

Biblical Anthropology

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion"
(Genesis 1:26 ESV)*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in
place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?
(Psalm 8:3-4 ESV)*

The Fall

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Genesis 3:1-24

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Introduction:

Good morning everyone! If you have your Bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to Genesis 3; that's on page 3 in your church Bibles. We're turning a corner here in our series on Biblical Anthropology. The great philosopher and theologian R.C. Sproul said that in order to have a coherent worldview you have to answer TWO MASSIVELY important questions:

1. Why is there something rather than nothing?
2. And why are things now not the way we sense they should be?

You get the answer to BOTH of those questions in the first three chapters of the Bible. Genesis 1 and 2 tell us why there is something rather than nothing and the answer is because:

In the beginning, God (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

That's the answer.

There is SOMETHING rather than nothing because in the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth. Everything exists – because GOD. People exist because GOD.

God MADE US male and female. He made us image and likeness. He fashioned our bodies out of the earth and he breathed into us the breath of life. He made us WHO WE ARE.

But.

Something has gone terribly, terribly wrong – and that is the story that is told in Genesis 3. Genesis 3 tells us the story of what the first humans **DID** AND what all subsequent humans **DO**. And of course, those two things are related. This is doctrine known as original sin. When Adam and Eve fell it affected their nature – and that’s a problem, because LIKE BEGETS LIKE and FLESH begets FLESH so if corruption has entered into human nature at the SOURCE, then everyone who follows is going to be affected – and that’s one of the reasons why this story is so important. This story describes the SICKNESS to which the Gospel is the cure. The Apostle Paul says that in Romans 5:6; he says:

“For while we were still **weak**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”
(Romans 5:6 ESV)

The Greek word translated there as “weak” is *asthenes* which the dictionary defines as:

1. pert. to suffering from a **debilitating illness** ¹
2. pert. to experiencing some **incapacity or limitation**

That’s our situation on the other side of the fall. We have been BORN with a debilitating illness. Our nature is characterized by incapacity and limitation. That is the human condition on the other side of the fall and so understanding that will better prepare us to appreciate and proclaim the Gospel – and it will help us to live wisely and circumspectly in this world while we wait for the renewal of all things.

With all of that being said, hopefully you have your Bibles open by now to Genesis 3. My intention is to read the entire chapter. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the

¹BDAG, s.v. “ἀσθενής,” 142.

fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 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.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So 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. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 And they 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 among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 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.

15 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.”

16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

17 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; 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, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

20 The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

22 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—” 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 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. (Genesis 3:1-24 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Now, as I said, this story in Genesis 3 is telling us what the first humans DID and what all subsequent humans DO, so of course, there a number of different ways we could preach this story, but our primary interest this morning is on the paradigmatic aspect. We’re interested in the answer this story provides to the question: what in the world is wrong with us as human beings? So let’s get into that.

What Is Wrong With Us As Fallen People?

The first thing we see in this story is that human beings ARE deceived.

1. We are deceived

That’s one of the MAJOR THEMES in Genesis 3. Verse 13 says:

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:13 ESV)

Our first parents believed a particular lie that human beings have been believing ever since.

Sinclair Ferguson puts it this way; he says:

“the lie was an assault on both God’s generosity and his integrity. Neither his character nor his words were to be trusted. This, in fact, is the lie that sinners have believed ever since – the lie of the not-to-be-trusted-because-he-does-not-love-me-false-Father.”²

You can see this lie being developed over the course of the serpent’s conversation with the woman. In verse 1 he says to her:

² Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, & Gospel Assurance – Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 69.

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” (Genesis 3:1 ESV)

In this first interaction the devil questions the authority of God’s Word and the goodness of God’s character. He says in essence, “Isn’t this really all about God wanting to keep you away from the good things that he wants to keep for himself?”

Now of course, that is a wicked distortion, of what God actually said, which the Bible records for us in Genesis 2:16-17. He said:

“You may surely eat of **every** tree of the garden, **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.” (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV)

In point of fact, God had opened the ENTIRE GARDEN to the man and the woman – EXCEPT ONE SINGLE SOLITARY TREE - but the serpent is introducing the idea here that God is unloving and ungenerous. He develops this suggestion further in verses 4-5. Eve reminded the serpent that God had warned them of deadly consequences should they eat of the forbidden fruit, but he contradicted her, saying:

“You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4-5 ESV)

“Disobedience won’t lead to negative consequences for you! On the contrary, disobeying God is the path to freedom and fulfillment”, the serpent said.

That was the lie.

God is UNGENEROUS and REBELLION is the path to freedom and fulfillment. Our first parents believed that lie and human beings have been believing that lie ever since. You were born believing that lie. That is the default religious disposition of fallen human beings. You see God as severe and you see his LAWS as restrictive.

You came out of the womb believing that – but that is not true.

