



A word on the Word

A monthly series on the Bible by Carrie Boren, Missioner for Evangelism

Hope from the Fall Genesis 3

“The Lord God said to the serpent ... ‘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’” (Gen. 3:14a-15).

The Creation narrative of Genesis depicts God’s vision for the world and humankind. He beautifully and tenderly created man and woman in His divine image, and they were in perfect harmony with Him and one another.

However, Adam and Eve quickly broke this glorious, dynamic unity as they defied God’s rules in an attempt to go their own way. God had commanded that they were not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In love and friendship, He gave them the ability to choose because He wanted them — and us — to respect and submit fully to His laws of their own volition.

Chapter 3 paints the picture of their denial of God’s law and rejection of trust. The serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit. It was pleasing to her eye, she desired wisdom, and so she ate it and gave it to Adam who was with her. They decided to go their own way instead of God’s way. It was SIN — pride, selfishness, disobedience, and arrogance. As a result, alienation ensued and is still with us today. Sin tainted and twisted God’s perfect harmony with His creation.

Some might say this story is an outdated fable, but I believe it is a profound analysis of the human condition. Disobedience brought about five consequences.

Spiritual alienation — The man and his wife heard God walking in the garden, and they hid. Adam said he felt shame because he was naked. They no longer felt comfortable with God. Today, like Adam, we run from God to hide our mess-ups and guilt. Sin has infected us.

Internal alienation — Because they felt shame, they covered up with fig leaves. We also cover up the things we don’t like about ourselves. We work hard to cultivate an image to cover who we really are — perhaps through material things or worldly success. All of us are caught in this trap.

Social alienation — God questioned Adam, and Adam blamed Eve for their disobedience. This was the beginning of rifts in relationships. From dysfunctional families to broken marriages to wars between nations, sin has ruptured harmony between human beings.

Vocational alienation — Because of the fall, Scripture tells us, women will have pain in childbearing and men will engage in painful toil. Work on earth will be difficult and no longer a joyful blessing.

Physical alienation — From the day we are born, our bodies are disintegrating. In Gen. 3:19, God says, “For dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Each of these consequences is evident in the human condition and represents some form of death. We, whom God created out of love and for his glory, are now separated from Him, and our hearts long to return to a relationship with Him. We often sense this emptiness and yearning and cannot place the pain. St. Augustine wrote, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

The Good News is that, from the beginning, God in His infinite mercy had a plan to rescue the world. The Bible’s story relates His design for bringing us back into full union with Him.

Because of our sin, we all need a Savior. From the Garden forward, the Old Testament points to the coming of that Savior who will bring us back into relationship with God. In Gen. 3:15, God explained that the woman’s offspring would eventually crush the serpent’s head — a promise Christ fulfilled in His victory over Satan.

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In His plan to bring salvation to the world, God chose a tribe from which this Savior would come. The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you ... and all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:1-3).

God brought the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt, took them to the Promised Land, provided them a king, built them a temple through Solomon, and promised them a Messiah. The exodus from Egypt, however, was only partial. Before Christ, Israel was free from Egypt but not from the internal bonds of sin.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets foretold the coming Messiah. He would come from David’s line; administer many healings (Isa. 35:2-6); suffer and carry our iniquities so that we could be healed and forgiven (Isa. 52:13-53:7); and die and rise again (Ps. 22, Isa. 42, 49, 52, 53, Jonah).

Then it happened, **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** God came to earth. The Father sent His Son to save the human race. He was the only one without sin. Truly God and truly man, He embodied the divine image of God and, therefore, was the only one who could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

During this Advent, let us enter into the wonder of the incarnation. Our Savior has come and begun to reverse the alienation that resulted from the Fall.

Jesus’ sacrifice:

Reverses spiritual alienation — He forgives our sin so that we can come back into union with God. Jesus is waiting for us to respond to His gift of forgiveness. If we accept it, we can walk with God like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. We can have intimacy with our God and rest in Him because He loves us unconditionally and accepts us totally.

Reverses internal alienation — Through Jesus’ redemptive act on the cross, God begins to take the darkness in our lives and turn it to light. We need no longer be ashamed of who we are. We can become God’s children.

Reverses social alienation — The more we see ourselves as forgiven and loved, the more we are able to forgive and love others. The Holy Spirit can bring healing into our lives and relationships.

Reverses vocational alienation — We need no longer live our lives just to make money or chase some form of fleeting happiness. Our work becomes a way to honor God in whatever He has called us to do. We are to be His light in all places. We can now see work through the lens of Jesus Christ.

Reverses physical alienation — He promises that when He returns, the dead will have a total reversal of physical degeneration. We will have new bodies.

This **radical reversal** of the alienation all of us have felt — the heavy burdens, uncertainties, shame, guilt, and anxiety — is the good news of Jesus. We are saved. Jesus Christ is alive today and wants to dwell in our hearts.