

A DERELICT MONARCHY

Genesis 3:1-6

A couple of weeks ago, we considered Genesis' record of humanity's origins, noting that God created humans to hold an honored place within the world as the representatives of His will and authority. The Bible, however, does not end after that account. The narrative quickly moves from revealing humanity's honored place as the ones to whom God gave rule over His creation to describe humanity's response – humanity chose to rebel against God and His plan for them. This lesson will continue our exploration of humanity's story in the Bible and its relationship to our theme of "Bonding".

"You will be like God, knowing good and evil"¹

- The Bible opens with a densely compacted account of God imposing order on a disordered and chaotic world (*Genesis 1:1-31*), an order He called "very good" (*Genesis 1:31*).
- God entrusted the responsibility of continuing His good, order-creating agenda to humanity, to the beings He created to represent His will and authority within the creation (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15*).
- Fulfilling the responsibility given to them involved trusting God's pronouncements about what was "good" and "not good" (*cf. Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:18; Proverbs 2:6*).
- The narrative surrounding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil reveals that humanity rejected what God said to instead assert its understandings about "good" and "not good".
 - The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" employs a figure of speech that, elsewhere in the Bible, uses knowledge about "good and evil" as contrasting examples to refer to a whole range of knowledge – think "A to Z" or "high and low" – and not merely two things (*Genesis 2:9; 2 Samuel 19:35; 1 Kings 3:9; Isaiah 7:15-16*).
 - The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" thus represented the ability to discern and make decisions about what was "good" and what was "not good".
 - By taking and eating from that tree, Adam and Eve were attempting to take for themselves the ability to decide what was good and bad; they were trying to usurp God's authority for themselves instead of representing His authority.
- Rather than enabling them to bring about the order God commissioned them to create and protect as the ones entrusted with rule of His creation (*Genesis 1:26-28*), humanity's rejection of God's wisdom in favor of its understanding created disorder and evil (*Genesis 3-11; cf. James 3:16*).
 - Consider, for example, the Bible's repetition of a pattern introduced in Genesis 3:1-6:
 - Genesis 3:1-6 – Eve "saw" and "took".
 - Genesis 6:1-2 – the "sons of God saw" and "took".

¹ Genesis 3:5. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- Joshua 7:20-21 – Achan “saw” and “took”.
- Judges 14:1-3 – Samson “saw” and took.
- 2 Samuel 11:2-4 – David “saw” and “took”.
- In each passage, the narrative intentionally replays Eve’s actions and shows how they resulted in cascading consequences of evil, violence, and disorder.
- Those consequences are not limited only to the individuals listed above; Paul makes it clear that all humans participate in Eve’s rebellion (*Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-18*).
- The Bible consequently locates wisdom – knowledge about what is good and bad – in rejecting one’s wisdom to seek God and His instruction (*Jeremiah 9:23; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31; cf. Deuteronomy 30:15; Proverbs 1:1-7; 2:1-10*).

Applications

- The Bible lays sin at the feet of humanity’s selfish interest (*cf. James 3:16*). Selfishness’ danger ought to concern us because:
 - We live in a consumerist culture that markets “seeing” and “taking” as one of its greatest goods.
 - We live in a culture that holds up freedom to do what one wants as another of its greatest goods.
- God calls us to reject our selfish interest to trust Him and His wisdom instead.
 - However, God’s wisdom often looks foolish to us because it does not fit with our preconceptions (*1 Corinthians 1:18-31*).
 - God’s wisdom can seem risky, even dangerous, because it does not base itself on our immediate security. Instead, God’s wisdom bases itself on the values that define His identity (*cf. Matthew 5:43-48*), reminding us that real security is not found in health, wealth, and freedom but in a relationship with God.
 - God’s wisdom, therefore, requires us to change our thinking, in part, by rejecting the thinking and values of our world (*Romans 12:1-2*).
- Rejecting God’s wisdom always results in the breakdown of the relationships He placed at the center of the responsibilities He gave to us as beings made in His image (*cf. James 3:16; Genesis 6:11-12; Matthew 5:43-48*).
- Too often, however, broken relationships seem to be the norm, while the relationships God created us to enjoy seems like a naive ideal. Be, therefore, unapologetically idealistic about your relationships – place your trust in God and in His plan for human relationships rather than in the unfortunate patterns into which our world’s relationships tend to fall (*cf. Luke 10:25-37*).

Humanity has a history of abandoning the rule God gave to it. That dereliction of duty expresses itself through the broken relationships that develop out of rejecting God’s will in favor of our own selfish will. What, therefore, do your relationships reveal about your faithfulness to God’s expectations?

