THE DEVASTATING CATASTROPHE

Sin is catastrophic on many levels: One of the ways is that it poses a serious challenge to God’s goal and method of education. As seen last week, the purpose of education was for Adam and Eve to reflect the image of God in every facet of their being. To accomplish this, God created them capable of development, both in capacity (quantity) and in vigor (quality). These two ingredients were necessary for the first human pair to fulfill their purpose of reflecting the image of God—they needed “equipment” that was capable of development, as well as the “time” (eternity) to develop.

If our first parents had bodies that could develop infinitely but did not have an infinite amount of time to develop, this would prevent them from fulfilling their goal of education. Equally, if they could live forever, but had a limited capacity to grow, it would be impossible for them to achieve God’s purpose for them—even if they could sustain the perfection which they possessed at creation. Although suffering these two consequences of sin would have made it impossible for Adam and Eve to accomplish the object of their creation, their situation was far more critical.

Sin almost obliterated the entire image of God from humanity. It not only impeded progress, but it caused degeneration. It damaged the four areas of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, making godliness a near impossibility.

How would God answer this devasting problem? He institutes a redemptive system of education! In a provisional and experimental time period, humanity would have the ability to live a life of righteousness by faith in a Redeemer.
Write out Genesis 3:1–15 from the translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, you may write out Genesis 3:6–9. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
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Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/ phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Genesis 3:1–15. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How have you experienced God’s wisdom, power, and love through Jesus Christ?

WISDOM, POWER, AND LOVE

Whereas the first two chapters of Genesis have God as the primary subject, the third chapter focuses on Adam and Eve’s attempt at creation. They sow fig leaves together and struggle to create robes that cover their unrighteous nakedness. Unsuccessful in covering their bareness, Adam remarks, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:10). When God replaced their self-made aprons with coats of skins, Genesis emphasizes that He made them for the couple (Gen. 3:21).

When God created Adam and Eve, they naturally surrendered themselves to God because they trusted His wisdom, power, and love. And because they knew He was infinitely wiser, more powerful, and all-loving, trusting Him was unsurprisingly effortless. It is important to note that what makes God unique from us is His monopoly on these three distinctive virtues: wisdom, power, and love. Furthermore, upon these three qualities rests the stability of the entire universe. If God were to lack even an ounce of the power, wisdom, or love required, the repercussions in the universe would be incomprehensible.

Prior to Adam and Eve’s first sin, they lived happily in harmony with God. This harmony was dependent on their complete obedience to God on the basis of the three infinite qualities. The unity between the human and divine was so pronounced that when Adam was asked to choose names for the created animals, God fully approved of each of his choices (Gen. 2:20). In Adam and Eve’s worldview, God was perfect, and His infinite perfection was the basis of unity, happiness, and trust.

In Genesis 3 we see Satan introducing a new and conflicting interpretation of reality. Whereas God said of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17), Satan now said, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). If God was wrong even in the slightest way, He would have been forever undependable. Thus, at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the stakes were high.

Satan was not merely accusing God of being wrong. He was accusing God of being evil (Gen. 3:5). Satan asserted to Eve that God was deliberately preventing her from achieving three things: (1) having open eyes, (2) being her own sort of god, and (3) knowing both good and evil. The implication of Satan was that Adam and Eve had (1) heretofore been deceived, (2) been prevented from reaching their highest potential, and (3) lacked complete knowledge.

When Eve swallowed the seeds of doubt that Satan scattered regarding the character of God, she shifted the entire worldview of humanity. The time came when she “saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make her wise” (Gen. 3:6). Humanity today lives under that same reality of judging by sight. We have the tendency to make sense of the world around us by our senses instead of God’s Word because we naturally trust ourselves more than we trust God’s character. This is the most catastrophic blow to education!

Nonetheless, God is not caught off guard by Satan’s fierce attack on communion between Him and His children. He gives Adam and Eve, in their fallen state, the tremendous gift of Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; John 3:16). In God’s own Son, we have the gift of faith that provides an answer to humanity’s sinful condition and a solution for God’s purpose in education.
A WHOLE NEW WORLDVIEW

To get Adam and Eve to fall in the Garden of Eden, Satan had to deceive them into adopting a worldview that was antagonistic to God’s. Motivation aside, when Adam sinned he was deceived into adopting a faulty worldview. Satan’s conversation with Eve shows at least three deceptions Satan used in the Garden of Eden.

Open Eyes
Satan’s words to Eve that her eyes would be opened if she ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were true in one sense. While their eyes were open to shame that follows sin, they were also closed. Adam and Eve now had their spiritual vision dimmed and mental capacity diminished, preventing them from being able to fully grasp the wisdom, power, and love of God.

Unfortunately, we also possess this visually incongruous eyesight that paradoxically recognizes a fault in our human condition but at the same time stubbornly blinds us in darkness. In our study, our eyes are opened, only for us to face the realization that there is no hope for the shameful human condition of racism, pride, lust, and greed. Something outside of the human condition is needed. Jesus said that in order for human beings to see clearly again, they need “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18).

