

Genesis Chapter 3 Notes (Defenders Study Bible by Henry Morris)

3:1 *serpent*. The “serpent” was not merely a talking snake, but was Satan himself (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) possessing and using the serpent’s body to deceive Eve. Satan had been originally “created” (see notes on Ezekiel 28:14,15) as the highest of all angels, the anointed cherub covering the very throne of God in heaven. He, along with all the angels, had been created to be “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). Not content with a role inferior in two important respects to man (angels were not created in God’s image, nor could they reproduce after their kind, there being no female angels), Satan led a third of the angels (Revelation 12:4, 9) to rebel against God, seeking to become God himself. Evidently, he did not really believe that God was the omnipotent Creator, but rather that all had evolved from the primeval chaos (probably the explanation for the widespread ancient pagan belief that the world began in a state of watery chaos). God, therefore, “cast [him] to the ground” (Ezekiel 28:17), thus allowing Satan to tempt the very ones he had been created to serve.

3:1 *subtil*. The physical serpent was clever, and possibly originally able to stand upright, eye-to-eye with man (the Hebrew word is *nachash*, possibly meaning originally a shining, upright creature).

3:1 *he said*. There is a possibility that some of the animals may have originally been able to communicate on an elementary level with their human masters, an ability later removed by the Curse. More likely, God merely allowed Satan to use the serpent’s throat (as He later allowed Balaam’s ass to speak—Numbers 22:28) and Eve was, in her innocence, not yet aware of the strangeness of it.

3:1 *hath God said*. The root of all sin is doubting God’s Word. Satan used this approach successfully even with one who had never sinned before and who had no sin-nature inclining her to sin. Satan merely implanted a slight doubt concerning God’s veracity and His sovereign goodness. The approach so successful in this case has provided the pattern for his temptations ever since.

3:3 *touch it*. Eve, in her developing resentment against God, fell into Satan’s trap, both taking away from God’s Word and adding to it. God had said they could “freely eat of every tree” (Genesis 2:16); Eve quoted Him merely as saying they could eat of the trees. God had said they should not eat of the fruit of one tree; Eve added the statement that they should not even touch it. These are the very sins God warned about after His written Word was finally completed (Revelation 22:18,19). Doubting God’s Word, augmenting, then diluting, and finally rejecting God’s Word—this was Satan’s temptation and Eve’s sin, and this is the common sequence of apostasy even today.

3:4 *the serpent*. It is interesting that two clay seals found in the archaeological digs at Nineveh may reflect the story of the fall of Adam and Eve. One seems to show the man and woman being tempted by the serpent, the other their expulsion from the garden.

3:5 *be as gods*. Satan’s sin led him to desire to be as God, and this was the desire he placed in Eve’s mind (see notes on Isaiah 14:13,14). In fact, when one questions or changes the Word of God, he is, for all practical purposes, making himself to be “god.”

3:5 *knowing good and evil.* Satan's deceptions are always most effective when they have some truth in them. Through eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve would indeed come to "know good and evil," but not "as gods!"

3:6 *make one wise.* The threefold temptation, appealing to body ("good for food"), soul ("pleasant to the eyes") and spirit ("make one wise"), was the same by which Satan appealed to Christ in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-12), and against which Christians are warned in I John 2:16 ("the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life").

3:6 *he did eat.* It was at this point that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). There could have been no death in the world before man brought sin into the world. Thus, the fossils in the earth's crust cannot be a record of the evolution of life leading up to man but must be a record of death after man. In the evolutionary scenario, struggle and death in the animal kingdom eventually, after a billion years, brought man into the world. The truth is, however, that man brought death into his whole dominion by his sin.

3:7 *naked.* The sudden recognition of their nakedness indicates the realization of Adam and Eve that their descendants, as well as themselves, would suffer the effects of this original sin. The ability and instruction to be fruitful, given by God as a unique blessing, now would also convey the curse of sin and death. Adam was the federal head of the human race, and it was "through the offence of one many be dead" (Romans 5:15).

