

THE CURSE

Genesis 3:14-19

INTRODUCTION

- David Attenborough is a zealous evolutionist and holds Christians in disdain. His oft-repeated argument against creationism is as follows:
- “I think of a little child in East Africa with a worm burrowing through his eyeball. The worm cannot live in any other way, except by burrowing through eyeballs. I find that hard to reconcile with the notion of a divine and benevolent creator.”
- There are a number of flaws with Attenborough’s argument
 - ✓ He is factually wrong about this so-called eye-worm
 - ✓ The condition “river blindness” is a nematode illness *Onchocercosis*, transmitted via a biting insect
 - ✓ This worm does not live in the eyeball or burrow through the eyeball, but lives in nodules of the skin
 - ✓ In its larval stage, microfilaria travel to the eye and die there
 - ✓ It is a symbiotic bacteria which triggers an immune reaction in the eye which can lead to blindness
 - ✓ If his atheistic, evolutionary world-view is true, then
 - Human suffering is of no significance, is not morally good or evil, and should not bother him
 - The life of the parasite has as much value as the life of a human, and has a right to exist and infect people
 - Humans are a blight upon the planet, therefore anything that harms or kills humans is good
- But of all his errors, it is Attenborough’s ignorance of the origin of this disease that is his greatest
- God is not to be blamed for the evils that humans suffer in this world
- God did not design his creation this way – in the original creation, all things were “very good” – such microscopic organisms were benign and harmless

- But it was only after the fall of man, the entrance of sin into the world, and the curse upon the creation, that such diseases and afflictions began
- In Genesis 3:6-13 we saw the fall of man and the awful consequences that followed:
 - ✓ The entrance of death
 - ✓ The conscience and heart corrupted by sin, evidenced by their awareness of their nakedness
 - ✓ Separation from God – they were afraid, filled with guilt and shame, and hid from God
 - ✓ They were confronted by God and called to give account for their sin
- Now we come to God's judgment upon sin, and in this judgment we learn something of God's dealing with sin:
 - ✓ God is perfectly just, and his justice demands that sin be judged and a sentence administered
 - ✓ God's judgment is perfect – it is never too severe, it corresponds to the nature of the crime
 - ✓ In judgment, God yet shows mercy (Isaiah 28:21; Lamentations 3:33; Micah 7:18; James 2:13)
- A divine curse is a judgment and sentence by God of evil upon a person or thing which must certainly come to pass
- We can understand more of what a curse is by looking at its opposite – blessing
 - ✓ Often these two are set against each other (Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 30:19; Proverbs 3:33)
 - ✓ To be under God's condemnation and wrath is to be under his curse
 - ✓ To be under God's forgiveness and favour is to be under his blessing
 - ✓ To be lost is to be cursed, to be saved is to be blessed (Genesis 12:3)
- It is noteworthy that though God curses the serpent and the ground, he does not curse Adam and Eve themselves
- The first man to be directly cursed by God is Cain (4:11) for the murder of his brother Abel

- The preeminent element of the curse is *death*
- When God warned Adam of the consequences of eating of the tree (2:17), there was only one thing that he said would come upon him: death
- The curse involves much more than death, but death is the supreme part of the curse
- The moment Adam sinned, the death principle, that was not present beforehand, entered in and began to work in him and the rest of the creation

I. THE CURSE INITIATED IN THE GARDEN

A. The curse upon the serpent (14-15)

1. In the wording of this curse, we see that *all creatures* are cursed – the serpent is “cursed *above* all cattle, and above every beast of the field”
 - a. “For the creature was made subject to vanity... the bondage of corruption... the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:20-23)
 - b. The whole earth is now cursed – even as we behold the great beauty of creation, it is marred by the effects of the curse
2. The serpent was cursed to the ground
 - a. Evidently the serpent was originally a far more glorious creature and may have walked upright
 - b. But from now on he would go on his belly and eat dust
3. God put enmity between the serpent and the woman
 - a. Humans and snakes have perpetually been in conflict, with snakes attacking and killing people, and people seeking out and killing snakes

