

A Study in Genesis 2:24–3:7

One Flesh, Innocency, and the Fall

We are reading from Genesis 2:24 through the opening verses of Genesis 3.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons."

One Flesh — The Primal Order of Marriage

Some comments on verse 24 were already made in a previous reading about the necessity of leaving and cleaving, and the establishing of a new household. One important clarification is worth stating plainly: it says they shall be one flesh, not one spirit. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit — but marriage is one flesh. If the marriage bond made one spirit, death would not break it, because the spirit does not die. There is much false romance put out about this, and what false romance does is take away from the truth. It does not give correct guidance, and it does not bring the Word of God to bear properly.

The Lord confirmed this verse in Matthew 19, saying: from the beginning it was not so — He was speaking about divorce, and reaching back to the primal order established here. Our Lord reinstituted things to that primal order and spoke with divine authority about it. Whatever Moses allowed for the

hardness of their hearts does not alter what was established in the beginning. And the principle that he set forth in Genesis 2 is not merely for Christians — the teacher sent from God does not address only a portion of mankind. He affirmed and set right what was God's order from creation.

The verse also speaks of monogamy — the man and his wife. Polygamy appears to have been introduced by Lamech in Genesis 4, a man who also committed a violent act. Those two elements — corruption and violence — came to full bloom and ended in the flood. Scripture is plain: the law made nothing perfect. It tolerated things, including polygamy among Israel, on account of the hardness of their hearts. But that does not alter God's order established in the beginning.

Marriage as a Picture of Christ and the Church

As Christians, we recognize something beyond even the domestic bond: that marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church, as Ephesians 5 sets forth. Every departure from the divine order as to marriage impinges upon that picture. To say that what is written in Genesis 2 arose merely from a patriarchal society is, at root, an attack upon the relationship of Christ and the Church, because all of these passages point to that truth. What God is doing for His glory in Christ — providing a bride for Christ — is reflected in what was established here at the beginning. All of these things are related, and a proper understanding of God's purpose in Christ confirms a proper understanding of passages like this one.

On the matter of divorce: Scripture recognizes one ground — adultery breaks the bond. The principle is not that because God did not intend divorce, there is therefore no circumstance in which a bond is broken. Even those who argue that Matthew's exception clause applies only in some narrow premarital context are forced to contort the text. Adultery breaks the one-flesh bond. The better thing, always, is reconciliation — but the bond, once broken in that way, is broken. God's moral principles do not change, and the invention of additional grounds — whether from supposed Pauline supplements or from the idea that departure of a spouse itself constitutes grounds — opens doors that the Lord deliberately kept shut.

Naked and Not Ashamed — The State of Innocency

They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. The word exposure is a helpful one here. In the state of innocency, everything was open and manifest before God — they stood in the light. God is light, and as John writes, whatsoever makes manifest is light. They were in the presence of God, in the light, and nothing was hidden. That is what not ashamed means in this state.

After the fall, nakedness takes on a different significance: exposure of their true state before God. When they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day, they hid. Why? Because

they were now conscious of exposure. The bad conscience they had acquired was a conscience before the eye of God, which now looked to them like a penetrating eye. Their communion with God had been broken.

There is therefore a connection between Genesis 2:25 and the statement that God is light. The verse supposes light. They were not hiding in darkness — they were standing in the presence of God, in the light, and everything about them was manifest. That is the most helpful way of understanding what innocency means: not merely the absence of guilt in some legal sense, but the state of standing openly in the light of God with nothing to be ashamed of.

Innocency Distinguished from Ignorance, Holiness, and Strength

Several important distinctions are worth making with care. Innocency is not the same as ignorance. The people in Nineveh who did not know their right hand from their left were not innocent in the way Adam and Eve were before the fall. They were ignorant — restricted by age or debility — but that is not innocency. Innocency is a specific state before God: standing in His light with everything open, nothing to hide, no bad conscience.

Nor is innocency the same as holiness. This is an important distinction for understanding the eternal state. The elect angels are called holy angels. In glory, the people of God will be holy — conformed to the image of Christ. That is vastly superior to a state of innocency. God does not restore man to what was lost; He brings in what is better. The paradise of God in Revelation is a better paradise than Eden. Christ is the tree of life in a more excellent sense than what was in the garden. This is a general principle throughout Scripture: God does not restore to a former state; He brings in what is higher and more glorious, thus showing that even the enemy's work becomes an occasion for greater glory to God.

It is also important to note that innocency does not imply strength or capability toward God. In innocency, the question of strength does not arise — it is a unique state, distinct from everything that follows. When we speak of the headship of Adam and the trial of the first man, we are always speaking of fallen Adam. He was not the head of a race in innocency; he becomes head as fallen. The state of innocency stands entirely on its own and is not an administration or a dispensation in the usual sense — it was his state by creation. All the things that came in at the fall — sin in the flesh, the bad conscience, the knowledge of good and evil — were not dispensed by God; they were acquired by the act of disobedience.

Holiness in Christ is not merely a return to innocency, nor is it the capacity to sin constrained by will. The Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners — and His holy humanity was not innocent humanity, nor was it sinful humanity. It was holy. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing power produced that holy thing. And in the eternal state we shall be like Him. There will be no possibility of

sinning in heaven — not because we cease to be human, but because we shall be conformed to His image. The suggestion that human nature necessarily entails the capacity to sin is an outrage against the eternal state of God's people, and is an outrage against the person of Christ Himself.

The Fig Leaves and the Coats of Skins

When they fell, Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. This is a picture of all human attempts at self-covering before God — the reformation of what was already there, the turning over of a new leaf, improvement of conduct, more politically correct modes of behavior. None of it answers to the need.

But in Genesis 3:21 we read: Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them. This supposes the death of an animal. The skin was provided through sacrifice. And this early, God was pointing forward to what would one day be accomplished at the cross — the covering of souls before God not by anything they could do, but by what He Himself provided through death. The proclamation of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, cleansing from sins, is what corresponds to those coats of skins. It is the exposure of the soul's state before God that is covered — not merely the outward and physical.

The Trial of the First Man

The fall marks the beginning of the trial of the first man. By that fall, Adam becomes head of a fallen race. The long epoch that followed — through Noah, Abraham, Israel, and the Gentile powers — is the outworking of that trial: what will man, as fallen, do with the responsibility committed to him? The answer, as all of Scripture shows, is that he fails every time. The trial of the first man does not end until the cross. There, the second man — the Lord out of heaven — has taken His place, and God's dealings with the first man are done in principle until Christ comes in glory to execute judgment.

The Schofield system errs on both ends: it inserts innocency into a sequence of testings as though it were one dispensation among seven, when it is a wholly distinct state not of that character at all; and it continues the trial of the first man past the cross, where in fact that trial was terminated and the second man established. The dispensational scheme as taught by Darby — the trial of the first man, his failure, the supplanting of the first man by the second — is a great line of truth that has been largely lost in popular teaching.

Meanwhile the whole world lies in the wicked one. Satan is the god of this age. That is how things stand until Christ rises in power, takes His great power to Himself, and reigns. Then the trial of the first man finds its final judicial answer in the judgment of the nations, and the second man, the Lord out of

heaven, reigns in righteousness.

May the Lord open our eyes to the riches that are in these foundational chapters of Scripture, and may we read them as He said — Have ye not read?