

# The Rebellion

## Genesis 3:1-24

11<sup>th</sup> January 2015

It was lunchtime at the Royal Masonic School for boys and rebellion was in the air. Back in the 1970's the fashion for teenage boys was long hair – anything else just wasn't cool! Imagine the sense of unrest at the headmaster's insistence that the school barber should continue to cut our hair – always short and usually very badly. So at lunchtime the rebellion was going to start with all 400 of us going on hunger strike. The first course arrived – a grim looking stew – but a few hungry boys still quickly gave in. Nevertheless a sufficient number held firm pushing their food to one side. Irritatingly the teachers barely noticed and when the second course arrived – strawberry flan with custard the rebellion was all but over as our desire for the tasty looking pudding saw virtually every boy cave in (including me). But, despite our failed rebellion they did eventually let us grow our hair a bit long but the style remained hideous!

So there we have it – a sadly pathetic attempt at rebellion. However, our reading this morning reveals a rebellion of far greater consequence. Not against the headmaster but against God himself and it still infects our world today. Genesis 1 & 2 explains the good within the world then Genesis 3 explains the bad within it. Because God didn't want people to be mere robots, doing the right thing at the touch of a heavenly button, He gave them free will – the ability to choose. But when using free will, Adam and Eve got it terribly wrong, choosing the one thing God had warned them against, convinced they knew better than him. From then on, as we see clearly within the Bible, sin entered the very make up of all human beings.

The fact sin actually entered the world is important because if sin was in the world at the time of creation that would mean God created it which then raises a whole manner of questions which totally contradict everything about the nature of God. Genesis Chapter 3 uses some symbolic language but it reveals a moment in history that describes sin entering into the world. And from this we can highlight four important aspects which help us grow in our understanding of God and our relationship with Him.

1. God's command
2. Temptation and sin
3. God's judgement
4. God's call

### 1. God's Command

Look at verses 2 & 3: The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Of all the different trees God planted in the Garden of Eden, only one 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' was forbidden to man and woman, as a test of their love and obedience to God and as an acknowledgment that the boundary's God set for them were for their own good. However, the one thing God said they could not have was the very thing they ended up wanting.

When our son John was less than 2 we visited some friends. Relaxing in their garden on a sunny afternoon we caught John picking up a half empty can of beer off the lawn and having a swig. He obviously liked it. But we didn't suddenly start giving him beer everyday! Because we love our children there were loads of things we encouraged them to do and loads of things we gave to them that we were confident they'd enjoy and find useful. But because we love them there were also things (including beer) that were (CLICK) out of bounds, that they weren't allowed to touch or eat. We gave them as much freedom as possible but there were boundary's we deliberately set.

Sometimes we have the illusion that freedom is doing anything we want. But God says true freedom comes from obedience and knowing not what to do. The restrictions he gives us are for our good, helping us to avoid evil. We can choose to walk across a busy motorway but we don't need to be hit by a passing car to realise it would be foolish to do so.

God's command is one of love. Man and woman are given God's freedom in God's garden with everything they need for their happiness and protection but there is a boundary. Beyond the boundary are things which God decides in his wisdom and love are not going to benefit them. There is this wonderful world in which man and woman are free to live life to the full in the love of God but He sets the boundary whereby they might enjoy that love and freedom for their own advantage. That's God's command.

## 2. Temptation and sin

V1 and v4&5 say: Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Notice Adam and Eve are not imperfect from the beginning. What happens is Satan's temptation comes to them from outside. Listen again to what he says: "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Disguised as a crafty serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve by getting her to doubt God's goodness. He implied God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share God's knowledge of good and evil. Eve forget all God had given her and, instead, focussed on the one thing she couldn't have.

We too can also easily fall into the same trap and dwell on the few things we don't have rather than on the countless things God has given us. Perhaps at those moments we need to consider all we *do* have and thank God. Then our doubts and desires are less likely to lead us into sin. Remember our Heavenly Father is the most loving and caring father you could imagine who deeply loves, values and cares for His children. He is all powerful and of far greater wisdom and discernment than any of us. So He sets boundary's in which we can experience his love and freedom without disaster occurring.

Now look at the first part of V6: the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.

At the point of creation the woman had no desire for the fruit of the tree but now all of a sudden this desire wells up within her. And this is where things start to really go wrong because this desire is about her wanting to make her own choice, exert her own will and be equal with God. It wasn't wrong of Eve to want to be like God. To become like God is humanity's greatest goal. It is what we are supposed to do. But Eve was misled concerning the right way to accomplish this goal. She chose to become more like God by defying God's authority, by taking God's place and deciding for herself what was best for her life and becoming her own god. But to become like God is not the same as trying to become God. Rather it is to reflect his characteristics and to recognise his authority over our lives.

