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Genesis, the Curse, and Christ!

Once again we see how Genesis is foundational for the rest of the Scriptures. It has been said that one needs to understand the bad news in Genesis to understand the Good News in the New Testament. This truth goes deeper than often realized. Not only does Genesis show why Christ's crucifixion was necessary for us sinners, but, we also see how Christ overcame the curse in His ministry, life, death and most importantly, His resurrection.

We read about the temptation of Eve by the Serpent in Genesis 3:6-7: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

As a side note before we begin, the fact that Eve appeared to be seeing this fruit for the first time suggests that the fall took place very soon after creation. This along with the fact that they had no children yet; it seems Adam and Eve would have obeyed God's command to "fill the earth" right away.

Now to the point at hand. It is most interesting that this passage

relates directly to the New Testament Scriptures that deal with overcoming selfish desires. Peter writes, "he who has suffered in his body is done with sin" (1 Pet 4:1). What a deep truth. When one can surrender his all to God, he is done with sin. Think of how many sins we fall into as a result of our concern for self. Whether it be hunger, escape from pain, being tired, lazy, sexual desires needing fulfillment, or need of attention, it all comes back to me, me, me. When one is able to surrender all these aspects of our life to God, allowing ourselves to suffer hunger or lack of sleep, etc., it keeps our focus on God and, in a sense, we are done with sin. Obviously we don't ever stop sinning because of our sinful nature, but we certainly lead a sanctified life through the Spirit of God and the forgiveness of Christ. I have found fasting to be such a blessing to help me be aware of self. The first time I fasted I was surprised at how many times my attention was directed toward self. The blessings came when each time those desires of self appeared, I immediately directed my thoughts to God and looked to Him for comfort rather than to food, etc. It made me realize how many fleshly desires take our focus off Christ. But suffering allows us to redirect our thoughts to God for deliverance. If you have not set aside a day for prayer and fasting, I would encourage you to do so, not as an experiment or for personal health, but as a day dedicated to the Lord. I believe you will see what I am talking about.

As I said, being able to suffer takes ones focus off self and puts it on Christ. I have wondered how much physical suffering Christ really had. Don't get me wrong, He did suffer physically, however, we sometimes tend to focus on this aspect more than His resurrection. What I mean is this: how often do we think of the cross rather than the empty tomb. I know Christ suffered, but I believe moreso emotionally rather than physically. He took upon all of our sins and thus was "forsaken" by God. That would be more emotional and spiritual torment than I could ever imagine. I also believe emotional torment is far worse than physical suffering. Did Christ suffer physically. Our natural response is absolutely,

without a doubt because he had nails driven through His hands. How can that not be physical torture? Psalm 22 clearly shows Christ felt physical pain, however, I don't believe it was to the extent we normally have in our minds. Why? If any of you have shot a gun that really packs a kick you may be able to relate to this. If you are shooting at an inanimate object it is sometimes difficult to pull the trigger, because you know the kick is coming and you will feel it. However, when the same gun is taken out hunting, a bird or deer may jump out and you can shoot and shoot (In my case usually many times without getting anything) yet without feeling a thing. Sometimes in fact, you can come home with bruises on your shoulder the size of a soft ball. A kick which leaves a bruise should hurt, but, it doesn't. Why? Your focus was somewhere else. I have even known people who have had the scope cut open their eyebrow yet not realize it. Again, when our focus is taken off of self and put somewhere else, physical pain can be lessened.

I believe that Christ's focus on the cross was on us, and more importantly, the Father. Therefore, yes, Christ did suffer, but perhaps not to the extent one might think. Why is this important? Because when we look at Paul, he was beaten for the name of Christ many times, yet found it pure joy and an honor to suffer for the LORD. Today, someone who would do such a thing would be considered a lunatic. But Paul's focus was not on himself, it was on Christ. There may come a time when our faith will stand the test of persecution. Where is your focus? Even if persecution is not an issue, how much joy would fill our hearts if our daily focus was on Christ, not our jobs, family or problems that occur in our lives. Again, where is your focus? If it isn't on Christ, this can be a dangerous thing as Eve found out.