B. The spiritual enmity and warfare between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed (15)

1. Satan is clearly identified as the serpent (Revelation 12:9; 20:2)
2. Satan’s seed are unbelievers who do the works of their father, the devil (Matthew 13:38; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8-10)
3. In opposition to the children of Satan are the children of God – all people belong to either God’s kingdom or Satan’s kingdom

4. For instance, though some might consider Cain to be a “seed of the woman”, he was actually the serpent’s seed – “who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother” (1 John 3:12)
5. Since the fall of man, Satan, his devils and his people have been waging war against the children of God seeking to bring them into sin and to destroy their lives (Job 1:8-11)

C. The victory of the woman’s seed over Satan

1. The collective “seed” of the first part of the verse is narrowed to a singular “seed” in the second part of the verse by the use of singular masculine pronouns, (it/he and his)
2. This clearly states that there would be an individual Seed who would go into conflict against Satan
3. From this initial promise of a Messiah, the unfolding of the Old Testament is the working out of that promise, to bring it to pass
4. In due time, this promised Seed entered the world, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Seed of the Woman, born of a virgin, having no human father (Galatians 4:4)
5. Satan bruised Christ’s heel, that is, his human flesh, when he suffered and died on the cross
6. Christ bruised Satan’s head, crushing and defeating him
 - a. Christ was victorious over Satan in his life, overcoming Satan’s temptations and assaults during his ministry
 - b. Christ was victorious over Satan in his death, “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15; cf. Hebrews 2:14)
 - c. Christ was victorious over Satan in his resurrection (Acts 2:24)
 - d. In due time, Christ will cast Satan into the lake of fire where he will be tormented eternally (Revelation 20:10)
7. Genesis 3:15 is known as the *protoevangelium* – the first gospel

D. The curse upon the woman (16)

1. Sorrow and pain in child-bearing

- a. Before the fall, childbirth would have been an easy and blessed process, but this all changed
- b. Now childbirth is regarded as one of the most painful things that a human can experience
- c. Animals have much less discomfort in giving birth – humans uniquely have intense, agonising pain, due mainly to the size of the baby’s head
- d. The travail of childbirth is so painful it is often used in Scripture to picture severe suffering and grief (John 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 12:2; Micah 4:10)
- e. Not only in the birthing of children, in the raising of them, the mother particularly bears the burden and sorrows of her children as they grow
- f. God’s mercy is seen here – rather than immediate death as the due punishment for their crime (2:17), God shows Eve that she will yet bear children, albeit with pain and sorrow

2. Strained marital relations

- a. Before the fall, God had ordained for the man to be the head and the woman to be in submission to him as his suitable helper
- b. But the fall brought corruption into this relationship, due to the rebellious and proud hearts in our fallen state
- c. “thy desire shall be to thy husband” can be understood as the wife’s deference and submission to the husband’s will, whatever that may be
- d. This phrase can also be understood as the woman having a desire to dominate the relationship with her husband
- e. In this case, the struggle for control and dominion in the marriage begins, as the woman attempts to break out of her God-ordained role and to usurp authority over her husband
- f. The husband, for his part seeks to assert his dominance by his strength
- g. Hence the repeated instructions in the Scriptures for wives to reverence, obey and submit to their husbands, and for husbands to love and honour their wives (Ephesians 5:22-24,33; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

- h. Feminism is nothing more than the curse manifesting itself in a woman's rebellion against God's ordained role for her sex
 - i. The cure for this sinful, feminist spirit is found in 1 Timothy 2:15 – pious motherhood
- E. The curse upon the man (17-19)
- 1. Before pronouncing the curse, God lays the blame upon Adam
 - a. He hearkened to the evil counsel of his wife
 - b. He did not silence her, rebuke her, call her to repentance and confession of her sin to God
 - c. He instead wilfully chose to disobey God and sin by eating of the forbidden fruit
 - 2. The ground cursed for Adam's sake
 - a. Adam was essentially a king over the earth, and when earth's king fell to sin, his entire kingdom fell and suffered the consequences
 - b. The formerly plentiful ground, yielding food of itself without maintenance, now became hostile and required intense labour to extract crops from
 - c. Thorns and thistles – plants and other organisms that were originally good and benign have now become pests, making life hard and dangerous for man
 - d. This would include fungi, bacteria, viruses, parasites, disease, poisons, etc.
 - e. Note that we can see even in this God's mercy – man now has a fallen, sinful nature, and idleness fuels and promotes sinful passions and behaviours – the need to occupy one's time and energy with work provides some prevention of such sins (Ezekiel 16:49)
 - 3. The curse on man had four main aspects:
 - a. Sorrow
 - b. Pain
 - c. Sweat
 - d. Death

