

SESSION 27: JUDGMENT, PART ONE

Genesis 3:14-19

May 5, 2024

PREFACE

On the surface of the text, Yahweh God has been interrogating the participants in this tragic drama. In truth His purpose has not been to gather information heretofore unknown to Him, but to see how each actor will respond—"to arouse a sense of guilt by a series of pedagogic questions" (Leupold). Would God's judgment upon them, which we will see in the text before us, have been softened if they had crumbled in humility before Him, confessing their sin and pleading His forgiveness? We'll never know, since their response to His questioning was quite the opposite: prideful, even blasphemous blame-shifting, and denial of any personal responsibility.

So we are now ready to hear God's individual verdicts for their behavior in this sad affair.

The serpent: vv14-15

The woman: v16

The man: v17-19

Read Genesis 3:14-19.

Several questions can be raised by the respective judgments:

- Does "on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat" mean that prior to this the serpent did *not* move about on his belly?
- Would childbirth have been painless absent Eve's transgression?
- Would the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife have been different without Adam and the woman's sin?
- Would "thorns and thistles"—i.e., weeds—have not been an issue for farmers and gardeners absent the curse of v17?

We will see if we can find answers for some of these in the text before us.

I take it that there is an ascending order to Yahweh's three verdicts. The man Adam bears the greatest responsibility—both personal and corporate—so he will be addressed third and last, and the longest. The woman comes second. The serpent is addressed first, and almost dismissively; note that Yahweh did not even bother to question him.

The order of the narrative reflects the order of the individual's actions, but the *ascending* order and assigned weight of responsibility, seems to reflect, first, man's rule over the animal kingdom.

Read Genesis 1:26.

Second, here is laid the foundation for the God-ordained family structure the apostle Paul speaks of.

Read Ephesians 5:22-24.

Paul then balances this with instructions for the husband.

Read Ephesians 5:25-28a.

Thus the earth-bound relationship between husband and wife is to reflect the universal relationship between Christ and His church. And we see the beginnings of this in Yahweh's verdict cast upon this trio of sinners.

John Sailhamer makes what I believe to be an excellent point.

Sailhamer: The thoughts of the snake, if there were such, or the thoughts of the man and woman are left completely out of the picture. The narrative gives nothing to help understand their plight as individuals. The snake, the woman, and the man are not depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather they are representatives. We are left with the impression that this is not their story so much as it is *our* story, the story of mankind. With great skill the author presents these three participants as the "heads" of their race. The snake, on the one hand, and the man and the woman, on the other, are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant "seed" or "offspring."

As Sailhamer points out, it doesn't really matter that we know so little about these three individuals:

- What was the serpent's means of locomotion prior to this?
- What color was the woman's hair?
- What age did Adam appear to be?
- What "race" were the humans? What was the color of their skin?

None of that matters, for in the scope of God's biblical narrative—Genesis to The Revelation—each of these three are representing something—indeed, many things—larger than themselves.

Here we have the establishment of "the curse"—the condition and environment under which every one of us was brought into this world. Often the words "fall" and "curse" are used interchangeably for the events of Chapter Three, but they are separate. Man's *fall* from grace occurred at the moment of their disobedience: the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here in this passage, vv14-19, is when God pronounces His *curse* upon the serpent, man and woman, and the earth itself, as the *result* of their fall.

v14: THE SERPENT

*And Yahweh God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than any of the cattle,
And more than every beast of the field..."*

The first to be cursed—*arur* (ah-RAHR)—is the instigator of this tragedy, the serpent. 📖 There is a bit of word-play going with that word translated "cursed": in v1 the serpent was called "crafty," or "clever" (*arum*) now he is cursed (*arur*), which means that God is reviling him, denouncing him, abhorring him, which is termed an *execration*. In one sense we might see this—the serpent's now cursed state—as the polar opposite of holiness. He may have been created pure, sinless; now he is consigned to the bowels of evil.

But we must not forget that the serpent is simply the agent for Satan—not just in what he performs in his name, but as the immediate recipient of his lord's punishment, which we will see more clearly in the next verse.

For some inexplicable reason Leupold says the serpent is a "she," but the verbs and pronouns are all masculine singular.

*On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;*

There are a couple of ways to interpret this second part of v14, the difference between them being the level of, shall we say, “cursedness.”

Some commentators say that the emphasis here is not on being on his belly; that may not be a part of the curse, as he may have been created that way. Instead, they say, the emphasis is on “dust you will eat all the days of your life.” And they rightly point to that being in God’s word a sign of total defeat, in a number of passages.

Read Micah 7:15-17. 📖

also Isaiah 65:25

So the serpent eating dust is a visual reminder even now of the ultimate defeat of Satan in his war against Christ. Note, however, in that passage we just read, in v17:

***“They will lick the dust like a serpent,
Like crawling things of the earth.”*** (emphasis added)

K&D add that the same curse of “on your belly you will go” should be included along with eating dust. That is, here is grounds for concluding that the serpent was indeed an either two- or four-footed beast prior to the curse, that slithering along the ground like today’s snakes was a change for him. For both conditions are used in God’s word for defeat and labeling something “detestable,” as in Leviticus 11:42.

[Yahweh spoke,] ‘Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, whatever has many feet, in respect to every swarming thing that swarms on the earth, you shall not eat them, for they are detestable.’

v15

Now let’s be honest: this verse, being a mix of prophecies, can be confusing. But God’s word is filled with prophecies that have more than one application, as we have seen repeatedly in prophecies that are “now—not yet.” Here, however, in addition to that, we have application to both individuals and groups, singular and plural, metaphorical and realistic.

