

“HOPE IS ON THE WAY” (Genesis 3:1-15) Part 1

12.1.19

INTRODUCTION

For Christians, this should be one of the greatest times of the year, but for one solitary, decidedly uncultural, uncommercial fact: Jesus Christ was born. Our Savior, our hope, our Redeemer, arrived in the world to begin a journey that had been planned, according to Peter’s first letter, *before the creation of the world — I Peter 1:20a*. What an indescribable gift! Jews don’t know that gift; they are still waiting for the Messiah’s first arrival to find their hope. Muslims don’t even believe that they can know God in any kind of a personal way so, while Jesus exists in their theology as a great prophet, he gives them no hope. But for Christians, the arrival of that little baby in Bethlehem marked the beginning of hope, of the possibility of actually being seen by a perfect God as being perfect ourselves. As Peter celebrated: *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect — I Peter 1:18-19*.

But for all the joy that this holiday should rightly allow us to experience, it certainly didn’t start out that way. In fact, the beginning of that hope that Christians and, in fact, the whole world, can know actually came out of one day — one terribly dark, black, seemingly hopeless day. So, let’s go back — to the very first promise of Christmas, directly from the mouth of God. Drew just read it, so let’s take a closer look at what God was saying:

TEXT

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this

you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel’” — (Genesis 3:1-15)

ANALYSIS

Just consider all that changed from that one moment where they completely denied their Creator: denying His design, His goodness and His word:

- 1) They denied God’s design: They denied the roles He had granted them; they turned away from their God-given right and responsibility, as He had commanded them: **“Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves along the ground” — God speaking, Genesis 1:28b.** So as the serpent continues this conversation, they do not assert their authority of him. Instead, they keep talking with him like he is one of them. He’s not!
- 2) They denied God’s word: The serpent cleverly asks: **“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” — Satan, Genesis 3:1b.** What God actually said was: **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden” — God speaking, Genesis 2:16b.** God’s prohibition focuses on only one tree: **“[Y]ou must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” — God speaking, Genesis 2:17.** And then, once he has them questioning God’s word, he directly contradicts his word as well, moving from what God actually said — **“you will certainly die” — God speaking, Genesis 2:17b** to **“You will not certainly die” — Satan, Genesis 3:4a.**
- 3) They denied God’s goodness: Satan has moved their attention from the grace and abundant riches with which God has supplied them to the one thing He has told them to avoid. In so doing, he gets them to focus not on what God has given, but rather on what motives He might have for holding something back — meaning that not only is God’s word being questioned, but also His goodness. And the Hebrew in this passage reflects that: The word for “desire” is the same root from which comes the word “covet,” used by God in the tenth commandment to describe desiring what is not yours.
- 4) And finally, the moment of truth: ***When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it — Genesis 3:6.*** Adam and Eve decide that they, and not God, will determine their future; they are going to take their lives into their own hands — what is best for them, what directions they will go, what choices they will make. They should be able to do that. Why not? Satan said it himself: **“[Y]ou will be like God” — Satan, Genesis 3:5b.** But, in that one brief, thoughtless, deliberate moment, that whole brand new, beautifully created world, universe, and the two beings literally handcrafted into God’s image, was broken.

Think about that first temptation: “You will be like God.”

My name is God. My name is God. My name is God . . . or so I thought for oh so many years. I was the greatest person to ever live upon the face of the earth. There wasn't anything I couldn't do, 'cause I was God . . . or so I thought for oh so many years.

Didn't everyone see that I had the most brains, the most talent, of course the most poise and personality? Why should I care how I got ahead or who I hurt . . . or how . . . or why? I was God . . . or so I thought for oh so many years.

I lived in my own private kingdom of ME, ruler of all I surveyed. So, everybody else, y'all better stay in your place, 'cause I am God . . . or so I thought for oh so many years.

But then one day I met another, who claimed that He was God. This must be a stranger to these parts, I thought, for didn't everyone know that I was God . . . for so I'd thought for oh so many years. But I decided to let Him talk, to tell me about Himself, so I could show Him how I was God . . . for so I'd thought for oh so many years.

But as He spoke, something deep down inside told me that He was very different from anyone I had ever met before. He said that He always was and always will be, the Alpha and Omega as it were. He told of how He had created the world and everything that exists, including all people. But one day His people had revolted, becoming bad, which made Him sad that He had ever created them. I asked Him, “What made them revolt?” He said, “They thought they were God.”

But He told of how He still loved them, and of how He sent a Son, His only Son, to die, to save them from their sins, that they might be good once again.

Inside I was shaken, for it seemed that . . . well, it seemed that maybe I had been mistaken in thinking that I was God for oh so many years.

I asked Him if He had more to tell, and He said that He loved me as well. He said that, no, I wasn't God; I wasn't even close. My god was just an idea I'd had, that I was very good. But He said that He still loved me; He always had . . . and He always would.

Well, try as I might, I could not turn from this message of love, for I could see that this God from above really meant what He said. And I could finally see that, not I, but He, had been God for oh so many years.