That's not who God is and that's not what the commandments are for. The commandments are not there to keep us away from fun and fulfillment, the commandments are there to keep us away from harm. We talked about this last Sunday. Why did God forbid us to commit adultery? Is it because he wants to ruin our sex lives? Is it because he just can't bear the thought of all of us having fun, consequence free sex with the neighbours? Is that why he gave the 7th commandment?

NO!!

He gave the 7th commandment because committing adultery is a MAXIMALLY STUPID THING to do! You might as well swallow a hand grenade. It will blow up your family, it will blow up the family across the street and it will affect your entire community – THAT's why God said: thou shalt not commit adultery – because he loves you! He is your Heavenly Father and he only wants what is best for you.

But you are not naturally inclined to believe that and you need to know that. And deep down inside, you probably do know that. Human beings are inclined to think that God is selfish and controlling BECAUSE WE ARE DECEIVED.

The second thing we learn in this story is that human beings are disconnected:

2. We are disconnected

In the middle of the chapter Adam and Eve are hiding from each other and hiding from God – you can see that in verses 7-8. And of course, that is tragic because, as we learned in Genesis 2, human beings were designed for communion with God and communion with one another. The man and the woman are supposed to be a team. They were made for team. She is strong in ways that correspond to his weakness; he is strong in ways that correspond to her weakness. Together they are an APEX creature but apart they are greatly diminished.

And they are apart.

The easy intimacy of chapter 2 when they were “naked and not ashamed” is a thing of the past; according to verse 7, Adam and Eve:

“sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”(Genesis 3:7 ESV)

So they’re hiding from each other now and they’re hiding from God - and that’s a problem for the cosmos because human beings were supposed to function as “intermediaries”; that was the original design. Blessings are supposed to come from God THROUGH US into the world – so if we aren’t connected to God, we’re going to suffer, and so is creation. That’s why the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:22 says that:

“the whole creation has been groaning” (Romans 8:22 ESV)

Creation NEEDS us to be the people we were created and intended to be. It needs us to be MALE and FEMALE; it NEEDS us to be image and likeness – it NEEDS US to be connected to each other and connected to God.

But we’re not and we haven’t been for a very long time.

At the end of this story the first human beings are driven out of the garden and out into the world away from God. Verse 24 says:

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. (Genesis 3:24 ESV)

The angel with the flaming sword makes it pretty clear that this is not a problem we can solve on our own. We can’t work our way back to God. There’s a breach here and it is going to have to be solved from the other end. Human beings, on the other side of the fall, are in exile. We are disconnected.

And then thirdly, according to this story, we are DEAD.

3. We are dead

Back in chapter 2 verses 16-17 God had said:

“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.” (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV)

DEATH comes from DISOBEDIENCE – but you might say: “Wait a second pastor, Adam and Eve don’t die, in this story. They sin and then they make their little loin clothes and they get kicked out of the garden, but they don’t technically die on that day.”

But that is to take far too LITERALISTIC an interpretation of this passage. Adam and Eve did die on that day in every meaningful sense of the word because of their sin. LIFE in the Bible has to do with knowing God and living out your purpose and calling in the world – that is LIFE – and that is what Adam and Eve LOST on that day. They LOST GOD. They LOST THEMSELVES. They LOST THEIR CALLING. And they LOST ACCESS to all the graces and privileges associated with their original estate.

And then of course, they did actually go on to die PHYSICALLY and LITERALLY later on in the story, as God said they would do in verse 19:

“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19 ESV)

Adam and Eve started to DIE PHYSICALLY on that day because of their sin and rebellion – and human beings have been dead and dying ever since. We are diminished and decaying people on the other side of the fall. The theologian A.A. Hodge puts it this way, he says:

“The whole nature became depraved. The will being at war with the conscience, the understanding became darkened; the conscience, in consequence of constant outrage and neglect, became seared; the appetites of the body inordinate, and its members instruments of unrighteousness.”³

³ A.A. Hodge, *Outlines Of Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1999), 324.

That's our situation now as human beings. We are deceived – we believe lies about God that lead us deeper and deeper into trouble – we are disconnected, so that we're not getting the guidance and support that we need from God and from each other, and we are DEAD – we are hopelessly diminished and depraved. We are FALLEN and FALLING and left to ourselves we're going to keep on doing stupid and sinful things, we're going to keep running further and further into the dark. We're going to wander around in circles in the desert until eventually our bodies break down and we return to the dust from which we were taken.

That's the human condition on the other side of the fall.

It's a little bit depressing.

And it leads us to our second question, which is: what is it exactly that fallen people need?

What Do Fallen People Need?

Because of course, the good news is that God doesn't LEAVE US TO OURSELVES. He doesn't send us out into the dark and forget all about us. He immediately begins to institute a plan. He puts some things in place that correspond to our NEEDS as fallen human beings. We can identify 3 of those things in the story almost immediately.

