

## THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

### Week 2 - Day 1: The Kingdom Lost

Last week, we saw that God created His kingdom people, placed them in His kingdom garden, and ruled over them by walking lovingly alongside them and giving them purpose. Adam and Eve faced a choice between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the serpent. Unfortunately, they chose to submit to the authority of the serpent and indulge in the forbidden fruit. This low hanging fruit came from the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*.

**Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**

At this point of God's kingdom story, the one who had been assigning the label of good and evil was God Himself. It was as if the man and the woman now had access to a role that was strictly meant for God. In other words, instead of trusting God to lead them toward what is good, the man and the woman would trust their own *knowledge of good and evil* to pave their own path.

As you may have observed, our human *knowledge of good and evil* can become skewed rather quickly. Even Adam and Eve would experience a complete 180 degree turn from the experiences described in God's kingdom described in Genesis 1 and 2.

Here is how the kingdom of the serpent affected God's kingdom family.

Humans were commanded to be fruitful and multiply so that God's family would continue to increase and His glory would spread to the ends of the earth. Instead, the process of childbirth and raising children would become a painful, and sometimes life-threatening, experience.

**Genesis 3:16a To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.**

The next experience humans would forego is God's kingdom space.

In God's kingdom, humanity was meant to live on an earth that was designed to be fruitful and provide for God's image bearers. Here is God's new description of the living space for humans in the kingdom of sin:

**Genesis 3:17-18 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.**

Finally, humans would miss out on God's kingdom rule.

Originally, the authority given to humanity was meant to be expressed over the earth and its creatures so that we could participate with God in His rule. Instead of expressing God's rule over creation, humanity would abuse their power over one another. God says to the woman:

**Genesis 3:16b Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.**

In addition to this interpersonal power struggle, God's kingdom rule would be lost in our purposeful and meaningful work. Human work was designed to be an experience that would yield the blessings of God and would spread His glory throughout the world. Instead, God curses the ground and human work is met with resistance, pain, toil, and eventually death.

**Genesis 3:19 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.” The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.**

*God’s rule, over God’s people, in God’s place was now a lost experience for humanity.*

It's at this point that many doubts about Christianity arise. “If there is a God who is in control of all things, why didn't He stop us from choosing sin? Did He create humans to fail and does that mean He really does not love us all? Did He know we would experience pain and suffering throughout the world and do nothing about it?” These questions typically come up because we, as descendants of Eve, the mother of all living, can all relate to this bleak existence described in Genesis 3. It is the human experience for you and for me so long as we live in this world that has been affected by the kingdom of the serpent.

Is there any hope to be found? Will God do something about this or is He just watching us fail?

Let's revisit God's kingdom family! Did you notice how God never directly curses the man or the woman? Even though He has every right to eternally curse humanity for choosing life under the rule of the serpent, we see God choosing to forever curse the ground instead (vs. 17). God's mercy towards us gives us an opportunity to one day enter back into His family of blessing. This is a glimmer of hope!

Next comes God's kingdom space! At the end of the chapter, we see God show His mercy by cutting humans off from the Garden of Eden and access to the tree of life. Why is this merciful? Because God recognized that if Adam and Eve were to eat from the tree of life, they would live forever under the rule of sin. This acts as God's punishment and grace so that we might one day be brought back into His kingdom space forgiven of all sin!

**Genesis 3:22- 24 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden**

to work the ground from which he was taken.<sup>24</sup> 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.

Finally God's kingdom rule! Here we see two acts of incredible mercy, love, and restored purpose!

In the immediate context, God physically covers Adam and Eve who are now stricken by a deep sense of guilt and shame. God meets them in their brokenness:

**Genesis 3:20a And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.**

Last but not least (technically first in the scripture order), God eternally curses the serpent! On top of that, God foreshadows the defeat of His kingdom! God promises that one day, one of Eve's offspring would come to defeat the serpent and the kingdom of sin. Pay attention to the mutual destruction of the one who will defeat the serpent:

**Genesis 3:14-15 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."**

Genesis 3 is unique in its acceptance of the raw human experience of evil and suffering. It also explains the cause and the purpose of sin. While we may not have all the answers to explain God's will behind the origins of sin, we can find joy in Genesis 3 as it points us to the one thing that will give us God-given strength and sustenance in the midst of our current reality of sin and suffering. There is hope in God's mercy and in the one who would come to sacrifice himself to crush the serpent!

There is hope that one day, God will once again bring His kingdom family into His blessings. There is hope that one day, God will make a way for us to enter back into His kingdom space. There is hope that one day, God will lovingly cover our guilt and shame. There is hope that one day, the one who would crush the serpent will come and our purposes will be renewed in God's kingdom.

With the promises of God's kingdom in mind, we now watch as these **kingdom purposes** of complete restoration unfold! How will God actually pull this off in a world full of sinners?

-AJ Vanegas

**Share the Gospel:** Genesis 3 is unique in its acceptance of the raw human experience of evil and suffering and its explanation of the cause and the purpose. However, while we may not have all the answers to explain God's will behind the story of sin, we can find joy in Genesis 3 as it starts to point to the one thing that will give us God-given strength and sustenance in the midst of our reality of sin and suffering: hope in God's mercy and in the one who would crush the serpent!

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: