

Sunday Morning Service
Christmas
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Genesis 3:15.

1. How old do you think creation is?
2. How did Adam's and Eve's familiarity with God's rule compare to what we know about God's law?
3. What consequences of sin bother you the most?
4. Do you ever experience consequences for your own sin?
5. List some of the blessings that create the environment for God's laws.
6. Discuss why it is easier to think about the difficulty of God's rules contrasted with thinking about the joys of God's blessing.
7. How many years after Adam's death was Noah born?
8. Are you friends or acquaintance with anyone who needs to express faith in Christ as Savior?

OFFSPRING OF A VIRGIN'S WOMB
Genesis 3:15

We sing the words of this title in the well known Christmas hymn, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." We probably sing it without stopping to think about how radical the idea is. What do "normal" people think when they hear such things? All over America today

there are people gathering in church services who only attend on Christmas Eve or maybe Easter. Do they even hear the words "offspring of a virgin's womb" as they sing?

If an unchurched and unregenerated person hears those words and thinks about them, he or she must conclude that it has something to do with Fairyland Forest, something make-believe. An honest cynic will respond to such a statement in the Christmas season with, "Get real." Oh, by real do you mean like Santa Claus the jolly old elf who lives at the North Pole, and delivers toys to every good child in the world out of a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer—all in one night? Who's living in Fairyland Forest?

Instead of dismissing this amazing promise of Christmas out of hand, come to the manger and bow in worship of the miracle child. In your heart, bow to the offspring of the virgin's womb because He is the promised Savior from sin, the promised Victor over Satan. It actually was not so long ago and far away.

Have you ever said, "Time flies"? There is no more obvious example of that reality than the Christmas season. The other day when I heard Alvin and the Chipmunks singing, "Christmas time is here again . . ." I thought, "How could it be here already?" It seems like we just took down the decorations from last Christmas a few weeks ago. I hardly saw tax day, Fourth of July, vacation, Halloween and Thanksgiving go by.

Actually, the real story and the whole story of Christmas seems to cover a very, very short amount of this slice of eternity called human history. If we assume that God created all that is some 8,000 years ago (which idea I realize is mocked and jeered by people who do not trust God, but which date is probably close according to Bible chronology), that is a relatively short time ago. That is only 100 of my expected lifetimes. Imagine lining up 100 people and pointing to each one and saying, "You live 80 years, you live 80 years, you live 80 years" and so on all the way down the line. At the end you look back over the line and say, "That is creation to the present."

One hundred lifetimes ago, sin crashed into God's perfect creation and ruined everything. At that time God promised to fix the problem through the offspring of the woman. Only twenty-five eighty year life spans ago, God fulfilled His promise in a stable in Bethlehem just like He promised He would. Only about 24 ½ of those

lifetimes ago, the promised Child crushed Satan's head at the cross outside Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel.

Today, struggling through a world sunk in sin, I have hope. There is hope eternal because the eternal God keeps His promises. He has plainly revealed His steadfast love for us as He kept the promise He made in the beginning. God has provided the woman's offspring to destroy sin and Satan. Tomorrow we celebrate once again the fulfillment of God's promise to send the Victor through the woman. Probably relatively few people will spend any time at all tomorrow reflecting on God the Son becoming one of us through His birth to the virgin Mary. And almost no one will contemplate how this fulfilled God's promise from the moment sin wrecked His perfect creation. Let's spend a few minutes today thinking about how trustworthy God is to keep His promises.

Why Will You Die? (3:3).

In the beginning, at some point after God created our human father Adam, God issued a warning to him. God's warning was clear. Don't eat of the tree of knowledge or you will die (v.17). *"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 2:17).

God created Adam and Eve in perfect innocence. They did not know the difference between good and evil. All they knew and experienced was the righteousness of God. They could not have an evil thought or do an evil deed. We find that hard to comprehend, but wish it were still the case for us. But God planted one tree in the garden of paradise that could give the first family the knowledge of evil. On one hand, it is obvious why God placed a prohibition on eating the fruit of the tree.

On the other hand, God's purpose was to test the will of the two people He created in His own image. The test was not for God to discover if He could trust humans. God's plan for redemption from sin was already in place for eternity. The rule was that eating of the tree would cause the process of death to begin. Or we might say that disobeying God would set in motion the laws of entropy and thermodynamics—everything is winding down, no new energy is being created.