3:7 *fig leaves.* The hasty fabrication of fig leaf aprons might conceal their procreative organs from each other, but could hardly hide their sin from God. Neither will the "filthy rags" of self-made "righteousnesses" (Isaiah 64:6) cover sinful hearts today. The "garments of salvation" and the "robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10) can be provided only by God, just as God provided coats of skins for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21).

3:8 *walking in the garden.* This is not a crude anthropomorphism, but an actual theophany. The "Word of God," Christ in His preincarnate state, regularly appeared in the garden for fellowship and communication with His people. How long this period of fellowship had endured is not stated, but it was long enough for the Satanic rebellion in heaven and expulsion to earth. Since it was not long enough for Eve to conceive children, however, and since she and Adam had been instructed by God to do so, it was probably not more than a few days or weeks.

3:10 *hid myself.* The shame associated with nudity is no artificial inhibition of civilization, but has its source in this primeval awareness of sin. It is only lost when consciences are so hardened as to lose sensitivity to sin. Clothing is even worn in heaven (Revelation 1:13; 19:14).

3:11 *Hast thou eaten.* God's questions were not to obtain information, but to encourage Adam and Eve to confess their sin. Instead of repentance, however, they responded by feeble attempts at self-justification, each blaming someone else. In this, they behaved like most of their descendants.

3:14 *cursed above all cattle.* God's Curse fell first on the Serpent, representing man's great enemy, the devil, as a perpetual reminder to man of his fall. All other animals were also placed under the Curse, as part of man's dominion, but the Serpent was cursed above all others, becoming a universal object of

dread and loathing. Whatever may have been its original posture, it would henceforth glide on its belly, eating its prey directly off the ground, and covered with the dust of the earth.

3:15 enmity between thee. This verse is famous as the Protevangel (“first gospel”). The Curse was directed immediately towards the Serpent, but its real thrust was against the evil spirit possessing its body, “that old serpent, called the Devil” (Revelation 12:9). Satan may have assumed he had now won the allegiance of the woman and all her descendants, but God told him there would be enmity between him and the woman.

3:15 her seed. The “seed of the woman” can only be an allusion to a future descendant of Eve who would have no human father. Biologically, a woman produces no seed, and except in this case Biblical usage always speaks only of the seed of men. This promised Seed would, therefore, have to be miraculously implanted in the womb. In this way, He would not inherit the sin nature which would disqualify every son of Adam from becoming a Savior from sin. This prophecy thus clearly anticipates the future virgin birth of Christ.

3:15 bruise thy head. Satan will inflict a painful wound on the woman’s Seed, but Christ in turn will inflict a mortal wound on the Serpent, crushing his head. This prophecy was fulfilled in the first instance at the cross, but will culminate when the triumphant Christ casts Satan into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

3:15 bruise his heel. This primeval prophecy made such a profound impression on Adam’s descendants that it was incorporated, with varying degrees of distortion and embellishment, in all the legends, mythologies and astrologies of the ancients, filled as they are with tales of mighty heroes engaged in life-and-death struggles with dragons and other monsters. Mankind, from the earliest ages, has recorded its hope that someday a Savior would come who would destroy the devil and reconcile man to God.

3:16 multiply thy sorrow. Had Eve not sinned, the experience of childbirth would have been easy and pleasant, like every other experience in the perfect world God had made. The Curse, however, fell in a peculiar way on Eve and her daughters, and the pain and sorrow of conception and birth would be greatly multiplied.

Nevertheless, the bearing of children, especially by a woman who loves God and seeks to obey Him, is a time of blessing and rejoicing even though accompanied by a time of suffering (John 16:21). In the experience of giving birth, every woman experiences by proxy, as it were, the privilege granted Mary when she became the mother of the promised Seed. Furthermore, she even becomes a type of Christ, who “shall see His seed...He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:10-11). The suffering is submerged in the rejoicing, and this in itself goes far toward mitigating the physical pain (note I Timothy 2:15).

3:16 rule over thee. She who had acted independently of her husband in her desire for the forbidden fruit must henceforth exercise her desires through her husband, and he would be ruler in the family. This prophecy has been fulfilled throughout history, in every time and nation.

