

GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY

Genesis 3:14-15

In 1979 Bob Dylan released the song “Gotta Serve Somebody”, selecting a matter-of-fact title that summarized his song’s refrain:

*“You’re gonna have to serve somebody,
Yes indeed you’re gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you’re gonna have to serve somebody”*

Although well-regarded, his song does not communicate a new idea – a long time before Dylan wrote his song, Jesus himself hinted at the same idea when he said that “no one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other”¹ (*Matthew 6:24*).

The Bible introduces the idea of two masters in its opening chapters where it records humanity division into two groups – the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman (*Genesis 3:15*). The remainder of the Bible develops the story of those two families and the conflict between them in a way that allows readers to identify which family they belong to while offering them a way to join God’s family, the offspring of the woman.

Family feud

- God made humanity in His image and gave them the responsibility to representing His rule and character within the world (*Genesis 1:26-28*).
- Humanity’s choice, however, to submit themselves to the serpent introduced division into the world that resulted in the separation of humanity into two groups – the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman (*Genesis 3:1-15*).
- The Bible illustrates the account of humanity’s division with the story of two brothers - Cain and Able (*Genesis 4*).
 - While the story of the two brothers focuses on Cain, God’s “regard” of Abel and his sacrifice indicates his allegiance to God (*Genesis 4:4*).
 - For reasons unstated in the text, God did not accept Cain’s sacrifice and warned him that sin was “crouching at the door” and that he must “rule over it” (*Genesis 4:5-7*). Rather than submitting to God’s instruction, Cain instead allowed sin to exercise mastery over him (*Genesis 4:8-16*).
- Moving forward through the Bible reveals story after story of people who, like Cain, submitted themselves to the serpent. The New Testament reveals the ugliness of the allegiance detailed in those stories.

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- Those who “practice” sin reject their identity as people made in God’s image and reveal themselves to be “of the Devil” (1 John 3:4-8).
- Being the Devil’s offspring involves pursuing their “father’s” corrupt will (John 8:44).
- The last book of the Bible adds an additional insight into the imagery in its first book – Revelation identifies the woman’s offspring (cf. Genesis 3:15) as “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” and reveals that they are engaged in a battle with “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9, 17; Ephesians 6:11-12).
- But their involvement in a spiritual battle follows an unexpected path – they participate as peaceful emissaries rather than violent combatants by following the nature of their Father (Matthew 5:43-48; Revelation 5:1-10).

Applications

- We praise individuality in our country, but, in reality, we all have one of two identities – we either chose to follow God’s will or we chose to follow the serpent’s will.
- Jesus gives us the chance to have a new, God-shaped identity (John 3:16-17; 1 John 1:5-10).
- While Jesus gives us a God-shaped identity, it does involve a lifestyle commitment from us – we agree to follow God’s will in all areas of our life (1 John 3:4-10).
- The lifestyle God’s wants centers on love (1 John 4:7-11) in contrast to the deception, manipulation, and violence that characterizes those who follow the serpent (John 8:44).
- The Bible’s record of humanity’s two families reminds us that the world is not a neutral place; it hosts the conflict between those two families while also revealing that God assures His family an absolute, unquestioned victory (cf. Revelation 12-21).

For the coming week:

To help extend the lesson and to encourage you to make it personal, take time during the coming week to consider the following material:

The Bible contains story after story of people giving into the serpent’s temptations. In light of that pattern, consider the following questions in the coming week:

- *In what ways do you think the serpent tempts you to move your allegiance away from God and what do those temptations reveal about you and your interests?*
- *Consider ways that you can protect yourself from the serpent’s temptations and commit yourself to doing those things by soliciting God’s help in prayer and by seeking the accountability of fellow Christians.*