

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:1-6**

**“1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?'” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'” 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”**

## **"A Dragon in the Garden"**

**We move on this morning to chapter three of the Book of Beginnings where we will learn about the fall of man. We come to a bit of a shock at the first verse and we will not move much further this morning as we consider the implications of finding a dragon in God's Garden!**

**I would like to posit that perhaps Genesis 3:1 is the single verse in the Bible that raises more questions than any other!**

- Who was the serpent?**
- Why could he talk?**
- Where did he come from?**
- When did he fall from grace?**
- Why was he allowed to test Adam?**
- When did he come into the garden?**
- How was he shrewd?**

**And there are probably a few more questions I did not think to write down! Some answers to these questions can be found in the rest of God's revelation, some are quite mysterious and others are simply beyond our ability to fully understand.**

**Let me begin with who this serpent is which has both a clear and mysterious answer... The reference to a serpent is clearly a reference to one of God's created animals both here and in the judgment given in verse 14 upon a created creature that must move on its belly as snakes do to this day. However, the curse seems to indicate a dramatic change in the appearance and function of the serpent so we cannot be quite sure what it looked like in the Garden. I would like to suggest that what approached Adam and Eve would have looked more like what we think of as a dragon than as a modern snake.**

**I believe that to be true because of what we are told about who has shown up here in the garden much later in the Bible, specifically in Revelation 20:1 “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.”**

- Satan is specifically referred to as the serpent of old and as the dragon.**

Now obviously if the serpent looked like a fierce fire-breathing dragon & was suddenly possessed by Satan & starting conversing with Eve, she might have been taken back a bit more than she appears to have been in the text before us.

But here are two things to remember: First, we don't know what kind of dragon like appearance the serpent might have had: Maybe just a snake that stood upright or perhaps like one of the more friendly dragons we often see in movies today! And second we must remember that Satan does not come trying to scare people, he comes trying to deceive them and thus often uses a very unexpected appearance...

Listen to how Paul describes Satan as he warns the Saints at Corinth about false teachers:

**“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” [II Corinthians 11:13-14]**

So this gives us a little insight into who this serpent was and perhaps helps a little with why he was having what seems to be a natural conversation with Eve there in the Garden. That is one of those areas that remains a bit mysterious just like Balaam's ass talking to him in the Book of Judges.

Some have argued that Eve should have been shocked to hear one of the animals talking and that should have been a BIG warning sign for her!

- It certainly should have been for Adam as he stood by because he had named all the animals and even if some of them were capable of speech before the fall, none were comparable with Him as one made in the image of God, but we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves there.

So we have a talking dragon-like serpent in the garden and the logical question to ask is where did he come from? The serpent as a creature was not out of place, but what about Satan? We learn in the fullness of God's revelation that Satan was a fallen Angel who sought to be as God and as we should see in the coming weeks, he came to the garden to challenge God.

- The Bible is telling the story of man & not angels, but fallen angels are spoken of by both the Apostle Peter and Jude...

Jude 1:6 **“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;**

II Peter 2:4 **“God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;”**

We are also given by the Prophet Ezekiel what is accepted by most as a description of Satan's personal fall: I would commend Ezekiel 28 to your further study but I want us to hear this morning what the Prophet reveals after saying that the proud King of Tyre would be destroyed...

**“11 Moreover the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says Jehovah God: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, [obviously the King of Tyre was not in Eden]**

**You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.”**

*[God tells Job from the whirlwind that the angels sang as He created the world!]*

**14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.**

*[now the Prophet gives us the details of Satan's fall and it should be a warning to us all!]*

16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. 17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you."

We are given more details about God's battle with Satan in Revelation 9 which could also be some good homework!

- Satan's fall from heaven at the time of Christ's incarnation is seen in Rev 9

1 "Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

*[we will remember in the Christmas season that King Herod was Satan's instrument for this plan.]*

5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil & Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, & his angels were cast out with him."

Here John sees the coming of Jesus from heaven's perspective and we know that Jesus wins the battle and dies to save His people from their sins fulfilling the promise we will study in a few weeks:

- That the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent.

As we discussed last week, God is telling His story of redemption: He is justifying, sanctifying and glorifying those who would be the Church, the beloved Bride for His Son. It is a grand story and a grand story with a grand ending... But as many of you picked up on last week, we are left with the question of just how sin got into God's story?

- Is God the author of sin?