Sadly in Genesis Chapter 3 (at that moment in history) mankind decided for themselves what was right and what was wrong. In mankind was raised not only doubts about God but an exulted view of his own nature and his own self. The temptation had created doubt and desire and sin was on the horizon. Look at the end of v6: ...she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Eve chose to eat and, as a result, disobeyed God. Meanwhile Adam 'who was with her' stood by silently while she was tempted and, seeing nothing terrible happen, joined in. Both shared in the disobedience and, in so doing, brought disaster on themselves and the rest of mankind. Yes - they got what they wanted: an intimate knowledge of good and evil. But they got it by doing evil, and the results were disastrous.

At this point in history for the first time mankind stumbles, mankind steps off the path of God's choice for him, mankind in all his arrogance and pride exerts his own will and choice knowing that it runs contrary to

God. They knew what God wanted but instead decided what they wanted and sin entered the world for the first time. They rebelled against God.

### **3. God's Judgement**

So what was the impact? Look at verses 7-9: Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

His father's instructions had been clear that morning before he and the boy's mother drove off for a week at Spring Harvest: no parties, no rowdy friends. But the unruly friends came and the son allowed them to stay, despite his father's warning. Now the house was in a jumble and the boys were tipsy but they quickly tidied up and **hid** any evidence of the night before and all seemed fine. Except for one thing. In a particularly rowdy moment they managed to (CLICK) decapitate the life-sized china cat (which had steadily grown in sentimental value having been given to the parents a number of years earlier). However, some remarkable supergluing enabled the crime to be concealed. That is until a few months later when the mother (someone called Ruth) decided to dust the repaired cat and found a small hole in the back of its neck – the rest is history! In fear, they hid.

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and then heard the sound of Him approaching. In fear, they hid themselves. V7-9 Show that immediately after they sinned, they felt guilty, embarrassed, exposed and afraid, even trying – foolishly – to hide from God, whose judgement was now inevitable. Man's guilty conscience emerged and it remains a warning signal from God placed inside us that goes off when we've done wrong. And yet these verses show God's desire to have fellowship with us. But they also show why we are afraid to have fellowship with him. Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard him approaching. God wanted to be with them, but because of their sin they were afraid to show themselves. Sin had broken their close relationship with God, just as it has broken ours. Sin destroys our harmony with God and with our fellow man. And so expelled from the garden and now without the closeness of God's presence, they were sent out into the wider world to fend for themselves and to learn what life would be like without God. The fall had occurred – the loss of God's presence through human sin.

In wanting what they could not have (the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), Adam and Eve lost what they could have had (the tree of life). Life in the Garden of Eden was like living in heaven. Everything was perfect, and if Adam and Eve had obeyed God they could have lived there for ever. But their actions led to them facing God's judgment, being separated from God and, ultimately, death. Look at the final three verses:

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flashing sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

From this point on, the Bible speaks of every human being walking the same path that they did, infected by the same deadly virus – sin! Romans 3:23 reminds us: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

But fortunately it's not the end of the story....

### **4. God's Call**

Whilst our reading explains how we became sinful it also glimpses God still calling to His people (CLICK): "Where are you?" we hear God call in v9. Many run away, trying to hide from Him or drown out the sound

of His voice. Yet we cannot hide from God; He knows exactly where we are. Rather than hide in fear, we can respond and discover 'how we can get better'? In 1 Corinthians 15:22 it says: <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

While Jesus was a man, he was far more than a man; he was God himself who had come to rescue all of mankind. The mighty Creator became a part of his creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to aging, sickness, and death. But love propelled him, and so he came to rescue and save those who were lost and to give them the gift of eternity. Through Jesus' death on the cross – this one death serves to put right and pay the penalty for the sin of all men from Adam, through each and every one of us right through to the end of the world.

So as we consider the fall of mankind and all the implications of this now let's also remind ourselves of God's loving response. Think of what Jesus Christ has done for each and every one of us - his broken body on the cross, his blood poured out for our forgiveness. By merely repenting and accepting his forgiveness, his grace – this free gift - God looks at us, accepts us as his own and forgives us all our wrong, restoring to us what was lost in Adam.

- Restoring harmony with God and our fellow man.
- Restoring meaning in this life because there is a place set for us where we belong and a true life to live here on earth.
- And at the end of time when God makes all things new we will be **fully** restored in our relationship with God and forever and ever we will live in His presence and His glory.

This applies to all who are in Christ. To all who will accept what Jesus Christ did on the cross in gaining for us our redemption - we are being brought back to God's presence.

So as we think about

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All of these are very real as we read them through in this passage. And we are all as guilty as Adam for our own rebellion, for our own sin. We shouldn't underestimate the enormity of our sin and of our rebellion. But neither should we miss the tremendous grace and mercy of our God for salvation and new life that has come into our world through one man. The historical act of sin and rebellion has been cancelled once and for all by the historical act of salvation. And that act of salvation is open to all of us. Praise God!