

Session 1

January 22, 2023

DOES IT AGREE WITH THE BIBLE?

Genesis 3:1-6

Genesis 3 records one of the most pivotal points in history: the fall of man. The narrative focuses on a seemingly innocent conversation between the cunning serpent and the truly innocent woman, Eve. There is plenty of room for speculation as to the timing of this event (how long after creation?), the physical form of the serpent (what did he originally look like?), and the location of Adam during the meeting (where was *he* at the time?), but the sequence of events and subsequent consequences are startlingly clear. This week's lesson reminds us that the fall of man was signaled by a subtle devaluation of God's authority followed by an outright denial of God's word. Each part of the conversation highlights a different way God's word was treated, and the results.

About and doubt (v. 1). Here, what God said was talked *about*, and the result was *doubt*. First, the tempter is *identified*. He is the serpent. Whether the creature was Satan in disguise, or God's created serpent possessed by the devil, his identity is clear (see Rev. 20:2-3). Second, the tempter is *described*; but only in a single word: *cunning*. The word means *shrewd, crafty, or manipulative*. Jesus bluntly referred to Satan as a liar in John 8:44, calling him a "murderer from the beginning [who] has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars." Here Satan is setting up his lie by creating doubt. He doesn't quote God. Rather, he talks *about* what God said...or didn't say. "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" How absurd that assertion must have sounded! For reflection: *What the Bible says is only as trustworthy as the One who wrote it. How does our view of inspiration affect God's credibility?*

Alongside and altered (vv. 2-3). It always bugs me when preachers misquote the Bible. With a dozen translations at their fingertips, why don't they just *read* the text so they get it right? No one knows for sure whether Eve misquoted God, added to His actual words, or simply paraphrased His intent. But the prohibition against even *touching* the tree in the middle of the garden (v. 3) was not in the original statement found in Genesis 2:17. In any case, it's always risky to paraphrase what we *think* God said, or what we *think* He must have meant. By placing our own interpretations alongside of God's word, we are in danger of *missing* God's meaning at best or *altering* God's meaning at worst. For reflection: *Remember: what God actually says in His word always outweighs what we think he said, and what God means always outweighs what we think He means!*

Against and accusation (vv. 4-5). Satan's response to Eve is wrong on at least three levels. First, Satan calls God a liar by directly contradicting what God had indeed said in Genesis 2:17. Second, Satan assumes the position of God, accusing Him of intentionally manipulating Adam and Eve to keep them in their place. Third, Satan accuses God of being maliciously jealous, not wanting anyone else to be like Him. We must note, God is indeed a jealous God, in that He will not allow His children to worship any other God (see Ex. 20:5; 34:14). But God certainly wants His children conformed to His image (see Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2, et al.). Simply put, He wants us to be like Him! By blatantly attacking God's word, Satan mischaracterized God and

falsely accused Him. For reflection: *I have always been taught that the Bible and God are not identical but are inseparable. What do you think is meant by that? How does John 1:1 relate to this statement?*

Abandoned and rebellion (v. 6). We all know the disastrous ending to the story. Once God's word was sufficiently doubted, and His character sufficiently smeared, Eve abandoned the truth altogether and ran headlong into rebellion. If only she had taken God at His word! For reflection: *Notice the progression of Eve's fall. Sin occurred when she abandoned God's propositional truth in favor of her own personal desire. How do we discern the voice of God? We begin by asking, "Does this voice compromise the unchanging truth of God's word?"*