

Fig Leaf Religion

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[0 : 00] Let's go.

Let's go.

Let's go. Punctuation marks. If you did that, and depending on the translation, your reading would sound something like this.

Comma, period, comma, comma. Period, semicolon. Period, comma, quotation marks. Comma, close quotation marks. And we could go on.

But what makes reading the Bible that way, and I don't recommend it, but I've done it for you, is it is not until you reach chapter 3 do you find the first question mark in God's Word.

[1 : 42] It took all the way to the third chapter. And God didn't ask the first question. Adam and Eve didn't ask the first question.

Satan, who manifested himself in the garden as a serpent, asked the first question ever asked on earth.

And of course, before there was life on earth, there was life in heaven. In fact, Satan was there, an angel by the name of Lucifer. But the fact that this question was asked, it may well be the first question ever asked in the universe.

Maybe there wasn't any questions asked in heaven. But there was in the Garden of Eden. How we arrived at this question is quite instructive.

And the fact that the question was asked and answered has impacted all of humanity ever since. In those first two chapters, we've already looked at some of the key passages.

[2 : 50] We're introduced to God and the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve. But then when we come to chapter 3, we are introduced to a fourth being described as a serpent.

That word serpent means snake. But we should not think in terms of the snakes that now exist and that I truly hate. Well, Diane, she can handle a snake, but she can't handle a spider the size of my pinky.

But most people can't. I hate them. Don't think in terms of snakes as they exist now. That's what the serpent became.

And we're going to actually look at that, I think, next week. So in Genesis chapter 3, we have a serpent that will eventually become a snake as we know it.

But this serpent was quite different because he could communicate in human language. I mean, I keep wanting Eve to say, is this thing really talking to me?

[4 : 06] But he was communicating with her in human language. And of course, we know that Satan was speaking through the serpent. Now, God had bestowed upon Adam tremendous freedoms and responsibilities.

And you may recall from a previous study that God gave Adam very specific tasks to accomplish. He was to subdue the earth. He was to exercise dominion over fish, birds, and all living things that move upon the earth.

He was to use plants and the fruit of trees for food. He was to farm the Garden of Eden. And he was to eat the fruit of almost every tree found in the garden.

Underline that thought, almost. You will note that all of these are positive commands. God gives to Adam one negative command that contains within it a stern warning.

There was a tree in the garden named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was commanded not to eat of the fruit of that tree and told that if he did eat of that fruit, he would die.

[5 : 29] And I think it means he would die that day. Adam possessed all the information necessary to live in fellowship with the Lord God.

After Eve was created from the rib of Adam, we have our first parents living in a perfect environment and in peace and harmony and fellowship with their Creator God. It even says in Scripture that they walked with God in the cool of the garden. And let me add here some information that might be useful, not only in Genesis, but other areas of the Bible when you study God's Word.

Many times the Bible records God coming to earth and visiting His creatures. And those fit into three categories. We call them pre-incarnate.

That simply means before the baby of Bethlehem was born. incarnate, and that started with the baby being born. And post-incarnate appearances of God.

[6 : 40] I would suggest post-incarnate or after the Lord ascended back into heaven. By pre-incarnate, well, I've already said that.

I don't have to go through that. But obviously, God was with us in the incarnation in the form of Christ Jesus. He was even called Emmanuel, which means God with us.

There were also a few post-incarnate appearances of God, the Lord, Christ, when He was seen or heard. These include an appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus, and John on the Isle of Patmos.

In fact, when John saw Him, He fell at His feet as if dead. He saw the glorified Christ. And I want to submit that I believe these three types of appearances were always the Lord Jesus.

Christ made it clear that God the Father is Spirit, that no one has seen Him except the Son. So when we read of God with His earthly children walking in the garden or appearing to Moses in the burning bush, those are appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ to His creation.

[8 : 01] And theologians of old call these appearances theophanies or Christophanies. God has dwelt among His people. One day in the Garden of Eden, our first mother, Eve, approached the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And she enters into this conversation with Satan, who is disguised as a serpent. And Moses tells us that he was a crafty being, craftier than all the other beasts of the field.

And it was at that moment that Satan asked Eve a question, the first question ever asked, that would impact humanity from millennia down to this day.

He said to the woman, Did God truly say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? Did God truly say?

There we have the first question. And I would suggest all sin flows from that. Did God truly say? The woman comes up with a very interesting response.