The first one is actually a little bit counter intuitive. To help and preserve fallen human beings God institutes several forms of restraint.

1. Restraint

Which actually makes sense if you think about it. What would you do with someone who was blind, disoriented, and having a total meltdown? What would you do? You would restrain them – not because you are trying to hurt them but because you are trying to keep them from hurting themselves or someone else and that's exactly what we see God doing for human beings after the fall.

Right away we see him restricting their access to the tree of life. In Genesis 3:22-23 God says:

“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—” 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-23 ESV)

The last thing the world needs is deceived, deranged, degraded human beings living forever– so God restricts our access to the tree of life. And then later in Genesis God restricts the human life span even further. He says:

“for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” (Genesis 6:3 ESV)

There is only so much you can do in 120 years – and that’s the upper max now for human life. Most of us aren’t going to get anywhere close to that. We’re going to die at 80 or 90 years old and that RESTRICTS the amount of harm we can do to ourselves and to one another.

In addition to that, God begins to institute forms of authority that will serve to restrain the wicked inclinations of fallen people. In Genesis 9 we have the original mandate for government. God authorizes the use of judicial violence to restrain those who would shed human blood. He says:

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Genesis 9:6 ESV)

In Genesis 9 God authorizes people to form government and judicial forms so as to implement this command in a fair and just way. This is the ROOT text for the institution of the magistrate – a principle which is repeated and reaffirmed in the New Testament. In Romans 13 Paul says:

“for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not **bear the sword** in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.” (Romans 13:4 ESV)

Here’s the point: fallen human beings need to be restrained. They need laws. They need boundaries. They need consequences, enforcement and deterrence and God gives us those things not to hurt us, but to keep us from hurting each other.

The second gift he gives to fallen human beings is:

2. Revelation

Since we're not connected to God the way we were in the beginning we are going to need some mechanism for receiving guidance and instruction and so in the Old Testament God began speaking to his people through prophets. There would be long periods of silence when nobody was hearing anything, then all of the sudden God would raise up a prophet. That's how the story of Samuel begins:

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. (1 Samuel 3:1 ESV)

Prophecy in the Old Testament was kind of like that game Marco Polo that you used to play in the pool as a kid. Every time human beings were drifting away into oblivion God would send a prophet and he would say: MARCO; and whoever was listening to the voice of the prophet would say POLO and attempt to grope their way back toward God.

To state the obvious, it was not a perfect system.

People became very skilled at IGNORING THE PROPHETS and very adept at recruiting their own prophets who would tell them whatever they wanted to hear.

So we should probably think of the first two gifts of God as GOOD but not GOOD ENOUGH. And both of those designations are important. Human beings on the other side of the fall NEED both of those things. Fallen human beings need government. Even saved human beings need government. Remember, SAVED people are in a state of BEGUN RECOVERY – so they are CHANGED and CHANGING and as long as they are CHANGING they are still subject to the lure and whisper of sin, so RESTRAINT is still something to be appreciated. As is revelation. I need the BIBLE because my mind is still subject to confusion and deception.

So these things are GOOD – but they are not good enough. We need something MORE and that something MORE is hinted at in Genesis 3. Even the darkest stories in the Bible contain a whisper of Gospel hope and we find that here in Genesis 3:15. God says to the serpent, in the hearing of the man and the woman:

“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 3:15 ESV)

In this verse God is promising something STRONGER and MORE EFFECTIVE than restraint and revelation. In this verse God is promising:

3. Rescue

Someone will come, born of a woman, who will defeat the enemies that have defeated you – at some cost to himself.

That’s it.

That’s all we’re told.

God could have given them the whole Gospel right there. He could have told them about Jesus – born of a Virgin, living a perfect life, dying a sacrificial death, rising again victorious, ascending to the Father’s right hand, pouring out the Holy Spirit into our hearts – he could have told them the whole story right then and there.

But he didn’t.

Because they weren’t ready to hear it. They needed to discover the extent of the damage they had done. They needed to learn the truth about the lies they had been told. They needed to feel the weight of the oppression they had come under.

Only then would they understand their need for rescue. Remember:

“at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6 ESV)

God is a good parent, isn't he?

Sometimes as parents we realize that all we can really do is TEACH and RESTRAIN – kind of like the Old Testament. We can put boundaries in place, we can enforce those boundaries, we can tell the truth, we can point out the way of wisdom – but sometimes you have to let the kids wander off into the dark. You have to let them get bit by the neighbourhood dog. You have to let them find out that there is nothing good in this world apart from God.

And when they find that out, and when they realize that mom and dad aren't such jerks after all, maybe they'll be in a place where they'll be ready to listen. Maybe they'll be ready to hear about what has done for them that they could never do for themselves. Maybe they'll be ready to be reconciled to their wise and loving Heavenly Father through the person and work of Jesus Christ – thanks be to God! Let's pray together.