

#### Lesson 4 - THE WAY OF LIFE    *Genesis 3:20-24*

**(Gen. 3:20)** - Adam disobeyed God and brought himself and the whole human race into a state of sin and death (*Rom. 5:12*). The Lord God has shown Adam and Eve the impossibility of gaining life and a right relationship with God by their works. He has graciously shown the only way of life and righteousness by the glorious Person identified as the seed of woman (*Gen. 3:15*). This is the first spoken prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is God the eternal Son and Who would be sent forth “*made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (*Gal. 4:4-5; cf. Matt. 1:21,23; John 1:14*). The Bible teaches us that this was God’s purpose established as, before He created the world, He chose a people to save by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and made Christ to be their Surety (*2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Eph. 1:3-7*).

Here is the first time that the woman is named “Eve,” which means “life” or “living.” She is described here as “*the mother of all living.*” We can say that she is the mother of all living physically as all people descended from Adam and Eve. But, more importantly, we can say she is the mother of all who live SPIRITUALLY in the sense that the Lord Jesus Christ came through her in His human nature without sin. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life of His people.

**(Gen. 3:21)** - The Lord shows here the way and the ground upon which He saves His people from their sins and brings in an everlasting and unchangeable righteousness so that He is just to save and justify His chosen people - sinners saved by grace. It is through the death of a God-appointed, suitable substitute who by death could satisfy the justice of God against the sins of His people (*Heb. 2:14-17*). This is the work of Christ, the Lamb of God, for His people. The Lord God slew an animal (probably a lamb) and made “*coats of skin, and clothed*” Adam and Eve. The Lord showed that sin demands death and righteousness demands life. The coats of skin are pictures of Christ’s righteousness imputed to God’s chosen people. This is the very righteousness of God accomplished and established by the shedding of Christ’s blood unto death. Upon this one ground, God justifies His people. He forgives all their sins and declares them righteous in His sight, all based on the blood of Christ. And from this legal act of justification, all for whom Christ lived, died, and arose again, are given the gracious gift of spiritual life which Adam lost in the fall (*Rom. 5:17-18*). In this act of slaying an animal and making coats of skin for Adam and Eve, the Lord established the sacrificial system of worship to picture and prophesy of the coming Messiah and His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of God’s chosen people imputed to Him by God the Father (*2 Cor. 5:21*). This is where worshippers would shed the blood of particular animals and bring the blood before the Lord. This way of worship carried on until Christ came and finished His work of fulfilling all righteousness for His people.

**(Gen. 3:22)** - In referring to Himself by the pronoun “us,” we see the Lord again reveals Himself in the Trinity of His Persons. He is ONE GOD Who subsists in three distinct Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the salvation of sinners (*Col. 2:9-10*). The meaning of the phrase, “*the man is become as one of us,*” is found in the following phrase - “*to know good and evil.*” It is God’s sovereign right to set the standard both of good and evil. All good and evil must be measured as it relates to God. Adam has attempted to exalt himself to a place that belongs only to God. He declared his autonomy (self-governing) from God. He followed Satan and Eve to attempt to set his own standard of good and evil and rejected God. Fallen, sinful man knows and judges good and evil by relating it to himself rather than God. This causes him always to be wrong in his

judgments of salvation and how to restore a right relationship with God. Man is not the measure of good. God is the measure of all good (*Matt. 19:17*).

*“And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever”* - God has revealed HIS way of salvation and of restoring a right relationship with Himself. It is by the work of the woman’s seed, the Godman (the Lord Jesus Christ) and based on His death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s people whom He chose and gave to Christ before the world began. This is the ONLY way of salvation, and it is by God’s hand - His power and goodness. The *“tree of life”* is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is life and from Whom we have eternal life (*John 3:36; 14:6; 1 John 5:11-12*). God did not fear that, if left in the garden, Adam might take of the tree of life and live forever. He excluded Adam from taking of the tree of life and gaining eternal life by Adam’s works.

**(Gen. 3:23-24)** - So, God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden *“to till the ground from whence he was taken.”* Man was cursed to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and it is a work that would never be finished. He would have to do this the rest of his life, and when he would die, he would leave that work unfinished. The next generation would have to begin where he ended. This is a good description of man trying to work his way to salvation. It is a futile, even deadly, attempt to do what is impossible for sinful man to do. Sinful man can never finish the work of righteousness because he has no righteousness and is unable to work out righteousness for himself. The way of the tree of life is not gained or preserved by the works of men’s hands.

According to the KJV, God placed Cherubims, which are angelic beings, and a flaming sword whirling around to guard or protect the way of the tree of life. Notice it does not say to bar man from the way of the tree of life, but to keep it or guard it. In other words, the way to the tree of life was to be closely guarded. Man can only gain access to the tree of life God’s way. The flaming sword represents God’s Word and God’s justice. The way to the tree of life is a way of law and justice satisfied by the sacrifice of the woman’s seed. John Gill wrote that the words here are not to be understood of placing the cherubim, but of Jehovah placing Himself in His shekinah glory at the east of the garden of Eden. The verse would read - *“So He (the Lord God) drove out the man; and He dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubims, as a Shekinah (a flaming sword), to keep open the way to the tree of life.”* Another possible translation could be - *“And He (the Lord God) made the glory of His shekinah, or glorious majesty, to dwell of old at the east of the Garden of Eden, over or above the two cherubim.”*

Because man has sinned and been driven out of the garden, God placed His glorious presence outside the garden between the cherubim, and it was there that God kept the way of the tree of life. It was there that sinful men were to approach and worship God by sacrifice. There are two things that support this translation: (1) The word translated “placed” in the AKJV is never translated “placed” anywhere else in the OT. It is translated “dwell” 83 times elsewhere. It means to “tabernacle” or “dwell.” (2) The next time we see the cherubims are in *Exod. 25:17ff.* where God gives instructions for the ark and the mercy-seat. The Lord God is always portrayed as One who dwells upon the mercy-seat, between the Cherubims. Was this God’s prescribed place of worship? Possibly. Was this where Cain and Abel brought their offerings? Possibly. We know that Cain rejected the way of life. He ignored God’s justice and denied the Gospel. He lifted himself up in self-righteousness and was rejected by God. By God’s grace and through the gift of life and faith, Abel obeyed God, believed the Gospel, humbled himself and sought life through Christ. And though God in justice drove Adam from the garden, He has always kept the way to the tree of life under His guard and open for any sinner whom He would bring to Christ and come for salvation, righteousness, and life His way (*Rev. 22:12-14*).