

Genesis 3 (15) – Christmas in the Garden of God

Jesus said that he is at the heart of the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44-45 / John 5:39). And you see Jesus in pattern, promise, and present from the first book of the Bible onward. In Genesis 3:8, you see the Son of God present, walking in the Garden of Eden. Jesus is the promised seed that will conquer evil in Genesis 3:15. And Jesus is patterned as the cover for sin in Genesis 3:21.

There is an abundance of evidence to commend what the Bible says, your conscience agrees, and society proves. That God is real, the Bible is true, and Jesus is the only way. The Christian faith is historical, logical, and believable. But some people still say, “There isn’t any irrefutable proof, and there isn’t enough evidence to convince me that Jesus is God, and that I must follow him as the only way to salvation.” People say they won’t believe because God hasn’t made himself clearly and undeniably known. But that is not why they don’t believe. And the reason why they don’t believe is in Genesis 3.

Before we even look at that, let’s look at Jesus answering that objection himself, as he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. You see, the Devil used this very, “give them something they cannot deny” line of reasoning. Satan knew who Jesus was. The Devil didn’t need convincing. Even his minions, the demons, knew who Jesus was. In fact, in Matthew 8:29, demons had possessed a man, but seeing Jesus approaching, they *cried out*, “*What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?*” And James 2:19 says – *the demons believe – and shudder!*

So, Satan already knew that Jesus was the Son of God. But he tried to convince Jesus that he should give the people some irrefutable proof. Matthew 4:5-6 says – *Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”* The Devil used the Bible to say to Jesus, “Jump off the temple then everyone will know who you really are and they will be fully convinced to follow you.”

In Matthew 4:7, Jesus answers, saying, *“Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* Jesus knew that even if people got what they say would be “irrefutable proof”, it wouldn’t make them believe. In Matthew 12:39 Jesus said – *An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign.* Of course, Jesus performed many miracles. He healed people, he raised people from the dead, and he raised himself from the dead. But that didn’t stop some people from their unbelief. In Luke 16:31, Jesus said that if people don’t believe the word of God, then *neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.* People want signs because they don’t want to obey Jesus as God. People could have all the evidence they want, and they would still be in need, because of their hearts needing to be changed by God.

So, here is the question. Why doesn’t God give absolute, irrefutable, undeniable, clear evidence of his existence? To see the problem, the solution, and the answer to the question, we go back to the Garden of Eden.

The Garden of Eden is also called the Garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13, 31:9). It was created to be abundant, beautiful, and pristine. But it was not yet complete. Eden was not yet everything that God intended, everything that God would make it for eternity (2 Peter 3:13). Eden would expand (Revelation 21:1-5). And the New Heavens and the New Earth will not simply be Eden restored, but Eden completed (Revelation 22:1-5).

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were created innocent, but not perfect. They had not yet been confirmed in their holiness. They had to pass a test (Genesis 2:16-17). But they failed that test (Genesis 3:6). Satan (in the form of a serpent / cf. Revelation 12:9) approached Eve and deceived her into disobeying the one command that God had given. Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil while Adam looked on and then partook as well.

And here came the consequences. Genesis 3:7-8 says – *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.* Adam and Eve had experienced the joy of God’s presence in the

garden before they sinned. When we read in Genesis 3:8 that Adam and Eve *“heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,”* it was not the first time they had heard him, or spoken to him. However, although they once enjoyed close fellowship with God, they now found themselves hiding from him. And because of their rebellion, God *“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). Eden had been lost and humanity had been plunged into the curse of sin.

So, Adam and Eve had ruined Eden. And they were evicted. But the promise and the process of redemption had begun. God would allow mankind to fall into sin, but to triumph over evil in the person of Jesus Christ. And to one day rule and reign with Jesus as redeemed, new, and perfect creatures in a perfect world for all eternity. In Genesis 3:15, God says to the serpent – *“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.”* This is the promise of ultimate redemption in seed form. Although sin had entered the world, God points toward a future redeemer, who would ultimately crush the head of the serpent, defeating death forever. And setting the stage for the ultimate redemption of the universe, and the New Heavens and New Earth.

