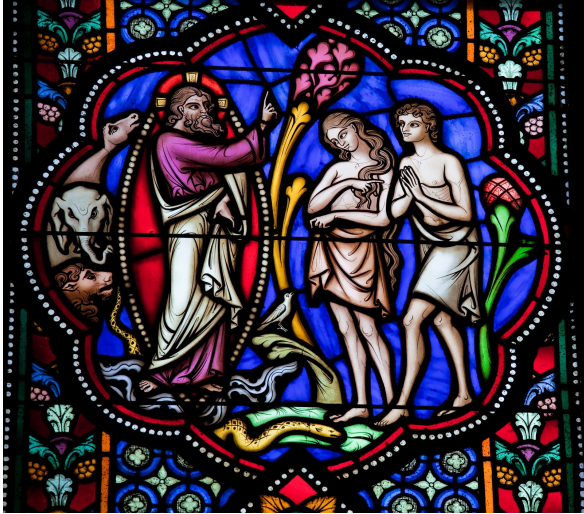


BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL: CREATION

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Genesis 3:1-24

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' ²The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." ' ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸ They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' ¹⁰He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' ¹¹He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' ¹²The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' ¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' ¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,

cursed are you among all animals

and among all wild creatures;

upon your belly you shall go,

and dust you shall eat

all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will strike your head,

and you will strike his heel.'

¹⁶To the woman he said,

'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;

in pain you shall bring forth children,

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yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.’

¹⁷And to the man he said,

‘Because you have listened to the voice of
your wife,

and have eaten of the tree

about which I commanded you,

“You shall not eat of it”,

cursed is the ground because of you;

in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your
life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for
you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread

until you return to the ground,

for out of it you were taken;

you are dust,

and to dust you shall return.’

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve, because
she was the mother of all who live. ²¹And the
Lord God made garments of skins for the
man and for his wife, and clothed them.

²² Then the Lord God said, ‘See, the man
has become like one of us, knowing good
and evil; and now, he might reach out his
hand and take also from the tree of life, and
eat, and live for ever’— ²³therefore the Lord
God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,
to till the ground from which he was taken.
²⁴He drove out the man; and at the east of
the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim,

and a sword flaming and turning to guard the
way to the tree of life.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

The story of creation is two primary scenes:
Genesis 1 is a poetic account of a
transcendent God crafting and populating
the universe. Genesis 2 is a more imminent
portrayal of God intimately fashioning
humankind. Genesis 3 follows these
accounts to present the expulsion of
humankind from Eden.

Each account is distinctive and offers a
different take on what it means to be human,
the value of the created world in relation to
God, and the condition of created existence.

The ancient picture of the universe that is
presumed in these stories is not the same as
our modern understanding. The idea of the
“firmament” or “dome” (see Genesis 1:9)
suggests that the sky was understood as a
solid layer, with holes that let in light (stars)
and water (rain). Reading the creation
accounts as modern science would be an
“adventure in missing the point.”

Reading the creation accounts with other
ancient stories of creation would be more
fruitful. In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, one
of the oldest creation accounts, violence
dominates. The Genesis story of creation by
God’s “word” (“let there be...”) offers a
contrasting picture of a peacefully ordered
world.

Adam is a Hebrew word that plays on “soil”
(*adamah*) and literally means “man.” Adam
and Eve can be understood as figures of
humankind who help us understand the
complex human condition of blessedness
(being “very good”—Genesis 1:31) and
brokenness (expulsion of Genesis 3).

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Genesis 3 has been the story that Christian tradition has titled “The Fall.” It is here that the concept of Original Sin found a narrative home (though there is no talk of “sin” in the story itself and the serpent is *not* identified as Satan). The theological idea is that the first sin (disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit) creates a permanent condition of rebellion that is passed on to each generation. Thus, no one is born that is not already “stained” by Sin. Original Sin is not something anyone does, but a state everyone already participates in.

St. Augustine, the earliest theologian to write in depth about the concept of Original Sin frames it as physiological: it is like a DNA trait, passed along from bodies to bodies, through sexual intercourse.

Later ideas of Original Sin would reimagine this doctrine, locating it outside the physical body in unavoidable cultural forces and social influences that we are caught up in: forces like sexism, racism, or economic exploitation.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. In what ways do you believe in or find truth in the stories of creation, Adam and Eve, and the expulsion from Eden?
3. What do you make of the doctrine of Original Sin? What is it? How does it square with Genesis 1, specifically God declaring all creation (including humankind) “very good”?
4. Reflect on the nakedness dynamic of the story. Adam and Eve go from no-shame to shame with respect to their nakedness. If nakedness serves as a symbol of vulnerability, how might Genesis 3 shed light on our own struggles with vulnerability, shame, and hiding ourselves?
5. Some scholars have noted that the curses are etiologies (ancient origin stories). They explain why snakes slither on the ground, why women are pained by childbirth, and why it is hard work to find and make food. What do you make of the curses?
6. What significance do you see in God clothing Adam and Eve after the curses?
7. What does the expulsion mean spiritually or theologically to you?
8. When have you felt cursed or experienced expulsion? How has God met you in those moments?

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