

Genesis: Genesis 3 – The Fall

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Abstract

Robert Vannoy's lecture on Genesis 3 discusses the significance of the Fall as the tragic turning point in human history, which introduced sin and suffering into a beautiful universe. He examines the probationary nature of the forbidden fruit as a test of obedience to God's absolute authority versus human self-inclination. The lecture further addresses the historical reality of the talking serpent, arguing that while it was a physical animal, it served as an instrument for Satan's temptation, supported by cross-references throughout Scripture.

Outline

I. Its Place in History

- A. Genesis 3 as a key chapter and turning point in Bible and human history
- B. The unnatural and abnormal nature of sin distorting creation
- C. Explanation for the co-existence of a beautiful universe with sin, misery, suffering, and death
- D. Human estrangement from God, self, others, and nature

II. The Details of the Fall

- A. The Nature of the Test
 - 1. Simple test of obedience: will man follow God or his own inclination?
 - 2. The taking of the fruit as an incidental action that demonstrates disobedience
 - 3. Herman Bavinck's Our Reasonable Faith:
 - a. Proscriptive command as a "probationary command" with arbitrary content
 - b. Necessity of obedience solely based on God's authority
 - c. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a demonstration of self-sufficiency versus submission to God
- B. The Serpent
 - 1. John Murray's description of the serpent as "the instrument of the temptation"
 - 2. Debate over the literal vs. allegorical/parabolic nature of the talking serpent
 - a. John Gibson's view: Genesis 3 as using the technique of a fable (analogous to Aesop's or medieval fables)

- b. New Testament confirmation of historical fact (2 Cor. 11:3, 1 Tim. 2:13)
- 3. Identity of the serpent: more than a mere snake
 - a. Display of intelligence superior to humans
 - b. Cross-references to Satan (John 8:44, Romans 16:20, Revelation 20:2)
 - c. Satan's use of the serpent compared to God's use of Balaam's ass
 - d. Satan as a spiritual being (fallen angel) taking form of or utilizing the animal
- 4. The Curse on the Serpent
 - a. Comparison with other beasts of the field
 - b. Physical modification of the serpent (going on its belly and eating dust figuratively)
- 5. Meaning of "subtle" (Hebrew word 'arum)
 - a. Dual meaning: prudent/wise/shrewd vs. crafty/negative
 - b. Interpretation of 'arum as crafty based on 2 Corinthians 11:3