

**Reading:** Genesis 3:1-24

**Theme:** Strange Interview and Presence in Paradise.

We started to look at Genesis 3. My further reading and thinking on this chapter has caused me to question why on earth I started preaching on it! As is said Mastermind, *“I’ve started, so I’ll finish!”* As evangelicals our view of the Bible is that it is the word of God, inspired, authoritative, accurate and relevant from Genesis to Revelation and all between. This needs to be stated loud and clear as the Bible continues to be under attack and especially Genesis 1-3. In the Genesis 3 we can see the explanation of how this world is in the state it is. At the end of chapter 2 the world was in perfect harmony - no death, disease or suffering; mankind and animals, animals and animals, nature all in perfect harmony. It was Paradise on earth. Yet by the end of chapter 3 we have death, the ground producing weeds and hard to work, we have the reality of pain and suffering; mankind is now distant from God and division between people occurs. The events in this chapter are history and not fables, myths or pictures of events. It is good to grasp what occurred and to see events in the wider panorama of Scripture.

Last time we saw **1. The Strange Events in Paradise.** We covered a lot of ground, and noted a subject animal creature spoke to one of the rulers of Creation. This was wrong in the God ordered design and Eve should have been alarmed, been concerned that a creature spoke to her. Moving on see:

## **2. The Strange Interview in Paradise.**

This serpent spoke to the woman - Eve as she is called by the end of the chapter. Although we’ll call her Eve from this point, the word of God calls her *“the woman”* until v20. The serpent was subtle and approached the woman and spoke to her. It is never recorded it spoke to Adam. Paul tells us that Eve was deceived

by the serpent's cunning (2 Corinthians 11:13). Yet why pick on her? Couldn't the serpent deceive Adam just as easily? Adam was the head of the woman, he was the first created and if the snake could get him to fall, then he would not need to bother with the woman.

When God created men and women, He created them of equal worth, dignity and status, but within that creation there was a priority built in - the man was the head of the woman and she was answerable to him and he to God. Peter in 1 Peter 3:7 speaks of the wife as the weaker vessel, partner - the husband is weak, the wife is weaker, this does not imply or mean inferior in status, dignity or abilities. God's design for Adam was that the woman was to complete, to complement him. His strengths and her strength are to be complimentary and as a couple they would be stronger than 2 individuals. We can often see this in marriages - seeming opposites and yet they make up in marriage what is lacking in the other and so they are stronger in their marriage union. Thank God if that is the case in your marriage and pray for those where it is not; pray also for our young people to be led to the right one God has for them. Sadly it will not always work out, for we are in a fallen world and things can go wrong even in the marriages of 2 believers.

Back to our heading - *the Strange Interview in Paradise*. The serpent recognised in the woman something which made her more suitable to approach than the man. The coming of sin into the world would cynically take God's greatest blessing to Adam - his darling wife, and make her the instrument for his downfall. She was created to be a "helpmeet" (AV 2:20), but became Adam's greatest hindrance and snare! The woman was approached by the serpent probably because she did not receive the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge and good and

evil from God directly. She would have been told of it by Adam. In 2:15-17 only the man is mentioned and then later on the woman was created. It is likely the woman was probably more open to questions, to suggestions and to be persuaded the more easily because of this.

So the interview, conversation started and started suddenly when Eve was alone in the garden. Note the approach *“Did God really say...?”* Not only should Eve have been alarmed at a lower order creature speaking, but it spoke and questioned God’s word! Perhaps Eve thought *“I will put this animal in its place; of course I know what God said!”* An animal speaking and questioning God should have warned her that this was an enemy of God speaking - as we will soon see. It is worth noting that we are more prone to temptation, to doubt God’s word if we are on our own and we keep away from meeting in the fellowship of God’s people. Matthew Henry wrote *“There are many temptations to which solitude gives great advantage, but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety.”*

The serpent was quite crafty - it asked a question which was designed to cast doubts upon God’s goodness and yet it seem as if it asked because it was ignorant and wanted to be informed! The woman heard the question and was ready to put the creature straight... The question asked was *“Did God really say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?”* The question was designed to prompt an answer and so get her to doubt God, His command and His goodness.

We know the command given to Adam in 2:16-17 was any tree except... Here the question is so subtle *“you are not to eat from any tree”* - it was making out that God was hard and cruel as

they could see all those wonderful trees around them. Eve saw the error in its statement, but did not hear the alarm bells and warning sirens going off and answered the serpent to correct it. She saw the line, but not the hook! I will come back to this 2<sup>nd</sup> area with some comments later on, but let's move on from the Strange Interview in Paradise to see:

### **3. The Strange Presence in Paradise.**

We all know that snakes do not speak and Eve should have known it also! What went going on there screamed out something was wrong. There was more going on than met the eye and ear! When the serpent spoke and spoke with a question that challenged God's order, God's ways and God's word, we are to realise it is something wicked and evil. We are living in times after the completion of Scripture and in the Bible we have necessary progressive revelation. God did not reveal all necessary truth at once, but developed, progressed revelation through the ages until clearly revealed in Scripture and we have the "*Ah now it makes sense*" factor.

We learn from clear NT references that Eve was tempted of the devil. The evil thoughts and words coming from a physical creature originated from the devil himself. We are not told how the devil took control of the serpent, even if the serpent resisted or was willing. Probably the devil saw the serpent's God-given subtlety, wisdom (*remember the word can include both*) and chose to use it as the most fitting instrument in his plans. There in Paradise was the strange presence of the devil, the enemy of God. The devil, so we pick up from the Scriptures, was the highest angel, was glorious and beautiful. He wanted to be co-regent with the triune God and led a rebellion of a number of other angels. These were all cast out of heaven and the devil,

Lucifer, Satan and his followers (*now called demons*) are reserved for eternal fire in hell.