To the woman who knows God, however, especially in the full light of Christianity, her role of submission to God and to her husband becomes her means of greatest fulfillment and happiness. The

“rule” of a true Christian husband is not one of harshness and subjugation, but one of loving companionship and caring responsibility (Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 5:22-33; I Peter 3:1-7; etc.).

3:17 unto Adam. The full force of the Curse fell on Adam, as the responsible head of the human race, and on all his dominion. Instead of believing God’s Word, Adam had “hearkened to the voice of his wife,” and she had been beguiled by the voice of the serpent. It is always a fatal mistake to allow the words of any creature to take precedence over the Word of God.

3:17 cursed is the ground. The “ground” is the same word as “earth.” The very elements of matter, out of which all things had been made, were included in the Curse, so that the “whole creation” (Romans 8:22) was brought under bondage to a universal principle of “corruption” (literally “decay”—Romans 8:21). That is, all things had been built up by God from the basic elements of matter (“the dust of the earth”), but now they would all begin to decay back to the dust again. The curse evidently applies to the entire physical cosmos, as well as to the planet Earth, though it is possible that the decay principle operating in the stars and the other planets may relate also to the prior sin of the angelic “host of heaven.”

3:17 for thy sake. The curse was not only a punishment for man’s disobedience but also a provision for man’s good, forcing him to recognize the seriousness of his sin, to realize the folly of trusting anyone but his Creator, and his inability to save himself from destruction. This would encourage him to a state of true repentance toward God and to trust in God to save him. Analogously, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which is the modern scientific statement of this decay principle (see notes on Genesis 1:1), though pointing toward an ultimate death of the universe, at the same time points back to a primeval creation and therefore compels men to look toward the Creator as its only possible Savior.

3:18 thistles. It seems unlikely that God actually created thorns and thistles at this time. More probably, He allowed the beneficent processes and structures He had made previously, all of which were “very good” initially, to deteriorate in varying degrees, some even becoming harmful to man and to each other. There exists now a host of systems in nature (disease, bacteria, viruses, parasites, fangs and claws, weeds and poisons, etc.) which reflect a state of conflict, predation, and struggle for existence in the plant and animal kingdoms, as well as in human life, all of which seems, at first, to be inconsistent with the concept of an ideal creation. In the physical world there are storms and earthquakes, extremes of heat and cold, weathering and disintegration, and many other unpleasant phenomena. There is still need for research to understand the mechanisms by which this change of state from the perfect creation was brought about. In plants and animals, beneficent structures may either have mutated to malevolent structures or else have been replaced through natural selection by recessive characteristics, coded into the genetic system by God at the time of creation in anticipation of the future environmental changes that might be necessitated if Adam used his freedom wrongfully.

These systems and processes now maintain a balance of nature and so are indirectly beneficial in maintaining life on a cursed earth, even though individual organisms all eventually die. Had the Fall and Curse not taken place, populations would probably have eventually been stabilized at optimum values by divine constraints on the reproductive process. With God’s personal presence withdrawn for a time, however, it is more salutary to maintain order by these indirect constraints associated with the Curse, adding still further to the testimony that the world is now travailing in pain, awaiting its coming Redeemer.

3:19 *sweat of thy face.* The Curse on Adam had four main aspects: (1) *sorrow*, because of the futility of endless struggle against a hostile environment; (2) *pain*, signified by the thorns; (3) *sweat*, or *tears*, the “strong crying” occasioned by the labor necessary to maintain life and hope; and (4) eventual physical *death* in spite of all his efforts, returning back to the dust.

But Christ, as the second Adam, has borne the curse for us (Galatians 3:13), as the “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3), wearing the *thorns* and suffering the greatest *pain* (Mark 15:17), acquired by *strong crying* (Hebrews 5:7) to *sweat* as it were drops of blood before being finally brought into the *dust of death* (Psalm 22:15). And because He so suffered for us, once again someday God will dwell with men, and “there shall be no more *death*, neither *sorrow*, nor *crying*, neither shall there be any more *pain*” (Revelation 21:4). Indeed there shall be “no more curse” (Revelation 22:3).