II. THE CURSE EXPIATED AT GOLGOTHA

A. The continuation of the curse

1. As time progressed, the full extent of the curse upon creation became evident in the misery and death that pervades our existence here
2. God gave man his moral law, his perfect standard required of man, yet rather than reconcile man to God, this law only brought man under God's curse (Galatians 3:10)
3. The final verse of the Old Testament is God's threat to "come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6)
4. All this time, the saints looked for and longed for the promised one who would remove the curse and restore man into a state of blessing with God (Genesis 3:15; 12:3)

B. Christ's work in removing the curse

1. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)
2. As guilty sinners, we are not merely negatively affected by the cursed creation, but we are ourselves under God's curse for our sin, and as such, liable to the eternal judgment of hell
3. Yet Christ became our substitute and took our accursedness on himself and suffered the judgment of the curse on the cross on our behalf

MAN BRINGS THE CURSE	CHRIST BEARS THE CURSE
Sorrow (Genesis 3:17)	Man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:3)
Thorns (Genesis 3:18)	Crown of thorns (John 19:2)
Sweat of brow (Genesis 3:19)	Sweat as blood (Luke 22:44)
Return to dust (Genesis 3:19)	Dust of death (Psalm 22:15)

4. His atoning work not only reconciles man to God, but secures the redemption of the entire creation from the curse

III. THE CURSE ELIMINATED IN GLORY

- A. Though Christ's atonement has released his people from the curse, the full removal of the curse is yet to take place
- B. During Christ's millennial kingdom, the effects of the curse will be diminished but not removed

1. Lifespans will be increased to antediluvian ages (Isaiah 65:20; Zechariah 8:4)
 2. Sickness will be removed (Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 30:17; Ezekiel 34:16)
 3. Animals will revert back to vegetarianism and will no longer be hostile to man (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25)
 4. The earth will be abundantly productive, deserts flourishing, pests and disease eradicated (Psalm 67:6-7; 72:16; Isaiah 35:1; 55:13; 65:22; Joel 2:24-26; 3:18; Amos 9:13-14)
 5. Yet sin and death will still be present
- C. The New Jerusalem and new earth will have no more curse whatsoever, as the cause of the curse, sin, will be utterly removed
1. In the final book of the Bible, in the final chapter, is the last occurrence of the word “curse” – “And there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 22:3)
 2. In that day, God will “make all things new” (Revelation 21:5), a new world where every trace of sin’s curse will be forever eradicated

THE CURSE INTRODUCED IN GENESIS	THE CURSE REMOVED IN REVELATION
The curse pronounced (3:14-17)	No more curse (22:3)
Sorrow and pain begin (3:17)	No more sorrow and pain (21:4)
Death enters the world (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Man banished from tree of life (3:24)	Man restored to the tree of life (22:14)

3. It is this hope and assurance that fills the hearts of believers, and promotes holiness of life in all those who have it (2 Peter 3:11-14)

CONCLUSION

1. All of us enter this world as sinners under God’s curse
2. Many people are self-deceived into thinking they are under God’s blessing and favour, when they are actually under his curse and condemnation
3. We must see and know ourselves as we truly are – cursed, wicked, hell-deserving sinners
4. To those who die in their cursed state, the Lord Jesus will say to them on the day of judgment, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41)
5. Our only hope is to flee to Jesus Christ, who became a curse for us, trusting in his atonement to remove the curse and bring us into a state of blessing and favour with God