As is the case for so many of God's laws or rules, He gave this one in the context of great blessing. *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden"* (Genesis 2:16). How many trees and how many different kinds of fruit were in the garden? Does the term "tree" also include vegetables? Not according to children. Why would God put vegetables in paradise? Whatever was available in the Garden, there was a lot of it and it was all good. God's kind and abundant provision was a picture of His grace to us.

Sadly, at some point in human history, everything went terribly wrong. The forbidden tree became the focus and failure was the result. We might wonder if Eve was beguiled by the serpent because Adam failed to communicate with her? *"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'?"* (Genesis 3:1).

This statement reveals that the serpent addressed the woman. That strikes common sense as a bit unusual. We must accept certain assumptions in this scenario. The snake was an unusual species. That is obvious in the fact that the snake could speak was not surprising to the woman. That the snake questioned God and misquoted God would indicate that evil was already present in the universe. Therefore, we can assume that this event occurred after Satan's rebellion and consignment to the earth. And also, we assume that Satan either indwelt the creature or strongly influenced it.

At the same time, there are many clear statements that we must accept as fact. *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'?"* (Genesis 3:1). We see here that the serpent was uniquely crafty. "Crafty" is not always an evil trait. There is commendable shrewdness. In various ways, from creation this creature was more perceptive and convincing than other creatures. It was not a creation of Satan to be used for his purposes. God created this thing and it was part of all that was very good (1:31).

Also obvious is the fact that the conversation was not an accurate reflection of God's rule. Satan, speaking through the serpent, failed to acknowledge God's bountiful provision of all the trees.

Furthermore, in the conversation, Eve added the word and restriction “touch it” (3:3). According to God’s message to Adam, He did not say that. Though it is a logical extension of the prohibition.

Some people also wonder if Eve’s husband was present in this conversation. On the surface it might appear that Eve was in this conversation alone. But 3:6 states that he was with her, which means at the moment, not just with her in the garden environment. Maybe the greater problem was that her husband had not taught her. It is true that God gave the original instruction to Adam before He created Eve (2:15-16 vs. 22-24). But Eve’s use of the plural pronoun “we” in the conversation with the serpent proves that she was well aware of the rule.

This was not a case of Adam or Eve being confused about God’s rule. Nor is that the case for us. All of God’s laws are clear. The Bible is knowable. God has given us the Bible so that we will know what His personal righteousness is like. God’s personal righteousness is the acceptable standard for living. All sin is a breach of God’s righteous standard. We know what God expects. Does God expect too much? Is it impossible for us to keep His rules? Hold that question.

The prohibitions of the Bible always stand against a backdrop of God’s amazing love. God reveals His rules in the larger context of His great love for His creation. He helps us become aware of His rules so that we will become more aware of our need for His love.

But have God’s rules been communicated? God has certainly communicated His desires and plans in the Bible. God has chosen and gifted certain people with the ability to declare and teach His desires and plans. The result is that multiplied thousands of people throughout history have dedicated their lives to tell the story of the gospel because we really do believe it.

How Can We Live? (vv.6-17).

Because God’s laws are clear, and because humans breach those laws, life is full of disappointments. Life is always difficult when the creature is estranged from the Creator (vv.6-11). Sin causes God’s image bearers to realize something is wrong. Such was the case for our parents. *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that*

they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths (Genesis 3:7).

The eyes opened is a picture of the reality that God created us with a conscience. From birth our conscience acts as an amplifier for God’s righteousness. Early on in life we become aware in our consciences that certain thoughts, attitudes, and actions are not acceptable. We attempt to do religious stuff and make religious commitments but they do not get rid of the guilt.

The guilt is present because sin separates God’s image bearers from the Creator. *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 (Genesis 3:8).* One day Adam and Eve were enjoying fellowship with their Creator and the next day they tried to hide from Him. By principle the same thing occurs in our world. Denying that God exists is that ultimate attempt to hid from Him.

As a result of Adam’s and Eve’s sin and disobedience, life is difficult. Relationships are strained. We blame others for our failure. God asked Adam, whom He put in charge of the first family, why he disobeyed. Adam blamed God by blaming his wife. *The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12).* What Adam said was true. The woman did give him the fruit and he did eat it. But the greater truth is that Adam faced a choice and he purposely and with intent chose to disobey God.

In the same way, God asked the woman if Adam’s accusation was true. *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” (Genesis 3:13).* That was to say, “God, if you would not have made the serpent, none of this would have happened.” And from the moment we are able to communicate, we blame others for our failure to live according to God’s righteousness.

Also, because of their sin against God, we find it difficult to show deference when it is expected. *To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16).* Husband and wife conflicts are a constant reminder that we fail to live up to God’s righteousness. The

greater expression of this is feminism in our culture that is demanded but is also the source of all kinds of conflicts.