We are told that when God created all creation He declared it very good. The devil was intent to oppose God and all His works. His aim here was to attack the pinnacle of God's creation - man and woman who were created in God's likeness. The devil used the serpent to tempt Eve, probably because if he appeared in his true form it would have panicked Eve and so a creature was used and its natural gifting was perverted.

The question is asked "*Where did evil come from?*" God made the visible universe very good and He made the invisible i.e. the spiritual realm, equally as good. So where did evil come from? Why did Lucifer turn against God? This is a question that has caused much discussion and thought. I will only give a brief answer from what I understand from my reading and thinking about things. Pride lay at the origin of sin in Lucifer, as he wanted to be like God - to rule and to be adored as He is. Angelic beings are not robots or mindless machines, but the devil and the fallen angels went away and against God by their own deliberate, wilful choice and not by any defect in them. God gave the angels wills that could choose to serve and adore Him, but out of their own beings and from no outward temptation, inducement or provocation they chose to rebel against God. That is important to note, just tuck it away – I'll refer to it in a later sermon.

As to why God allowed it to happen I can give no clear answer, except to say that He knew it would occur even before the creation of the angelic world, as He knew mankind would be tempted and fall and yet He allowed it and planned Man's salvation in eternity before time began. Why He did so can only be down to His all knowing wisdom and power. Yet He did so to

bring greater glory to Himself - I may come deal with this area in a later sermon in more detail. From what I've said it does not mean God is the author and originator of sin. God created all good, yet He knew of Lucifer's turning away and Man's subsequent Fall, but God allowed such for He also allowed His mortal creation to freely serve Him and did not compel them as slaves. The fallen angels and Lucifer wanted to be as God and interestingly that is a major part of how the devil tempted Eve (v5).

I hope we can see that the strange presence that invaded and was present in Paradise was none other than the devil himself. As we go on with our studies we are to note and to remember this. We are to recognise also that this devil is still real and active and he will seek to attack us as believers, to deceive us, to keep people deceived if they are not Christians. In closing I want to make some comments on what we have looked at so far:

We are not to picture the devil as a comic creature in a red suit etc. The Bible tells us he can appear as a roaring lion and devour us; he can be as an angel of light and take people in. He does not fight fair, he is a cunning boxer and he has weapons of mass destruction in his arsenal and he has cunning and deceptive ways and wiles that he can also pull out of his intelligence section. He still delights to use the original question and cause people to question what God has said. His question to Eve has been used billions of times in history "*Has God really said...?*" He is very pleased when people try to argue with him. When he tried it with the Lord Jesus, the Lord Himself simply said "*It is written...*" and He quoted Deuteronomy which is so often dismissed by modern critics as not being God's word at all! I wonder how many of us could quote sections from Deuteronomy!

If we ever hear things like “*The Bible says, but...*” - let the alarm bells ring! This can be usually followed by “*but that was then*”, or “*but it is not applicable now*”, or “*but we’ve moved on in our understanding*”, or even “*but that does not apply to mean me or us in our days and situations*”. Yes there will be variations on a theme, but basically it is calling God’s word into question, even claiming to bring a new and radical understanding of it - which if we know church history will turn out to be an old heresy warmed up and repackaged in the slick glitz of marketing. It may even come in the form of “*The Lord has shown, revealed to me...*” We need to be very cautious and alert when we hear something like that!

If the devil can get us off the word of God then we have an unsafe and sandy foundation. It does mean we need to know God’s word, to live it out and to apply it correctly in our lives. We are to be cautious of those who take texts out of context and makes them a pretext. Our son Dan says that a text taken out of context just leaves us with a con! I hope you have noticed that as I bring God’s word Sunday by Sunday I try to systematically work through and apply God’s word in its context and do so relevantly to our situation as I try to apply what it says. The trouble in doing that is that I will have to deal with issues, hard verses and topics, but thankfully it will be in a right place in Scripture. It may mean struggling in study and prayer as I try to understand and then open up these verses and also apply them correctly as well, but I feel it is the best way to equip us for godly living and to present the gospel as relevant for all.

There are many entertaining preachers about and if you’d rather one of those let me know I’ll keep a lookout for one for you! Peter was told by the Lord Jesus to feed His sheep and lambs. Sadly many so-called preachers entertain goats while the sheep

of God's flock are starving. Yes I'm aware that preaching should not be boring, so I ask you to pray that I would take the precious and glorious truths of Scripture and under God make them living and attractive, but never boring. Realise preaching is a place of interaction between the word of God, therefore God Himself, and mortal creatures such as you and me.

I have stressed the need we have to be aware of the devil's attacks by causing us either to question the word of God, or to ignore the word of God. It was his first tactic and it has been so successful that he has continued to use it. Because of this we need to be warned and to be alert. Eve was deceived by a subtle enemy when she was perfect from God's hand, with undiminished faculties of mind and body. We are not to imagine we would stand any better than she did. That is why Paul tells us to be on our guard and to put on the whole armour of God - to put it on and to use it correctly i.e. know the truth of God in all He's done and apply to our lives and live it out. To do this we need to go back to His word and say often to our hearts and minds, and to the evil one "*It is written, the Lord has said!*" I pray that our God and Saviour would help us to stand in our evil days and that we would do so, not to boast of what we have achieved, but that we would boast and glory in the Lord, His grace, mercy and keeping power.