For a little while now I've walked with this God, learning how to live by His Word. I've seen His love for me everyday and I've seen how I need Him to guide my way. You know, in many ways, He's like a good father; when I'm doing what he says He is glad, oh, but He is so disappointed and sad if ever I should leave him, even for a minute. “Oh why did you leave My side?” He'll say. “If even for a moment, it was too long.” Yeah, and I will know that I've been wrong, for I have learned where I belong. I may try, I may really try . . . but you know something? I just can't do anything without Him.

My old god is dead. He doesn't live with me anymore. I follow a new God, the one true God . . . and He lives with me now.

My old god is dead. He doesn't live with me anymore.

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OK, so back to the Garden of Eden. Think about that moment of sin that changed everything:

- 1) Short-term consequences: Look how immediately we can see the results of sin:
 - a) Shame — they both saw their nakedness.
 - b) Fear — they tried to hide from the Lord: ***“I was afraid because I was naked” — Adam, Genesis 3:10b.***
 - c) Blame game: “It’s not my fault”:
 - i) It’s the Lord’s fault, or at least the woman’s fault: ***“The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” — Adam, Genesis 3:12.***
 - ii) It’s the serpent’s fault: ***“The serpent deceived me, and I ate” — Eve, Genesis 3:13b.***
 - d) Eve: Pain in childbirth, difficulty in relationship with husband.
 - e) Adam: Ground is cursed, pain in labor to produce food, eventual death (same word in Hebrew to describe both “pains”).
 - f) Nature: Animals had to die so their skins could be used to clothe Adam and Eve before they were banished from the Garden of Eden.
- 2) Earth and cosmic history would never be the same:
 - a) ***Therefore, . . . sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned — Romans 5:12.***
 - b) ***The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — for I regret that I have made them” — Genesis 6:5-7.*** The result was a worldwide flood that destroyed all mankind except Noah and his family.
 - c) ***“The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea” — God speaking, Genesis 9:2a.***
 - d) ***For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time — Paul, Romans 8:19-22.***

So, what was lost — big picture?

- 1) Fellowship with God on earth. They went from being created for it to being removed from it. Why?
 - a) *[Y]ou are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong — David, Psalm 5:4-5.*
 - b) *[Y]our iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear — Isaiah 59:2.*
 - c) *Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing — Habakkuk 1:13a . . . AND . . .*
- 2) Something new was created by mankind — religion! There is no way to restore the purity with which mankind was created — the purity that God rightly demanded. But man thought different. I mean, he was created, he was hard-wired, to seek God, to please God. So, shouldn't he be able to prove his worth to God, in his own efforts, in his own strength?
 - a) *All a person's ways seem pure to them — Proverbs 16:2a.*
 - b) *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away — Isaiah 64:6.*
 - c) *Since they do not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness — Paul, Romans 10:3.*

Now we could sit here and talk about all the consequences from that single moment; for sure, human and cosmic and natural history have never been the same. But the fact is, God is the injured party here. He gave those folks everything — and they threw it all away because they thought they had found a better idea. How personally insulting can you get — to question the heart and the wisdom of almighty God? I mean, they were surrounded by it; they're experiencing His goodness and wisdom every moment of every day — and they still didn't see it. And as a result, paradise was lost, fellowship was lost, sinlessness was lost; it seems that all was lost.

Now, if somebody were to break a masterpiece of mine, especially if I had created it just for them — well, let's just say that's a one-and-done. In other words, why in the world would I want to give somebody a second chance when I had just given them my best in the first place? And certainly, God could have been done with us right then and there, and who would've blamed him? But praise God; He isn't like that. Instead, from that same heart and wisdom that created that perfect masterpiece in the first place, God interceded, stepping into that moment to declare that, despite appearances, no way was Satan gonna win. Hope was on the way. Let's look at His prophetic words to see what that hope looked like:

- 1) First: The serpent is cursed, sentenced to crawling on its belly and eating dust — both pictures of humiliation.
- 2) Second: There will be perpetual animosity and conflict between the serpent and the woman, specifically between the serpent's offspring and her offspring, or seed. Now this is interesting because seed is almost always a reference to the man's offspring.

But in this instance, God is specifying the offspring of the woman. Right away, we can know that this “hope” that God is declaring will be different; it will be a member of the human race (the woman’s offspring), but somehow not a member of the human race in the usual way.

- 3) Third: This coming hope will also be unusual in another way. While he will be some kind of “savior” to rescue us from this disaster of our own making, he will be a savior who can be hurt. This first proclamation of the gospel features God’s hope as someone who will turn this apparent loss into a victory, but at a cost — there will be pain; this victory will hurt! — listen to the words: You will sting him, he will crush you!

CONCLUSION

Talk about “gospel” — “good news.” This is the greatest news ever heard. This is the greatest story ever told. This is the greatest gift ever given. And we are here, not to add up our receipts or count our profits, or to drive ourselves crazy by the demands of schedules that just seem to get worse every day, but to tell a world on an ever-shortening timeline that they have been given the greatest gift of all time but, to receive it, they need to claim it.

What are we doing to tell that story? It doesn’t have to be fancy or lengthy; it just has to be told. Where the gifts come from, where the music comes from, where the nativity scenes come from — that all has to be told. Otherwise Christmas will never be anything more than the commercial consumer-fest it has become. What are we doing to present an alternative? Let’s pray!