[9 : 12] Beginning in verse 2, she says, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

Her response back to the serpent, or to Satan, is a mixture of truth and error. And we should be reminded that all of her information either came from Adam, or it was made up by herself.

She rightly said they could eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. She rightly reported that there was a prohibition placed on eating the fruit from the tree in the midst of the garden.

She also correctly stated that if they ate the fruit from that tree, they would die. But she erroneously added information that she and Adam were not allowed to even touch that particular tree.

That's not found in Scripture. That was in addition to what God had told Adam. And there's a principle here. Do not add or take away from God's Word.

[10 : 26] That's a good principle to live by. Well, the crafty serpent was ready with a response to Eve's comments concerning a death sentence for disobeying God.

In verse 4 and 5, the serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die. Do you read in that a form of saying God's lying to you?

For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Satan attacked this woman the same place he attacks all humans. He went after her mind through her emotions.

She wanted to eat from this tree. And based upon the information the serpent gave her, Eve quickly arrived at three conclusions. First, she thought to herself, this tree is good for food.

[11 : 36] That's a physical attraction. She could see the fruit. And I don't know, I don't think it was an apple. I think it was something else. I don't know what it was. Probably broccoli. I wouldn't have

eaten.

The tree was delightful to look at. That is a visual attraction. And the tree would make her wise. There we have an emotional attraction.

Every sin we commit satisfies us in one, two, or all three of these categories. We sin because it makes us feel good for the moment.

That's physical. It is often pleasant to look at. That's visual. And it won't harm or might even broaden our horizons. That's emotional. Now, for us men, it's easy to conclude that all this took Adam by complete surprise because surely he was out tilling the South 40 and he returns and he discovers what Eve has done.

She's already eaten. It's too late to do anything about it. I tried to sell that to Diane when we were sort of newlyweds and I was reading that in the Bible. She said, let me see that. And I said, no, no, I've lost my place.

[12:46] I don't know where I'm saying. Of course, we know nothing could be further from the truth. This is what God's Word says on this point in verse 6, the second part of verse 6.

Eve took from its fruit and ate and she gave also to her husband who was with her and he ate. There are six devastating words contained in that passage. Because of them, men, we just can't get off the hook. They are her husband who was with her.

I used to tell Diane, I wish I'd been there instead of Adam. She said, we'd be worse off. Adam didn't just happen upon this scene. He was an active observer of it.

And let me add something. I don't think it's in your notes. But not shutting that down, he became an active participant in it. The Bible refers to this as Adam's sin.

[13:58] Why? Because he should have stepped in and put a stop to this entire episode between Eve and the serpent. Adam should have stepped in and prevented Eve from even engaging in conversation with the serpent.

I heard a pastor just last month around the Christmas time talking about this. And that pastor said, Adam should have killed the serpent. He should have killed him.

Instead, he acquiesced. His complete inaction made him a participant in the disobedience, made him responsible for it. Remember, Eve was deceived.

Adam chose to sin. I'll just say that in my next paragraph. What has really happened here? Eve followed Satan.

Adam followed Eve. And the world has never been the same. Sin has consequences.

[15:05] And let me say that more forcefully. Every sin we commit has consequences. What were the consequences for our original parents? Well, the first thing that happened is that they died.

But hold on. Didn't they actually live for hundreds of years and bear many children? And the answer to that is yes. But the moment they took a bite of that forbidden fruit, they died.

They experienced instant spiritual death. Fellowship with God was broken and they became separated from Him.

That's spiritual death. Separation from God. And let me say this also. Adam is the federal head of the human race. At the moment he sinned and was disobedient to God, the wellhead of the human race was poisoned.

Everything that has flowed from Adam and Eve, including each of us, is polluted with sin. And they don't have to teach us to have a sin nature.

[16:14] We're born with it. We're born with it. I appreciate the way the Puritan Cotton Mather puts it. He says, The first man, Adam, immediately sinned against God in one remarkable instance wherein the sovereign Lord made a trial of His fidelity.

Immediately poor man lost not only his innocence, but also his ability. He fell short of the glory of God. That's Romans 3.23.

And all His offspring fell in Him and with Him. That is why we read in Romans 5.6, We are without strength and ungodly. Now, some people want to object at this point and they say this isn't fair.

