

THE223 Christian Narrative 1 Creation and Fall

Unit 5b God's First Judgment of Sin

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Welcome to Unit 5, Session B. In this session, we'll take a look at God's first judgment of sin. This picks up from our conversation in our last session where we talked about the introduction of sin, that act of sin. We left off at a low moment, but you'll remember that our teaching point for that idea was that man chose to vandalize God's *shalom*. So in quick review, God created us and all that we see around us, and we lived with God in *shalom*, unhindered relationship. But through a willful act of choice, Adam and Eve both violated the boundary that God had put in place at the center of their living, and in so doing, brought sin upon themselves. They missed the mark. They did not conform to God's boundary. And so in this lesson, we'll move from understanding the act of sin or the presence of sin to understanding that God's holiness required that he judge humanity. Again, here is our big idea. We're going to move from the act of sin to the judgment of sin, and this is due to the holiness of God himself.

So *qadash* is the primary Hebrew word translated "holy." And it brings to mind the concept of perfection. So one of the key things we have to understand about God himself is that he is absolutely holy. He is without sin, without defect, without blemish. And we read about this throughout Scripture. We could bring up many, many passages to talk about the holiness of God. Psalm 24:3, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" We could look at Isaiah 6:3. "One called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'" Psalm 71:22, "I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel."

God is holy. And as Wayne Grudem says, "God's holiness means that he is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor." In fact, because God is holy, he will have and, in fact, cannot have anything to do with sin and maintain his holiness. So the entrance of sin means that now God cannot have natural relationship with mankind because sin is present. Because man and woman chose willfully to disobey God's command, they disobeyed the law that he had placed. And so now they were no longer able to relate to God. And so, as we turn back to this narrative of creation and fall, we find Genesis 3:24 which talks about how God initially and ultimately responds to this issue of sin. Genesis 3:24, "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."

Now, in a moment, we're going to take a look back and begin to take apart the actual judgment that God places on sin. But this verse is good for us because what it does is it's the end of chapter 2 of our story. You'll remember that we're telling a four-part story as we look at Christian Narrative: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. And before we get to the systematic approach of understanding sin and God's judgment of sin, look at it as a story. In the beginning, God created everything we see around us. And as he created these things, he created the pinnacle of his creation, man and woman, made in his image, made to glorify him. And what we learned in our last lesson was that God existed with us in perfect *shalom*, in unhindered relationship. But man and woman willfully disobeyed God. They introduced sin. And the only thing that this did, far from making them like God, as the serpent suggested, this actually pushes them away from God. God was at the center of their life. And no longer is God at the center. And so this verse, Genesis 3:24, kind of puts a final period on this act of the fall that God drives out the man from the very garden he had created for them to enjoy. God drives out the man from the very garden in which he had created man and woman. And we're going to discover that sin has been judged by God and that this is the natural result of God's judgment: separation. Genesis 3:24.

So let’s turn our attention to understanding the specifics of God’s judgment of sin. So God’s judgment of sin comes to us in Genesis 3:14-19. Here it says, “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 contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.’ 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.’”

So here we have God’s judgment of sin focused on the snake, the woman, and the man, each being judged separately. And now what we’re going to do is take a look at each one uniquely and see what we can discover about how God is judging this. God first deals with the snake. And this comes to us in verses 14 and 15. We see two different judgments leveled against the snake, one in red and one in blue. First, we see that the serpent is cursed among creatures. And second, we see that enmity will exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman. First, “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.” Now, this one is interesting to us in that we see a serpent speaking with humanity, and we don’t see any other creatures in the Genesis account talking with man. So if there was a unique aspect of the serpent, it seems to have gone. Some have argued that perhaps he walked around. Perhaps he didn’t crawl on the ground as we know them today. This was a fact of sin. We’re not sure. But what we see is that the serpent now takes the lowest position on the totem pole of God’s creatures, of all the beasts of the field, because of this act of bringing man and woman to the point of sin.

But more interesting to us today is this second judgment leveled against the serpent. Enmity will exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman. Verse 15, “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.” So, many within the theological world have called this the proto-evangelium, the prototype of what God is going to do through Christ. So in this moment of sin, in this moment of the fall, in this darkest moment in human history, God puts a ray of hope and a ray of light, talking about the fact that ultimately, he will bring reconciliation back to humanity, that he will not allow what the serpent has done to completely undo what God’s plan was.