The point of all this is seen with Eve's desire to fulfill self. She saw the tree was good for food and thereby would satisfy her physical appetite. She also saw that it was pleasant to the eyes and, therefore, appealed to her senses and emotions. Finally, her mind

and spirit were being satisfied with the tree's ability to grant wisdom and intellectual growth. These three desires encompass almost all sins known to man. Look at what Scripture states, "For EVERYTHING in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16). Satan's temptation of Christ followed this same theme. First Christ was tempted with bread (physical appetite), then He was shown the many kingdoms from a high point (emotions and senses), and finally, He was told to prove His divinity and authority by having His angels rescue Him (pride) (Luke 4:1-12). In a sense, Christ showed here that He had overcome ALL sin.

Next, Eve got Adam to eat of the tree as well. This is partly why the woman has the submissive (not unequal) role. We read in Timothy, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Tim 2:12-14). This does not make Adam free of guilt, as he too ate of the tree, and "for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22; see also Rom 5:15).

The first result of their sin was the awareness of shame and nakedness. No longer did they have control of their sexual desires and they could not look at one another in the same pure way. We are told that if a man even lusts after a woman he commits adultery. This is also why it is important, especially for a woman, to dress decently and be fully covered today. If not, because of man's weaknesses and sinful nature, he may fall into sin as a result of the woman not covering herself. Paul writes, "Do not cause anyone to stumble" (1 Cor 10:32). To do so is a sin and, therefore, if a woman causes a man to sin by her clothing, she also sins. These fig leaves certainly did not do the job Adam and Eve had hoped they would.

First Satan, and then Eve is cursed as a result of Eve's giving into her "selfish" desires. Then in verse 17 Adam gets his: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:17-19).

The reason was because Adam "listened to his wife." This is not to say that men are not to listen, but in spiritual cases (of which man is to be the head), Adam should never have been submissive. He left his role of headship and let the wife take charge of his spiritual well being by trying to gain wisdom.

When we examine the curse we see that it corresponds to the entire creation. Not only are the animals (verse 14) and humans cursed, (verses 16-19) but, the physical universe is also subjected to frustration (Rom 8:22). Here the ground was cursed, causing it to produce thorns and other weeds, making Adam work for his food. No longer would it be simply harvesting, now it would take the sweat of his brow to bring in food. This process would be lifelong and then he would die, returning to that from which he was made--dust. Though once Adam was to rule over and control the ground, now it would control him.

An interesting parallel can be made with the curse and Christ. We read, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). We just read how as a result of eating from the tree, Adam was cursed with pain, thorns, sweat and death. Christ Himself hung on a tree (Gal 3:13) taking us back to the Fall. He suffered pain, especially emotional (Heb 5:7; Ps 22), wore a crown of thorns (Mark 15:17), sweat blood (Luke 22:44), and died for us, but more than that, He rose from the dead. He indeed

became the very curse of man in order to redeem us from this curse through His death and resurrection, so that there would be no more pain (Rev 21:4; 22:3). Praise God! It is true that the price of the curse has been paid, but it will not be completely delivered until the end of the world (2 Peter 3:10). We read, "But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pet 3:13; see also Rev 21:1; 20:11).

These verses also show a common law of science that was set in motion, the Second law of Thermodynamics. This law states that all things in the universe are in a state of decay. Not only does this go against the theory of evolution where things are increasing in complexity, it also is a reminder that this world will someday end, and either heaven or hell awaits. After the curse plants began to wither and die, animals and humans began to age, with diseases and suffering to boot. The stars began to burn out, the earth began to erode along with many of its qualities (electromagnetic field etc.). Scientifically this has been seen first hand, giving support to what the Bible already states: "In the beginning, O Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment" (Heb 1:10-11); and "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever" (1 Pet 1:24-25).

How these changes took place nobody knows. Perhaps there were many genetic changes, or maybe God simply withdrew His sustaining power. If the serpent was changed physically, there is no reason to suspect the other animals could not have been changed also. Perhaps the spider was given the ability to make a web, which has the function of death. We don't know and it really doesn't matter, as the point is, what once was is not but shall be again, through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, our Lord! This

is where our focus will remain!