I wasn't there. We were there. Our DNA was in Adam and Eve. We were in His loins. But let me say this. In the entire history of the human race, if no one had ever sinned until today, and any one of us today committed the first sin in the history of humanity, that would be sufficient to plunge the human race into spiritual death.

That one sin of disobedience. When our parents sinned, something else happened. Their eyes were opened. How do we know that? Now, this doesn't imply that they were blind before that.

[17 : 43] And now they could see. What is implied is their innocence prior to the transgression chains. Innocence was forever lost.

We all know that nature abhors a vacuum and something came in to immediately replace the lost innocence. And that something was conscience.

God gave them a conscience. He created conscience at the moment disobedience entered the human race. So their eyes are now opened and conscience told them they had disobeyed God. For the first time since they were created, they knew they were naked. They'd been naked since day one. And by the way, that brings up a point, not in your notes.

How long was this after Adam and Eve were... I don't think very long. I think they were a matter of days or weeks old. We're not talking about several hundred years here.

[18 : 47] But now they know they're naked. Before, in innocence, they were naked without any emotional baggage. Now they were acutely aware of their nakedness and they immediately tried to do something about that fact.

And the first thing our sinning parents did was try to cover their shame. The Scriptures say they sewed fig leaves together in the hopes they would provide an adequate covering.

Think about that. To do that, you've got to work at that. You've got to come up with some kind of law and you've got to come up with some kind of twine from maybe a weed or something and weave it together.

And this took some effort. So they sewed fig leaves together. They're hoping they can adequately cover their sin.

And this is nothing less than human effort to cover sin. And our parents will learn such self-efforts always fail.

[19 : 51] Always fail. We need to embrace this universal truth. No one has ever been able to successfully provide his or her own covering for sin.

Only God can do that. Only God. And sewing fig leaves together, here we have an effort for them, our first parents, to make themselves again presentable to God.

And that is the creation by our first parents of the first human religion. They created a religion.

They're trying to recreate the conditions that existed before their disobedience, but they're trying to do it by human effort.

And I call it fig leaf religion. They created fig leaf religion. It's not Islam. It's not Hinduism. It's not Buddhism. It's fig leaf religion.

And we need to understand something here. And this may be difficult for some of us. Religion has always been the enemy of God. Always.

[21 : 05] Religion has warred against God, has warred against His revealed Word since the start of the human race. Well, what do we mean by religion? I have in my library a reproduction copy of Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary.

Of course, you know that Webster was a staunch believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is his definition of religion. A return to bondage.

A return to bondage. Human religion is mankind's efforts to reach God and it always falls short. Counted to this, we have Christianity, we have Christ, that is God's efforts to reach mankind and it succeeds. When I say religion is the enemy of God, think over the millennia of human history. Religion has always opposed the true God and His revelation. If we consider Christ during the incarnation, we see this most clearly. Jesus battled against organized religion during His earthly walk because He rightly saw religion as condemning men and women to hell.

[22 : 25] He dealt with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. We can accurately say that religion nailed Jesus to a cross. The Romans share in the blame but they were merely carrying out the wishes of the religious leadership of Israel in that day.

So, here we have Adam and Eve participating in a process trying to make them once again themselves once again presentable to God.

But look at what happens next in verse 8. They, that's Adam and Eve, heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Then the Lord God called to man and said to him, where are you? You think he knew? Yeah, he knew. But he calls out and he says, where are you? And Adam answered and he says, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked so I hid myself.

Our original parents have entered into a life of disobedience to God and things begin to change rapidly.

[23 : 57] They hear God walking in the garden and as he approaches they hide from him among the trees. This is what sin does to all of us.

We want to hide. We want to hide from God. And there's a principle at work here in the form of a question. Where do you go to hide from God? Where do you go?

Jonah tried. He went down to the very bottom of the ocean and the scriptures say to the roots of the mountains under the water only to discover that God was there.

And I always find it fascinating that we didn't discover mountains under the ocean until about 300 years ago. People should have read the Old Testament closer because Jonah said I went down to the very base of the mountains under the water.

And there are actually mountains under the ocean specific the Pacific Ocean that are larger than Mount Everest. So Jonah goes down to the roots of the mountains.

[25 : 07] Reminds me of something that happened years ago. I've said it in here before but I do repeat my best stories. Dr. Swindoll was pastoring a man in his church sought him out having lost his entire family wife and children in a horrible traffic accident.