And while we’ll talk more about salvation in another course, listen to some of the words from the New Testament that harken back to Genesis 3. So Galatians 4:4, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.” Notice there that the author of Galatians wants us to see that Christ was born of a woman. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.” Galatians 3:16, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.” “I will put enmity between the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” We see a whisper in this word of the woman’s offspring of Christ coming. Romans 16:20, “The God of peace (love this) will soon crush Satan under your feet.” “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” While enmity will exist

between the serpent and the woman, the seed, their offspring, what we see here is the whispers of hope that will be in Christ. God’s first judgment of sin carries with it the hope of redemption.

Now, from the snake, we now turn our attention to the woman. The woman receives a twofold judgment, like the serpent, one in red and one in blue for us. First, we see that the woman will experience pain in childbearing. And second, we see that she will have a desire for her husband. There it says, “To the woman he said (God said), ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.’” Now, we can see a little bit of hope here in that she will indeed have more offspring, that that is not ceasing. But in bringing forth more children, the pain that she experiences will increase. There is a relationship between the pain a woman experiences in childbearing and the memory that sin has been brought into the world. And so in order to bring new life into the world, there is an increase of pain and difficulty, reminding Eve of the fallenness, reminding Eve of her choice to rebel against God, reminding Eve of what has happened in her life.

And then we read in blue, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Now, a lot of conversation has gone on about this particular phrase. What is meant by desire? Is that sexual desire? Is that a more broad desire? Is this related to the first, that even though there’s pain in childbearing, that a woman’s desire would be sexually for her husband? Or is it more because Eve usurped Adam’s rightful role of authority and ate the fruit prior to asking and was deceived? And so there’s some conversation here that’s going on. But I think ultimately, what we can see, I think the clearest argument that can be made for this is that it’s more of a general, that she’ll desire to have freedom. She will desire to buck the natural order that God had created, having male headship over her. And so while the man will rule over the woman, her desire will be contrary to that. And so, as we look around our world today, the conflicts that often occur between male and female leadership, particularly in interpersonal relationships, is a reminder to us of the real consequences of sin in our life, that this sin that came to us because of the fall has real life implications today: pain in childbearing and a desire on Eve’s part, on a woman’s part to have the role of her husband, but in fact, ultimately being unsuccessful in that.

So first, the serpent, then the woman, and finally, the man is judged. Verses 17 through 19 are given over to understanding Adam’s curse. “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.’”

Kenneth Matthews talks about these verses in this way. He says, “The final word is directed against man. Adam’s penalty also fits his crimes since his appointed role was intimately related to the ground from which he was made and which he was charged to cultivate. Now the ground is decreed under divine curse on his account. The man will suffer, first, lifelong, toilsome labor, and finally, death, which is described as the reversal of the creation process. Although the woman will die too, the death oracle is not pronounced against her since she is the source of life and therefore living hope for the human couple. It is the man who bears the greater blame for his conduct and is the direct recipient of God’s death sentence.” The reason we see him bearing a greater amount of blame, even though it was Eve who ate the fruit first, was, as we looked at in that passage in Timothy from our last time,

1 Timothy 2:14 tells us that while Eve was deceived, Adam willingly ate the fruit. He made a conscious choice. There was no confusion in his mind. He knew what he was doing.

So the ground is cursed. The ground is cursed because of what Adam has done. We see that thorns and thistles come because of what Adam has done. We see that there is difficulty in taking from the ground those things which are edible. And all of this takes place because of man's action. Man is judged and so the ground is cursed. Yet even there, we see in Romans 8:19-20 that creation itself, it longs for redemption. Verse 19 of Romans 8, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope." I think it's fascinating that even as we're looking at the judgment of sin on God's part, that in both the judgment of the serpent, the judgment of woman, and the judgment of man, there are whispers of hope. In his judgment of the serpent, we have the proto-evangelium. In the judgment of the woman, we have the promise of continued life. And in the judgment of man, we see hope will return to God's greater creation. While it was not willingly subjected to futility, it is not eternally subjected to futility. So the ground is cursed because of Adam, and it will make him work hard. He will have a difficult life, ultimately leading both he and Eve, by implication, to death. And as Matthews talks about that death is the reversal of the creation process, God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, and at death, he removes that breath of life, and man returns to the dust from which he came. So we see God judges the serpent, the woman, and the man. And its God's holiness that required him to judge humanity. Man chooses to violate *shalom*, and God's holiness requires that he judge humanity.