Be as Gods
At the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Satan perverted the calling to be like God, originally installed by God Himself at creation. First, Satan modified God-likeness into something that needed to be protected. Godliness was a gift that had been freely offered to Adam and Eve at their birth. It was not something that required their works; it was not something to be obtained—godliness was theirs to possess and enjoy. Unselfish surrender was the key to maintaining this gift. As long as they surrendered what they had (mind, soul, strength, and might) for what God could offer (a fuller reflection of His image), they could remain in possession of this gift. However, in the phrase “you will be like God,” Satan instilled in Eve the idea that real God-likeness was a state of being that was yet to be obtained. Eve was led to believe, ironically, that godliness was the exact opposite of what it truly is. Thus, Satan’s deception was turning godliness into selfishness and then making selfishness appealing to Eve.

Knowing Good and Evil
The third way in which Satan deceived was in the estimation of knowledge. Satan convinced Eve that the knowledge she possessed was incomplete. In mathematics, “and” is a term used for addition. Eve was told that she could add to the knowledge that she already had (the “and”) by partaking of the tree’s fruit. Satan continues to use this same argument today, giving the impression that to know more—including that which is in violation of heavenly things—is better than knowing only that which is good.

However, this costly deception robs those who believe it. God’s intent has always been for His children to know that which is good. Good and evil cannot be added together because they are not similarly valued—what is good is eternal, while that which is evil is temporal. In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived Eve into adopting a worldview that settled for a temporary false conception of excellence at the expense of an eternal fountain of whatever is good and true.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Romans 6:23  
Isaiah 59:2  
Ephesians 1:7–10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with how God redeems us?

THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND

In his warning and counsel to the Colossians, Paul makes several important points. He wrote, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:8, 9). First, he states that our natural tendency is to be mentally swept away. This is the cause of his warning to “beware.” The implication is that unless there is an intentional effort on our part to beware, we will surely become captive victims of fraud because our human condition is susceptible to believing that which is vainly and emptily deceitful.

Another important point Paul establishes is that the deceitful traditions of men or the basic principles of the world are antagonistic to Christ. Furthermore, this philosophy is deceitful in that it appears to be fulfilling, while it is, in fact, deficient in its ability to do anything meaningful for a person’s mind or soul. In other words, the traditions of men and the basic principles of the world appear to open our eyes and make us as gods, and know good and evil, when it is in Christ alone in whom “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

The Colossian church struggled with the same temptation many have today: holding to the perspective that even a small amount of humanistic philosophy can be helpful on a quest to be like Jesus. Christ’s goal in our lives is to rid us of everything that is worldly, because the source of worldliness is human effort; and human effort is powerless to transform us into the likeness of Christ—He alone must save.

Sinlessness in Sinfulness

The problem the Colossian church had—accepting deception instead of the truth—is the same we have today. It was the cause of Adam and Eve’s fall. Paul gave the solution to the warped worldview in his letter to the Philippians: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5–8).

Today, by faith, we can reverse Satan’s deception by allowing the mind of Christ to be in us (Phil. 2:5). When Christ died on the cross for our sin, He provided Himself the right to give us His mind by faith so that we could continue the journey of education even in a fallen world, understanding that a knowledge of Him is always greater than a knowledge of anything else.
“Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death. Yet the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.

“Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. . . . To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored.

“. . . . The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts. . . .

“. . . To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works. The earth, marred and defiled by sin, reflects but dimly the Creator's glory. It is true that His object lessons are not obliterated. Upon every page of the great volume of His created works may still be traced His handwriting. Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given in His written word.

“The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education. To obtain an education worthy of the name, we must receive a knowledge of God, the Creator, and of Christ, the Redeemer, as they are revealed in the sacred word.”

“... Man was not abandoned to the results of the evil he had chosen. In the sentence pronounced upon Satan was given an intimation of redemption. 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman,' God said, 'and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Genesis 3:15. This sentence, spoken in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. Before they heard of the thorn and the thistle, of the toil and sorrow that must be their portion, or of the dust to which they must return, they listened to words that could not fail of giving them hope. All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.

“This intimation also nature repeats to us. Though marred by sin, it speaks not only of creation but of redemption. Though the earth bears testimony to the curse in the evident signs of decay, it is still rich and beautiful in the tokens of life-giving power. The trees cast off their leaves, only to be robed with fresher verdure; the flowers die, to spring forth in new beauty; and in every manifestation of creative power is held out the assurance that we may be created anew in ‘righteousness and holiness of truth.’ Ephesians 4:24, margin. Thus the very objects and operations of nature that bring so vividly to mind our great loss become to us the messengers of hope.”

(Education, 15–17, 27)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Describe a hypothetical scenario of having the capability for development but not enough time.

Describe another scenario of having enough time, but not the capability for development.

How has sin almost obliterated the image of God in humanity? Why is it “almost”?

Name aspects of the worldview presented by Satan in Genesis 3 also found in contemporary worldviews.

How do modern theories and values of education reflect God’s values?

How do modern theories and values of education reflect Satan’s values?

How are redemption and education linked?