

LESSON 3 – THE GREAT DECEPTION

PURPOSE

After God created the heavens and the earth, He delegated the oversight and development of it all to Adam and Eve. They were to remain accountable to Him; and as long as they obeyed the Lord, they enjoyed great freedom and the abundant fruit of creation.

There was one particular area that God reserved for Himself and that was the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. From the beginning, God taught mankind that freedom was not absolute and that with delegated opportunity also comes responsibility and accountability.

This lesson will show how Satan caused mankind to believe that disobedience could produce quicker and better results, but how in fact it cost them a great opportunity and lost resources.

GLOSSARY

Accountability – responsibility for a trust; the state of being liable to answer for one's conduct.

Anarchy – want or lack of government; political confusion.

Deception – the state of being deceived or misled.

Redemption – deliverance from bondage, distress, or from liability to evil (*Webster*).

GOD IS A PROVIDER OF OPPORTUNITY

God created mankind in His own image with creative abilities and great opportunities. Mankind named the animals and enjoyed the idyllic garden – a paradise. Beyond, that, they were given the opportunity to expand paradise throughout the earth while enjoying each other's unique companionship and producing children.

The only reservation given to them was to abstain from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree represented God's ownership, and the first fruits were His. This is a principle maintained throughout the Bible. The Tree also represented the necessity of obedience to some rule or government if creation was to operate successfully. In addition, God seems to be saying that moral knowledge is no substitute for faith and obedience when it comes to productivity and stewardship. In other words, being smart doesn't necessarily make one productive.

SATAN IS A FORCE FOR FAILURE

We need to remember that Satan once occupied a lofty place in the heavenly order, was exceptionally intelligent, beautiful, and musically

Genesis 2:15

Genesis 2:17

Genesis 3

Isaiah 14:12-14
Ezra 28:17

Proverbs 6:16–19

gifted. He was thrown out of heaven because, in his pride, he led a rebellion against God. The issues of recognition of God, delegation, and stewardship are important eternal issues that also have bearing on human history.

Satan's real problem was with God. He hated – and still hates – all authority, obedience, and faithfulness because these virtues remind him of God and his own fallen character. Wherever he sees a righteous and productive order, he will seek out a weakness in order to exploit and destroy the order. Satan destroys through sowing doubt and discord.

Genesis 3:1–6

1 Timothy 2:14

When Satan came to earth and examined creation, he discovered the one restraint on human freedom and assaulted that particular issue. Secondly, he appealed to Eve, rather than Adam, who had received the original instruction from God. He approached her with questions designed to bring doubt. His next step was to appeal to her own desire to 'know for herself' and the possibility to be 'as God.' Eve was deceived through believing her own perspective instead of the Word of God. She ate as Adam watched passively, after which he followed her lead.

Genesis 3:8–13

It is noteworthy that when God arrived in the Garden for His regular fellowship with Adam and Eve, they were hiding. They realized several things: They were naked . . . (self-awareness), they were disobedient, and they were accountable. It is also noteworthy that God called for Adam . . . 'Where are you?'. Adam was held responsible for both his actions and his wife's.

The process toward failure was disorder, doubt, deception, and deliberate sin on Adam's part. (The Bible doesn't say he was deceived . . . his sin was willful.) The whole idea that creating one's own rules to success and ignoring God's prescribed principles was a tragic error that continues to face each successive generation.

Genesis 3:15–24

Adam and Eve's behavior brought God's disapproval. For the first time they felt separation, guilt, shame, and condemnation. For the first time, they tried to blame each other and to refuse personal accountability. Because of disobedience, paradise was lost along with innocence and relational harmony.

Not only were Adam and Eve forced to leave this idyllic Garden, but death entered their lives because of sin. In addition, their labor was increased by a rebellious creation. Disobedience had not brought more freedom – rather it had brought less.

GOD IS A FORCE FOR REDEMPTION

Romans 11:29

Genesis 3:15

God's plan for man and creation was not destroyed because of man's disobedience. Though mankind's sin brought judgement and loss of blessings, God's purpose was still in effect.

In the very midst of God's judgement on sin, He gave a promise – that the seed of woman would triumph over the enemy. It is significant that Jesus Christ was born of a woman and conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not born of Adam, nor is He the son of Adam, but He is

Genesis 3:21

the Seed of woman and the Son of God. So even in judgement God gives a promise that He would provide salvation.

In addition, God provided a sacrifice in the Garden to cover man and woman, to remove their sense of shame and embarrassment. This animal sacrifice was the first offering of the innocent for the guilty, and a foreshadowing of Christ's own death, and the exchange of His innocence for our guilt. By faith, our 'nakedness' (our sins) is covered with His righteousness. When God looks at us, He sees Christ's own righteousness.

Romans 5:20

While this episode tells us a lot about mankind's weakness and Satan's guile, it also tells us a lot about God's covenant love and determination to provide redemption for fallen humanity. As the apostle Paul says in Romans 5:20, 'Where sin abounded, grace abounded even more.'

APPLICATION

In what way did Adam and Eve fail?

What lessons are to be learned that might apply to our own work place?

How do 'short cuts' cause us problems in today's world?

When is creativity and personal initiative a healthy thing?

When is it not?

CONCLUSION

The Scripture is clear that we are created as stewards – not owners. God has provided us all with great opportunities, and a right relationship to Him gives us great freedom to develop these opportunities. Pride and ambition can make us vulnerable to temptation and cause us to take apparent short cuts to additional power, rather than waiting for His promotion. When we violate His place or take what is forbidden, we jeopardize our place and opportunities. Nevertheless, even if we fail, His grace is available. Jesus offers us an opportunity to be redeemed and restored if we do not blame others and accept our own responsibility. By His grace He forgives and forgets our transgressions. By faith in Him, He becomes our Overcomer of temptation and example of true faithfulness and promotion.