Here is what Jonathon Edwards had to say about that question: "If by 'the author of sin,' be meant the sinner, the agent, or the actor of sin, or the doer of a wicked thing . . . it would be a reproach and blasphemy, to suppose God to be the author of sin. In this sense, I utterly deny God to be the author of sin." But, he goes on to argue rightly that willing sin to exist in the world is not the same as sinning. God does not commit sin in willing that there be sin. God has established a world in which sin will indeed necessarily come to pass by God's permission, but not by his "positive agency."

All of the great theologians of the Church from Augustine down through Calvin to Van Til today have known that you cannot take what the Bible has to say so clearly about God's sovereign control over His Creation seriously and then pretend that sin was a surprise or something outside of His control.

- Yes, God brings a dragon into His story and mankind falls into sin under his influence.

This was known to God and the will of God, before the foundation of the world because we are told that He elected us to salvation before He made the world!

This brings up a host of questions, many of which the Apostle Paul helps us to wrestle with in Romans 9-11: I will not go through all of them in detail this morning but I want us to know that God does give us some insights into all of this even though it is extremely difficult for us as mere creatures to fully understand. First, I want to turn to a passage in Isaiah which brings us to an example that Paul picks up on in Romans 9: God in Isaiah 45 is explaining how he controls history which in part involves the use of wicked men and rulers:

**“1 "Thus says Jehovah to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, Jehovah, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. 5 I am Jehovah, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am Jehovah, and there is no other; 7 I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, Jehovah, do all these things.'"**

*[For those of you have who a King James Bible that verse reads:*

*“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I Jehovah do all these things.”]*

**8 "Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, Jehovah, have created it.**

**9 "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? 10 Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?' " 11 Thus says Jehovah, The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. 12 I have made the earth, And created man on it. I -- My hands -- stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.”**

- I think it should be obvious from this passage that God does NOT simply ‘allow’ evil!

The introduction of evil in the rebellion of Satan and Adam must be seen in the light of the verses we studied last week:

- In the case of Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery & the Romans and Jews crucifying Jesus, what they intended for evil, God intended and greatly used for good.

Could God have made a creation with no sin? Yes of course He could have!

But that is not what He chose to do and to ask why He did things the way He has, and certainly to judge Him as being wrong in doing so, is where the Prophet says, a pot cannot say to the potter why have you made me this way?

When such an accusation is made in Romans 9, Paul is quick to answer drawing his example from the Prophet Isaiah: “20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? 22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Now you will notice the Apostle Paul is not afraid to ask a ‘what if’ question and it should teach us two things: First and foremost it shows that it is OK to ask honest ‘what if’ questions as long as they are respectful...

- Like the one I just asked about having a creation without sin.

AND we must remember that Paul is here asking a ‘what if’ question and not giving us a definitive truth about God’s motives. Paul gives one possible explanation of God’s ultimate plans but when he comes to the conclusion of his discussion at the end of chapter eleven Paul declares, “33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

And just one final thought for when we struggle with these truths or when we are challenged by those who question these great truths. In the Scriptures we see that God hates sin and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked! They will say, or we might think, well then why did He not save everyone? Or why did He not just judge Adam & Eve in the garden and start over? All such questions revolve around trying to understand why God let the dragon into His story.

- We are not told the reason for that, BUT we do clearly see that God judges all sin and that sin is contrary to His nature!

This is the reason, and it can be the only reason, why we think that evil IS evil and why it needs to be judged!

- In other words, without God’s character as the standard, how would we judge anything to be evil?

Well we have wrestled with a number of the questions verse one raises and I will have to leave the question of when Satan came into the Garden and just how he was shrewd for next week!

**I hope this has been helpful, & yes you will need to think about them always!**

As we ponder what all of this means for us today I want to return to Paul’s reference to Satan coming as an Angel of Light and look at the full context:

II Corinthians 11:1 “1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it! 5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6 Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. 7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! 12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

**Our hymn of response this morning will be the great hymn written by Martin Luther based on Psalm 46: Luther was one who understood well the battle raging with Satan down through history.**

**He came deceiving our first parents in the garden and he will be loosed for a short time for a final great temptation on the earth at the end of time.**

**In the meantime the Apostle Paul warns us about keeping God's armor handy so we can quench the fiery darts that Satan can still throw at us!**

**Yes, we need that armor, but we should also be able to sing with Martin Luther, 'his doom is sure!'**

**Jesus has come and crushed the head of the serpent as promised at the cross:**

➤ **As we shall see in the coming weeks, Man was lost at a tree and man was saved on a tree!**

**Martin Luther had this confidence because he knew AND believed Psalm 46 where we read in part:  
"10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!  
11 Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge."**

**Let us go forth this week singing the new song that we see lifted up in Revelation 5 to the Lamb who was slain...**

**"You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."**

**Communion Meditation: John 8:42**

**"Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." 48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."**