

Lesson 14 Genesis 3:14-19

Genesis for Families

Genesis 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shall thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shall thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return.

Commentary

Some teach that the serpent was already in the physical form that we know today and it was an evil spirit that had entered the serpent and used his body to tempt Eve to sin. What did the serpent look like before the fall? We simply do not know and to try and guess is mere foolishness. The curse of God on the serpent makes no sense if his appearance was as we know it today. The serpent did not expect to crawl out of there on his belly and to spend the rest of eternity crawling around in the dust of the earth or God would not have told him this was his new position in life on earth. “3:14 *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shall thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life.*” We know from the previous text that the serpent was subtler than any other beast God had created. This can mean capable of complex and precise thought, or of using natural things that seem harmless to get their way. Something happens in the curse we just do not have enough information to know precisely what. For example the fox is much more cunning than a serpent in our world, yet it is said the serpent was the most subtle. I prefer a literal reading here and the serpent was a desirable beast prior to the fall and not to be feared, though to Adam and Eve the keepers of all things created by God no beast would have caused them fear. I then would say the serpent was physically changed in the fall and thus the curse had meaning. The early Jewish writers say this word meant wise in the ways of evil. That doesn’t fit the text and explain the curse of crawling in the dust either.

“3:15 *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*” This means a perpetual state of war, complete distrust. We see this today in that most people have a natural disdain if not fear of serpents. This special place in relation to man is seen in many of the ancient religions that saw this difference and set up different gods and ceremonies to worship the serpent.

What is called the proto-evangel or the first type of the revelation of Christ is seen in this verse. The seed of the woman is an interesting wording and reveals that something special is taking place. Females

do not have seed they have eggs, even in the human realm this is true. We need to pay particular attention that the word is seed, not seeds. This singular wording is also part of the revelation. We are reminded of this singular usage in the New Testament when it is noted that the seed spoken of by God to Abraham is also singular. Galatians 3:16 *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”* Throughout the Bible the word is singular when mentioning Christ whether in the Old or New Testament. It is not stretching the imagination then to see that as God speaks here in the curse to Satan (the serpent) God reveals to Adam and Eve to whom God has not addressed His wrath yet the promise of a Savior.

God’s curse of Eve is also revealing. First the implication is that childbirth would not be painful and a tremendous trial of women as it is now. We see this somewhat in the witness of nature where it is only so-called domestic animals in close association with man that seem to need any assistance in childbirth. There is an interesting word used here too. The word we translate desire in English has nothing to do with the natural desire for love between human beings, as it might appear to be. Instead this Hebrew word is the picture of a vicious animal that is standing over a person ready to completely devour them. This word is only used one other place in the Bible and that is when God reveals Cain’s sin to Cain. In effect then God has said to the woman you will want to be the boss and lord it over the male but this isn’t going to happen, man will rule over you. The big battle of the sexes that has raged throughout history is part of the curse of God on mankind for the first sin. This is why it is said elsewhere in the Bible that when women and children rule it is not a blessing but the curse of God. It has never been a matter of can or being able but of obedience to God who placed women in this place because woman was the first to sin. Paul uses this order of who sinned first in explaining this same thing about the proper place of women in the family and church.

Last God turns His attention to man and because of the greater sin of man to whom God had given charge of all things the whole of creation is cursed because of this sin of Adam that will bring death to the garden to abide with man ever after until the last day when this final enemy shall also be defeated by Christ.

Would there be death if Adam had not sinned? The Bible implies it would not have been but that sin introduced death and created the need of a Savior not only spiritually, but to insure the life everlasting was also restored to man. The end of the world isn’t an all-new creation as some think, but it is properly more of a renewal. The best way is to see it as the lifting of the curse by God on all creation. The New Testament says that all of creation waits for this day when the real sons of God are made manifest and the curse is thus lifted. The last words bring to us the words used in the commitment of the body to the ground in Christian funeral services. It also gives understanding to the word in the New Testament where we read it is given that all men shall once die, then the judgment.

Application

First lesson for us is that unless the text itself demands it be treated otherwise the best way to understand the Bible is exactly as it reads taking the words to mean exactly what they say. God doesn’t hide His meaning from us as the purpose of the Bible is to reveal Jesus Christ to those whom God has chosen. All others are not going to believe it anyway. If we will take the time to look we will find that the nature of the beast is revealed in the Bible not on the couch of some therapist. The Bible is the source of all truth. The most popular way isn’t always the way God reveals things to us. We do not decide what is true by

taking a vote. The old Puritan principle should always be applied to the Scriptures as we read them: 1. What does it say? 2. What does it mean? 3. What am I supposed to do about it?

Questions

- What was the serpent like before the fall?
- What verse is known as the proto-evangel?
- Why would we say it is foolish to ask questions like the first one here?
- Who sinned first and what effect did this have on the perfect relationship God created between men and women?
- When will all of creation rejoice together and why?