And he sat down with Dr. Swindoll and he told him he says I'm really mad at God over this tragedy of my family. And Dr. Swindoll asked him he said have you spoken to God about your anger over this situation?

And the man's response was no I don't want God to know that I'm angry with him. That's what he answered him. In other words he's trying to hide his anger from God.

And Chuck Swindoll just sat there for a moment in silence just stared at him. And after a few moments the man said God knows that I'm angry at him doesn't he? And Dr. Swindoll said yes and God has very broad shoulders so you should go ahead and talk to him about your feelings.

go ahead and talk to him he already knows. Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in don't try to close God out of it.

[26 : 25] First of all he already knows. And he has broad shoulders and nothing you tell him will come as a surprise to God. And he also has VBE very big ears and he can hear the slightest whispered prayer at 3 o'clock in the morning when it seems as though the world is caving in all around you.

He can hear that whispered prayer. When Adam sinned several things happened simultaneously. For the first time in his creation Adam had a fear of God.

Hadn't been like that before this. Taken walks with him now he fears him. Fear was introduced into the human family. Adam discovered that he was naked.

This was also new. Before the fall he was naked and not ashamed. Now he tries to hide among the trees so God would not see him in such a state.

And like I said most people are trying to hide from God even as I speak right now. They create God their own imagination. So we have introduced to the human family these four things.

[27 : 40] The fear of God nakedness shamefulfulness and the desire to hide from the omnipresent God who is everywhere. There was a fifth thing introduced into the human race and it's rampant today.

It was the use of the personal pronoun I. Adam said I heard I was afraid I hid.

So we've got another new word in here and it's the personal pronoun I. We had a guy preach to us and he wasn't our pastor he was a visitor and it was so amazing I started keeping marks on my bulletin and 44 times he used the personal pronoun I.

I did this I did that he never mentioned Jesus but he 44 times that was the only time he preached to us. Now the focus was on Adam he's focusing on himself and not the worship of the creator God and the Lord challenges Adam with this penetrating question who told you that you were naked? well you talk about being exposed the God of the universe looks at you and says who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat?

[29 : 12] And of course Adam being a man he steps right up and does what men will do he tries to shift the blame yeah listen to his response the woman whom you gave to be with me she gave me from the tree and I ate now did Adam blame the woman?

only indirectly he is shifting the blame on God the woman you gave me he was saying in effect God you gave me a defective model if you'd given me a perfect one this would never have happened I

would never shift blame for my sins on my wife but I do wish when men get married God would provide an instruction manual so we could better understand women that would be helpful and we'll tell Rhonda you said amen so God focuses his comments first on the woman what is this you have done well does the woman step up say I really made a mistake here no the serpent deceived me and I ate and he did something else is introduced into the human race the ability to shift the blame to someone else the ability to shift the blame to someone else

Lee will appreciate this when I first went to work for Philip something went south and my boss called me in and said how did this happen and I said because of my inattention to detail and it totally disarmed him they weren't used to that answer at Phillips you know they gave him this whole list of excuses and I said I was responsible I'm responsible for the unit it's like as police chief I apologize a lot of times for things I didn't do I was home in bed asleep at 2 o'clock in the morning when they happened but I had to apologize so now we see this shifting of blame to someone else upon the introduction of sin into the human race we adopted the ability to rationalize away our sins or blame someone else for them and that goes on every moment of every day even in the church even in the church unless we forget it

God had promised our first parents that in the day they sinned against him they would die did they die that day yeah not physically they would go on for centuries but they immediately died spiritually they suffered spiritual death separation from God who created them and he created them so they could walk with him in the cool of the garden that spiritual death has been passed on to every human that is why the Bible describes us before we are saved as dead in trespasses and sins the vast majority of the world tonight are dead in trespasses and sin the vast majority of the world has inability to do anything to get themselves dressed up so they can go present themselves to God they can't do it another thing that died that day in the garden it was the human ability to exercise perfect free will

Adam and Eve had perfect free will prior to choosing disobedience free will beginning with Adam and Eve is now tainted with sin it's tainted with sin and you know there's people on this earth that does some really amazing things but if you really look closely sin is lurking somewhere nearby sin is lurking around now the next time we meet in our study of key scriptures we will see God as he curses the serpent for what he did in the garden and we'll talk about that we will see God severely discipline the man and the woman for what they did in the garden but our chief focus next time we will see God promise to send the Messiah to make all of this right moment moment moment moment