And this mention of God in Genesis 3:8, this person talking in Genesis 3:15, and the one who made animal skins into coats for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21, this is not God the Father, whom no human can see, as 1 Timothy 6:16 says. Rather, this is God the Son, and what we call a Christophany, or a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. You see other Christophanies in Genesis 16:7-14, Genesis 18, Exodus 3, Joshua 5:13-15, Judges 6:11-14, Daniel 3:24-25, and elsewhere. But in Genesis 3:15, you see the preincarnate Jesus, prophesying of the Incarnation of Jesus, and his atoning death for our sins. This is Jesus talking about Christmas and Easter in the Garden of Eden.

And here we are. Adam and Eve knew for sure that God existed. They knew for sure because they had interacted with God personally. And there weren't other people around. They had God all to themselves, as it were. They

weren't perfected. But they were innocent. Unlike us. There wasn't the volume of sin and separation that we have now. And yet one word from the Devil in Genesis 3:5 – *you will be like God*, set his diabolical plan into motion. It worked. Of course, God was using the Devil's plan as part of his own plan. That tragedy in the garden would lead to the triumph of the ages.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had enough evidence. But they fell. And think beyond Adam and Eve, to Satan. How could he know all he knew and still disobey God? Satan himself knew God better than anyone ever has. Better than Adam and Eve. The Devil was with God in the garden before Adam and Eve ever got there (Ezekiel 28:13-15). Satan knew that God was God, and that he himself wasn't God, yet he fell into sin, too. He wanted to be like God (Isaiah 14:12-14), and he fell, and then he tempted Adam and Eve with the same desire, to be like God. And people have been falling for the lie of the Fall ever since. No matter how much evidence they have. Adam and Eve lived in a time of innocence, with God being abundantly evident. And yet they still disobeyed the one rule that God had given them.

The issue isn't about people not having enough evidence. The issue is about people not wanting to give up control of their lives. The problem is not a lack of evidence. The problem is our sinful hearts. The solution is our sin bearing savior, coming to the world in human form at the Incarnation, at Christmas. And the answer to the question of why God doesn't give us some absolutely, irrefutably, undeniably, and clearly known evidence of himself is that even if he did, it might change our minds, but it can't change our hearts. Sin in the world and in our lives is the reason why we cannot see the evidence that is all around us. What we see is sin; the injustice, the evil, the pain. But sin is our problem; it is our fault, not God's fault. People think that sin is evidence against God, but sin is actually evidence for God. For our need of God.

“You can have it your own way”; this was the seed that was planted in the garden, in Adam and Eve, our first parents. They had all the evidence. But evidence is not the ultimate issue. All the intellectual and even experiential evidence we might need to convince us that God exists and that Christianity

is true is not enough to overcome our emotional barriers, and our fear of not being as happy as we would otherwise. We might even fear hell. But the ramifications to our relationships, the consequences to our comforts, and of course having to give up our cherished sinful desires, these are what keep people from repenting toward God and placing their faith in Jesus Christ. You could have perfect and full evidence for God, but still not want to trust and obey God. Because you still want to do life your own way.

So, we choose not to believe. As a rule, for those who aren't Christians. Or in a moment or season of rebellion, for those who are Christians. The people who aren't Christians don't want Jesus to rule their lives. And people who are Christians want Jesus as our Savior, but sometimes we don't want him as our Lord. This was the seed that was planted in the garden. It is the consequence of what we call Original Sin.

How many times have you broken the law, broken the rules, did things your own way, or failed to do the right thing, even when someone had the power and authority to punish you? So, how many times have you rebelled against God's will? How much evidence is there for that? People know they can't meet God's standard, and that's why they pretend that God doesn't exist. But he does, and your sins are mounting as evidence against you. The irrefutable, undeniable, and absolutely clear evidence is that the seed planted in the garden is still bearing the fruit of sin in your life.

The good news is that Christians are forgiven of all of their sins. And a new seed has been planted in them, righteousness, a "you can follow God's way" seed. You still have to struggle with sin, with this "you can have it your own way" seed. However, Christians have been *born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God* (1 Peter 1:23). This means that you can indeed struggle, and win, *for God's seed abides in the Christian*, as 1 John 3:9 says. I may not always look like I'm winning, but in Christ I have won. I am justified, I'm being sanctified, and I will be glorified, as 1 John 3:2-3 says. I'm winning. Despite some of the evidence that says I'm not. It's not enough evidence for me not to believe in Christmas.