

Genesis, Session 3B: The Garden Story, Part 2

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Abstract

This source features Dr. Kenneth Mathews' theological lecture on the garden story in Genesis 2:4-3:24. It examines the covenantal union of marriage, the temptation and deception of humanity by the serpent, and the cosmic trauma of the subsequent fall of man. The lecture analyzes the narrative's structural reversal of the creation order, the specific judgment oracles delivered by God, and the theological development of original sin and corporate solidarity as interpreted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 5.

Outline

I. Introduction to Genesis 2:24-25 and the Marriage Union

A. The Coming Back Together of Man and Woman

1. Created of the same material
2. United through sexual relations as one entity without surrendering individual uniqueness
3. Purpose: Receiving God's blessing to procreate and exercise rule over the earth

B. The Mechanics of Covenant: "Leaving and Cleaving"

1. "Leaving" and "cleaving" as covenantal terms of relationship, commitment, and mutual love
2. Separation from family of origin to form a new union
3. Continued honoring of parents but spouse holds primary loyalty

C. Nakedness and Innocence

1. Original state of nakedness without shame
2. Contrasted with post-fall realization of nakedness, shame, and efforts to cover with fig leaves
3. Nakedness itself is not sinful but requires clothing out-of-bounds post-fall

II. The Entry of the Serpent and the Cosmic Trauma of the Fall (Genesis 3:1)

A. Introduction of a New Participant

1. Serpent characterized as more crafty and shrewd than other wild animals
2. The fall as a cataclysmic, cosmic trauma marking human history, analogous to historical generation-defining events (Pearl Harbor, JFK assassination, 9-11, pandemic)

B. Character and Identity of the Serpent

1. Subject to God's ultimate sovereignty as a created being
2. Representative of Satan in Jewish and Christian tradition, supported by Romans 16:20 and Genesis 3:15
3. Ancient Near Eastern ambiguity of wisdom and evil
4. Concrete, personal evil being rather than an abstract concept

C. The Mystery of the Origin of Evil

1. The Bible is silent on the source of evil and God never takes responsibility for its origin
2. God does take responsibility for executing the consequences of evil (e.g., judgment, death, the flood)

III. The Temptation, Deception, and Fall

A. The Serpent's Crafty Dialogue

1. Distortion of God's generous command in Genesis 2:16-17 into a stingy restriction
2. The woman's response adding the touch prohibition ("neither shall you touch it"), which may reflect commendable caution

B. The Serpent's Bold Rejection and Lie

1. Contradicting God's warning by stating "you will surely not die"
2. Accusing God of self-interest and promising that they would be like God, knowing good and evil
3. Partial truth: Gaining wisdom and losing innocence but ultimately suffering death

C. The Allurement and Willful Rebellion

1. The woman's focus on the food, beauty, and wisdom-gaining potential of the fruit
2. The woman's deception contrasted with the man's willful, silent rebellion in eating without reservation

IV. The Consequences of Sin and God's Judgment

A. Narrative Reversal of the Order of Creation

1. Creation order: God -> Man -> Woman -> Animals/Serpent
2. Fall order: Serpent -> Woman -> Man -> God

B. The Specific Judgment Oracles (Genesis 3:14-19)

1. Serpent: Crawling on its belly in humiliation and eating dust
2. Perpetual enmity between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring (the promise of a deliverer)
3. Woman: Pain in childbirth and subjection to her husband, yet continuing the blessing of procreation
4. Man: Painful toil and sweat to produce food from the cursed ground, returning to dust upon death

C. Banishment and the Tree of Life

1. Expulsion from the Garden of Eden to prevent humanity from living forever in a broken relationship
2. Cherubim and a flaming sword placed to guard the way to the Tree of Life

V. Theological Implications of Original Sin and Corporate Solidarity

A. Original Sin in Genesis

1. Root source of sin: humanity becomes sinners, which then produces sinful actions (e.g., Cain's fratricide of Abel)
2. Escalation of sin and wickedness leading to the universal judgment of the flood

B. Paul's Synthesis in Romans 5:12-21

1. Universality of sin and death entering the world through one man, Adam
2. Proof of sin's reign: the universal reality of death from Adam to Moses prior to the formal law
3. The Contrast of Corporate Solidarity: Adam vs. Christ
 - a. Adam: Representative of the old humanity, whose trespass brought condemnation and death
 - b. Christ: The "new/last Adam" representing the new humanity, whose obedience and righteous act bring grace, justification, and life
4. The role of the law in exposing human sinfulness, and the ultimate superabundance of grace