

# Genesis Bible Study 3

## The Broken Image – One God and One Humanity: Can God be Trusted?

taken from

### *Salvation for the Social Order: For Those Who Haven't Read the Bible and for Those Who Think Religion is Merely a Private Matter*

by Philip E. Friesen

**Reading:** Genesis 3

**Principal Question:** Can God be trusted?

**Main Point:** Evil destroys relationship.

#### **New Themes**

1. The Snake and its deception (v 1-5,13)
2. Fear (v 10)
3. Enmity (v 15)
4. Pain and servitude – he will rule over you (v 16)
5. Toil and frustration (v 17-19)
6. A covering for shame (v 20)
7. Knowledge of good and evil (v 22)
8. The Tree of Life (v 22)
9. Separation (v 23-24)

#### **Old Themes Developed**

1. Shame (v 10,21)
2. The Dust of the Ground (v 14,19)
3. Death (v 19,21)
4. Oneness or Unity
5. The Tree of Life
6. Male and Female (v 16,20)

#### **Discussion**

1. What do you think the snake represents in this story?
  - All the animals that the man and woman were supposed to manage?
  - Snakes in general?
  - An unseen spiritual reality, which we will learn more about later?
  - Temptation in general?
  - The pleasures of the material world, which humans are supposed to govern?
  - A combination of the above options?
  - Something else?
2. What do you think was the purpose of the snake's question?
3. Why was the woman vulnerable to this deception (v 6)?

4. What do you think of the man's role in the conversation?
5. Choose a word to describe the man/woman relationship in v 16.
  - Equality
  - Unity
  - Hierarchy
  - Other\_\_\_\_\_
6. How is the relationship between man and woman different here from what it was in Genesis 2:24?
7. Think of some words to describe the relationship of the man to the earth in v 19.
8. What does the name "Eve" mean?
9. Contrast Adam's attitude towards his wife with the relationship described in Genesis 2:23-25.
10. What word is used to describe the relationship between the woman, her children, and the snake in v 15?
11. Can you find any hopeful promise for the woman in v 15?
12. In Genesis 2 God breathed the Breath of Divine Life into the man (v 7) and gave him the Tree of Life (v 9). By contrast, what did humanity lose at the end of Genesis 3:22?
13. Choose a word to describe the relationship between humanity and Deity in Genesis 3:21-24?
  - Distance
  - Enmity
  - Friendship
  - Affection
  - Indifference
  - Rage
  - Curiosity
  - Other\_\_\_\_\_

### **Further Notes on the Fall**

In Genesis 1 a cosmic line was drawn between what is temporary and what is eternal. In Genesis 2, the Tree of (eternal) Life is made available to the human race with one restriction. We cannot "know" evil and live forever. Evil is a temporary phenomena. Humans were given authority to govern the natural order, but not the moral order. The moral order is God's domain.

When humans demanded the right to govern God's domain, they discovered their nakedness. They were not up to the task, and were overwhelmed with shame. Trust is the basis of relationship, and humans have been proven not to be trustworthy. The

consequence was the loss of governorship (Genesis 1:26-28), and demotion to servitude (Genesis 3:14-19). This can be explained in religious terms in the fact that God could not trust his appointed managers. It can also be explained in psychological terms in the fact that humanity was so filled with shame, that humanity could not trust itself to carry out the job. The result was that humans began to worship the spirits of nature instead of governing nature (see Figures 1, 2, and 3 – attached).

The Snake suggested that God is less than trustworthy. The humans are actually entitled to more than what God has offered, and they can get equality with God by taking it. Every statement of the Snake was false:

- “You will not die” was false.
- “You will be as God” was false.<sup>1</sup> (Instead of being promoted, they were demoted.)
- “You will know to differentiate good from evil” was false. (As finite creatures, they could never know good from evil by themselves.)

It was completely an illusion. They already knew good. Everything God gave them was good, evil was the unknown. The shame of their inappropriate behavior brought them face-to-face with the meaning of evil. Evil came packaged as a delightful fruit, that is, a sensory experience, as temptation often does, but the result cost them everything. The failure to govern themselves proved them untrustworthy to govern anything.

The snake asked, “Can God be trusted?” This question is the main theme of Genesis, and the rest of the book will provide an answer. Life is capricious. For our ancestors, the gods were capricious, and they tried every way to please the gods. For us, the market is capricious, our software often seems capricious, our employers and our government may be unpredictable and arbitrary. You never know what will happen. Genesis tells us that God is trustworthy.

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<sup>1</sup> The statement appeared to be true, for they continued to live on for many years. But as Jesus said, a branch broken from the tree begins to die; so their death was guaranteed as soon as they were separated from the Tree of Life.

### **Evil is What Destroys Relationship (Genesis in Simple English)**

Now the snake asked the woman, “Did God say not to eat of any tree in the garden?”

The woman answered, “God said we may eat of any tree except the one in the middle of the garden. If we touch that one, we will die.”

The snake said, “You won’t die. When you eat from that tree, you will understand good and evil just as God does.”

The woman looked at the fruit. It appeared good to eat, and she wanted the wisdom the snake had promised. So she ate, and she gave some to her husband, and he ate. Immediately they saw themselves naked, and they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. In the late afternoon they heard God walking in the garden; so they hid behind the trees, because they were afraid of God.

God called to the man, "Where are you?"

The man answered, "I was naked, and when I heard you come, I was afraid and hid."

God said, "How did you know you were naked? Did you eat from the tree in the middle of the garden?"

The man said, "The woman you put here gave me some, and I ate."

Then God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

The woman said, "The snake tricked me, and I ate some."

God said to the snake, "Because you did this, you are cursed more than any other animal. All your life you will crawl on your stomach and eat dirt. You and the woman will always hate each other. Your descendants and her descendants will always be enemies. One of her descendants will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Then God said to the woman, "Now your pain of childbirth will increase. You will still desire your husband, and he will rule over you."

Then God said to the man, "The ground is cursed because of what you did. You will have to struggle hard to make a living, and in the end go back to the soil you were made of. You are dust, and you will become dust again."

The man named his wife Eve,<sup>2</sup> because she would become the mother of all who live. The LORD made clothes out of animal skins for the man and his wife.

The LORD said, "The man now can decide good and evil for himself. We can't allow him to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever." So God removed the man and woman from the garden, and set a guard of angels at the gate.

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<sup>2</sup> This word in Hebrew sounds like "living".