The headline in the news the other day asked this very important question: “How can we prevent sexual abuse in the work place?” Immediately, I thought, “Well, the answer to that question is very clear and two thousand years old.” God revealed the rule through the Apostle Paul. *“Train the young women . . . to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:5).* But, I thought, “There is no way I could say that publicly because I would be dismissed as a neanderthal.” No one believes that rule. Even most professing Christians don’t believe it. I know. That’s why we have a problem.

We experience ongoing conflict with unrighteous people. *“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).* The offspring of the serpent is the offspring of the devil. Jesus identified the very religious leaders of Israel as that offspring. *“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).*

We also know too well from personal experience all the physical pain and ailments leading to death that are part of God’s curse on sin. And then there is the ever present “Murphy’s Law.” Murphy’s Law states: “If anything can go wrong it will.” The reason for this truth is found in God’s curse against His own creation because of Adam’s sin. *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; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 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” (Genesis 3:17-19).*

And life has been chaos ever since. What hope is there?

Hope for Christmas (3:15).

Christmas is the great unfolding of God’s plan for the woman’s offspring. God promised that the offspring of the woman would be our Champion who will vanquish the author of sin - Satan. It is quite interesting to follow the lineage, the continuing offspring of the woman.

Genesis 5:1-28 reveals the path from Adam to Lamech. In that context we discover that Adam lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5). A lot of people would be born in that lifetime. Then there were key offspring like Seth . . . Enoch . . . Methuselah . . . up to Lamech the father of Noah. Imagine Lamech, who was 56 when Adam died, sitting down and asking the old patriarch what it was like to live in paradise and walk with God. Imagine Lamech asking what life was like before sin, and Adam explaining how horribly life had changed because of the effects of sin becoming deeper and broader all the time.

Then there were Noah . . . Shem. . . Arpachad . . . Peleg . . . Nahor . . . Terah . . . Abraham. We read that God chose to pour out His grace on Noah. Noah and his family would have to receive God’s grace for humanity to survive. They faced the near end of the woman’s offspring. God would cause an illustration of the effects of sin, the consequences of sin, and the judgment of sin that people still talk about today—total destruction! That is the universal flood that modern thinkers reject as a historical event. They do so in the face of a Grand Canyon full of evidence. God graciously saved Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives. And only these people.

But through them came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the father of the twelve family leaders of the nation called Israel. And born in the line of Judah was king named David. And God promised David that He would make an eternal kingdom from someone in His lineage.

And finally we arrive at the manger. Go just like the angels invited the shepherds to go and see. *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11-12).* Come to the manger and see the offspring of the virgin’s womb who God promised in ages past.

Come to the manger and see Jesus who is the Christ. When God promised Joseph and Mary that Mary would have this unique Holy Spirit-given child He instructed: *“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus is God’s plan for Christmas. The plan is critical because everyone needs the Savior. Every person is born as the offspring of Adam and Eve. Therefore, we all inherit the sin principle they brought upon the human race. God said, *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned* (Romans 5:12). The same statement is found seven verses later, *For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners* (Romans 5:19a).

What will we, people born offending God, offer as the means to bring us into fellowship with our offended Creator? Remember those rules we mentioned earlier? We know God’s law. We also know that we cannot keep it. We all know we are offenders. What can we do? Come to the manger and find the Savior, the offspring of the woman.

At the manger we find Christ the Lord who is the Savior. His name is Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. He alone brings us the free gift of salvation through His obedient sacrifice on the cross. The other side of Paul’s argument in that Romans five passage is, *But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many* (Romans 5:15). The last part of verse nineteen promises, *So by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous* (Romans 5:19b).

No one killed Jesus (contrary to the title of Bill O’Riley’s book). Jesus is the promised Offspring of the Woman who came to earth to lay down His life as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin. That acceptable sacrifice is God’s free gift to us, His Christmas gift to us.

The offspring of the virgin is the ultimate victor. He crushed Satan’s head when He shed His blood for sin and rose from the grave as the victor. The battle for souls rages, but the end of the war is already determined. Come to the manger and scrutinize how God our Creator keeps His promises.

A hundred life spans ago, God promised Satan’s defeat through the offspring of the woman. Twenty-five life times ago, God kept His promise regarding the woman’s offspring. Twenty-four and a half life times ago, God kept His promise and defeated Satan. How many life times will it be until God keeps the rest of His promises? He who came as the woman’s offspring is coming again to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Are you ready? God will keep His promise.