3:19 *dust thou art.* The Curse thus applies to man and woman, to the animals and to the physical elements, God’s whole creation. It is so universal as to have been discovered and recognized empirically as a general scientific law, the law of increasing entropy (“in-turning”). This famous Second Law of Thermodynamics is sometimes also called the law of morpholysis (“loosing of structure”). It expresses the universal tendency for systems to decay and become disordered, for energy to be converted into forms unavailable for further work, for information to become confused, for the new to become worn, for the young to become old, for the living to die, even for whole species to become extinct. One of the most amazing anomalies of human thought is that the concept of evolution, which has never been observed in action scientifically and is exactly the opposite of the universally proved scientific principle of increasing entropy. This theory is nevertheless believed to be the most fundamental principle of nature by almost the entire intellectual establishment!

3:20 *Eve.* Eve means “life,” and her name indicates Adam’s faith in God’s promise that the “woman” would bear a Seed. Even though he realized he was going to die, Adam still believed that God would provide life. He had disobeyed God’s Word by partaking of his wife’s forbidden fruit; now he believed God’s Word centered on his wife’s fruitfulness. Since true faith is always accompanied by repentance, it is evident that Adam had turned away from Satan and back to God. No doubt Eve had done the same, desiring now to follow her husband instead of leading him.

3:20 *all living.* There were no children at this time, so this statement is apparently an editorial insertion by Moses, testifying that all mankind had descended from Adam and Eve. There were no “pre-Adamite” men (compare I Corinthians 15:45, speaking of “the first man Adam”), nor were there any pre-Fall children, since “in Adam all die” (I Corinthians 15:22).

3:21 *coats of skin.* This action is very instructive in several ways: (1) God considers clothing so vital in this present world that He himself provided it for our first parents; (2) the aprons fashioned by Adam and Eve were inadequate, testifying in effect that man-made efforts to prepare for God’s presence will be rejected; (3) the clothing provided by God required shedding the blood of two animals, probably two sheep, who were thus the first creatures actually to suffer death after Adam’s sin, illustrating the basic Biblical principle of substitutionary atonement (or “covering”), requiring the shedding of innocent blood as a condition of forgiveness for the sinner.

3:22 *as one of us.* Once again there is a divine council of the Godhead, this time to decree man’s expulsion from the garden. Man’s ultimate restoration requires his full instruction in the effects of sin and separation from God.

3:22 *tree of life.* The delicious fruit of the tree of life had been freely available to Adam and Eve, but it was not *necessary* for their survival. It was only eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that would result in death (Genesis 2:17). The same will apply when the tree of life is planted again in the new earth. Its fruit and leaves will be freely available for food (Revelation 22:2), but it will not be necessary for survival, since there will be no more death there (Revelation 21:4). However, it did contain such wonderful health-giving ingredients that it would have enabled people to survive to tremendous ages even after sin and death entered the world, and this would have undermined God's intended purpose for death (see note on Genesis 3:17). The words "for ever" in this verse are from the Hebrew *olam*, which can also legitimately be translated a "long time," depending on context (e.g., Isaiah 42:14). It is also used for the "lasting hills" (Deuteronomy 33:15).

3:22 *live for ever.* The fruit of the tree of life will be freely available to all in the new earth (Revelation 2:7; 22:1-2).

3:23 *sent him forth.* Evidently Adam and Eve were reluctant to leave their beautiful garden home and God's personal fellowship, but it was for their own good, and God finally "drove out" those whom He loved (Genesis 3:24).

3:24 *Cherubims.* The cherubim are apparently the highest beings in the hierarchy of angels, always associated with the immediate presence of God (Psalm 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Ezekiel 1:4-28; 10:1-22; Revelation 4:6-8; etc.). Satan himself had once been the "anointed cherub" on God's holy mountain (Ezekiel 28:14). The appointment of the cherubim to keep (or "guard") the way to the tree of life, with swordlike tongues of flame flashing around them, suggests that God's personal presence continued to be associated with the garden and the tree. By analogy with the representations of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:17-22; Hebrews 9:3-5), it may be that God continued to meet at stipulated intervals with his people at the entrance to the garden (see notes on Genesis 4:3-5).