men-noo) is definitely plural.

Thus, there is broad agreement in how this is translated. This needs an entire DEEP of its own.

5 Genesis 3:22a (ESV)

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.”

The “us” agrees with the Trinity doctrine, but can also be interpreted as including the heavenly host.

That’s the easy part. The tough question is, “What happened to man?” Becoming “*like one of us*” is obviously significant, but what does that mean?

Unfortunately, scripture doesn’t give us a simple answer. We are told that Adam and Eve were changed by eating the fruit. Their eyes were opened, and they suddenly knew good and evil. Curiously, in one way they were now even more in God’s image than before.

Now man is like God in the knowledge of good and evil. People have a universal sense of right and wrong, which exists innately, even in children. This is spelled out in detail in two books by CS Lewis—*The Abolition of Man* and *Mere Christianity*.

Animals show no signs of being like that. All their behaviors are just conditioned responses. That’s why dogs are house-broken, instead of being taught about the moral failings of peeing indoors.

But why not just create man knowing good and evil to begin with? Why go through all the drama?

Well, you can ask that about every event in history. Everything has a purpose, which we may or may not understand. The events of chapter three of Genesis give us the backstory of a fall into sin that defines us.

It seems at first glance to be a series of unfortunate events, but what do we know?

It’s all up to God, and it’s all for His holy purposes.

We should think and pray broadly about good and evil and what God wants us to do about it. As servants of the Lord, we should be strategic. It’s all about seeking His will and doing it.

Unfortunately, we tend to seek the Lord’s will in short-term decisions, rather than think about what He wants our goals to be.

Look around you. What needs to change? What parts of this broken world are calling you to get involved?

How can you make a difference? What are your aptitudes? What skills might you be able to add that would complete the package needed to have serious impact? Is it time to start working on the problem, or is it time to focus on training?

This is the most exciting, and most scary, kind of prayer. Seeking the Lord’s will for your life (while being seriously open to what He says) is not for the fainthearted.

Seek clarity in this. Ask God to call you in a specific direction. Pray for doors to open (or close) in clear ways so that you’ll know how to proceed.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Are you good at telling when someone is lying?
2. Do Christmas carols seem somehow “better” than most other hymns?
3. Are you troubled by guilt over things you did long ago?
4. Are the trials women face fundamentally different from the trials men face?
5. What needs in your community are you most qualified to address?