Remember, these three individuals—the serpent, the woman, and the man—are more than just themselves: actual, historical beings. Each also represents either another individual or group.

The serpent being addressed by Yahweh God is the immediate recipient of God’s curse, but at the same time represents his master Satan, receiving *his* curse as well. Verse 14 speaks to the earthly being; v15 now speaks to the eternal, evil angel, Satan.

**“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

Many refer to v15 as the “fifth gospel”—or, perhaps more accurately, the *first* gospel—for here we have the first mention of the Savior (“seed,” *zarah*, singular). Here we have the prophecy that sets up the cosmic battle (“enmity” (*eba*), hostility, hatred) between Satan and Christ Jesus. ➡

The operative verb here is more often than not translated “bruise,” which really doesn’t sound so bad. But the Hebrew word is *shuph*, which here means to break, smite in pieces, crush; to greatly injure or wound. More important than the verb is the location of each wound:

- The Son of God will receive His fatal blow at the cross, but since He will be raised from the grave, it will be as if He was only wounded “on the heel.”
- Satan, however, will have his “head” crushed, and there will be no recovery from that.

From the beginning days of Creation, Satan’s fate was sealed. Christ will have the ultimate victory over His ancient nemesis when Satan is destroyed forever, in the lake of fire, during the very Last Things (Revelation 20:10).

Satan, here represented by the serpent, would indeed bruise the seed of the woman (Messiah)—i.e., an injurious blow; but Messiah would ultimately “crush” the *head* of Satan—i.e., a fatal blow. As it was and will be played out, Christ Jesus (“the seed” of the woman) was indeed killed, but was raised to life, and ultimately will reign over all things in an eternal kingdom, while Christ’s adversary will go down to defeat, and an eternal life in fire.


In response to those who take issue with this interpretation, claiming, no, the text just describes the common interaction between humans and snakes, Leupold writes, “Now enmity (*’ēbhah*) is a term not applicable to dumb beasts. Its scriptural use limits it, like its verb root, to enmity between persons or morally responsible agents. This fact alone, as well as the sequel, rules out the idea of mere *hostility*, which is not enmity, between man and serpents.”

*“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;*

As I said, although Yahweh’s words in v15 are being addressed to the physical serpent, they are really being directed toward his master, Satan. Don’t miss that Yahweh God is directing this; this is not just a prophecy, but represents God’s intentional design. God states the “I will put” this enmity in place between Satan and the woman, between evil sin and Messiah, and, in a broader sense, between Satan’s evil and all the human race.

God is not the author of the evil in Satan, but it is righteous that he creates and sustains in humans an enmity—personal hostility—against evil.

*He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

To be fair, we do not—and cannot—reach these conclusions from this text alone;  this verse establishes the very foundation of God’s program of salvation for the human race, which finds its dramatic, cataclysmic finale recorded in The Revelation (specifically Revelation 11:15-22:21)—the final battles between good and evil, with evil being vanquished forever and an eternal righteousness and holiness with Christ enjoyed by His followers for all eternity.

In the past I have heard and read some definitions of the “inductive Bible study method” that restrict your study of any verse or passage to that text alone, a method with which I energetically disagree. And this verse is a perfect example of how that method cannot always work: one cannot glean the deep substance of this verse and passage without referencing and citing the events of the Apocalypse, and even vast portions of Scripture as a whole.

SESSION 27

Judgment, part one
Genesis 3:14-19

Individual Verdicts

- The serpent: vv14-15
- The woman: v16
- The man: v17-19

An Ascending Order

there is an ascending order to Yahweh's three verdicts. The man Adam bears the greatest responsibility—both personal and corporate—so he will be addressed third and last, and the longest. The woman comes second. The serpent is addressed first, and almost dismissively; note that Yahweh did not even bother to question him.

The order of the narrative reflects the order of the individual's actions, but the *ascending* order and assigned weight of responsibility, seems to reflect, first, man's rule over the animal kingdom (**Genesis 1:26**), second, here is laid the foundation for the God-ordained family structure the apostle Paul speaks of (**Ephesians 5:22ff**).

Representatives

Sailhammer: The thoughts of the snake, if there were such, or the thoughts of the man and woman are left completely out of the picture. The narrative gives nothing to help understand their plight as individuals. The snake, the woman, and the man are not depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather they are representatives. We are left with the impression that this is not their story so much as it is our story, the story of mankind. With great skill the author presents these three participants as the “heads” of their race. The snake, on the one hand, and the man and the woman, on the other, are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant “seed” or “offspring.”

Curse or Fall?

Often the words “fall” and “curse” are used interchangeably for the events of Chapter Three, but they are separate. Man's *fall* from grace occurred at the moment of their disobedience: the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here in this passage, vv14-19, is when God pronounces His *curse* upon the serpent, man and woman, and the earth itself, as the *result* of their fall.

v15

These three individuals—the serpent, the woman, and the man—are more than just themselves: actual, historical beings. Each also represents either another individual or group. The serpent being addressed by Yahweh God is the immediate recipient of God's curse, but at the same time represents his master Satan, receiving *his* curse as well. Verse 14 speaks to the earthly being; v15 now speaks to the eternal, evil angel, Satan.

Many refer to v15 as the “fifth gospel”—or, perhaps more accurately, the first gospel—for here we have the first mention of the Savior (“seed,” *zarah*, singular). Here we have the prophecy that sets up the cosmic battle (“enmity” (*eba*), hostility, hatred) between Satan and Christ Jesus.

For complete notes and audios for each session, go to DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/

