

Did God really say?

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

Students of scripture must have a thorough understanding of Genesis 3:

We must be aware of Satan's strategic distortion of God's Word in the Garden of Eden;

We must guard against the very same strategies when they are employed by Satan today;

We must learn, from the Bible's parallel scenes--the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4 and Luke 4--how Jesus wielded *the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God* (Ephesians 6:17) to defeat Satan's evil designs.

So let's walk, step by step, through the garden...

Did God really say...?

Adam and Eve are real individuals and their story is specific history recorded by Moses under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But their story is also universal, describing what has happened countless millions of times down through the ages--**the descent into sin.**

God's word attacked.

Through the snake's voice Satan attacked God's Word. This is the beginning of the descent.

God's Word had been responsible for everything that Adam and Eve enjoyed. God speaks into existence day and night, sun and moon, the blue sky, flowers, singing birds, and all the adoring creatures.

"Did God really say..."

So shrewd. The serpent didn't directly deny God's Word, but he smuggled the assumption that God's Word is subject to our judgment. Such a thought had never been verbalized before, and it was enticing.

This sets up Satan's systematic distortion of God's Word.

Satan's scheme (which will fail) is to get them--and you--to sin; he postulates that God will love them too much to condemn them and in so doing God will have abrogated his own word, placing him on the same level with Adam and Eve--on the level of sin.

"Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

This is a complete distortion of God's Word and his generosity.

Whereas God was generous in his original statement of **verse 2:16**--*You are free to eat of every tree but one*-- he is made to seem stingy and miserly, by suggestion. Satan is subtle--not coming out and directly attacking the Word of God--he just asks an "innocent" question. The seed of doubt has been planted and it will bear surprisingly quick fruit.

This would have been a great opportunity to defend God, but Eve didn't. She descended to her own revisions of God's Word:

She diminishes God's Word.

She adds to God's Word.

She softens God's Word.

Diminishes--

3:2--She leaves the *'every'* out of verse 2:16. She discounted God's gracious generosity. This is a tacit agreement with the serpent. This subtle shift of heart indicates something bad is happening inside of Eve.

Adds to--

3:3: "...and you must not touch it." God never said that; Eve added it. She magnified God's strictness. Then, paradoxically, she...

Softens--

3:3: She leaves out the "surely" of 2:16. She removes the certitude of death.

By her revisionist approach to the Word of God she has placed herself in harm's way.

This emboldens the serpents' reply in 3:4--"You will not surely die." This is not subtle. Together, they have arrived at the place of saying that God's Word is wrong.

"You will not surely die."

The doctrine of divine judgment is the very first doctrine to be denied. Satan attacks it from the beginning. Modern culture's loathing of this doctrine indicates that our culture is conversant with Satan, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (Ephesians 2:2) But note that judgment did come upon Eve and Adam--as it surely will fall on all.

God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. (3:5)
Emboldened further by Eve's participation in the distortion of God's Word, the serpent shifts from attacking the Word of God to attacking the very goodness of God Himself. According to the serpent, the threat of death is nothing but a scare tactic to keep them in their place. So God is repressive, and jealous--that they not ascend too high. This is an incredible, unbelievable slander of God, in light of the thousand "goods" of creation.

This lie would alter life on earth forever. It bore the lure of divinity for Eve: *You will be like God*. Sin had a promise, which God's Word withheld.

By reaching out for the fruit and eating it, she would be like God; she would decide what was right and wrong apart from God's Word. What an intoxicating thing it was--and is today: she would do it her own way. This is the lure of moral autonomy--to be your own moral compass. The godlike prospect of moral autonomy drew her to take and eat the fruit.

Adam and Eve had come from the pinnacle of innocence and intimacy to the pit of guilt and estrangement. See 3:7-8.

We are not unaware of Satan's schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

What we learn from Genesis is that sin takes hold when we begin to doubt God's Word and God's goodness.

When this starts to work in us, we begin to leave out the great pluses in God's word and character. We begin to minimize the promises and the graces and the goodness of his Word. They evaporate in our minds. We become less enthusiastic.

Then we add to and exaggerate the things we don't like, making it grievous in our minds.

When we do these things, we are in harm's way. We begin to regard God as someone who is withholding something, keeping us down, repressing us.

That's why Moses, who wrote Genesis under the inspiration of the Spirit, at the very end of his writing, will say:
Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you--they are your life. (See Deuteronomy 6:6-9; and Deuteronomy 32: 46, 47a;)

And when we come to the New Testament we find Jesus facing Satan--in the wilderness, not in the Garden. He defeats Satan with three quotations from Deuteronomy, including "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4, quoting Deu. 8:3).

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**the rebel**

Abel is my older, braver brother, who went forward first, following God by faith. He went forward alone, rejecting his generation and his family's values. The rebel was certainly not Cain.

**Abel came God's way--**

*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. (Heb 11:4)*

Abel brought a blood offering, thus confessing himself a sinner:  
*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:22)*

Cain came his own way, with his own offering. **That's religion.**

*The way of Cain* (Jude 11) is not by faith in God, but by faith in self. God wanted a lamb brought, which points to the sacrifice of Christ. The offering of Cain denied that human nature is evil and in need of a Redeemer. Cain believed in God and religion, but he thought he would negotiate with God directly. It can't be done:

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)*

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*

He brought himself instead of Christ, which is the essence of religion--then and now.

**Cain and Abel stand as two great systems, two classes of people:**

the lost and the saved;  
the self-righteous and the broken spirited;  
the formal professor and the genuine believer.

The difference between these men wasn't a character difference. The difference was the offering they brought. No Christian takes the position he is better than anyone else, because there are only two kinds of people--**sinners that are saved, and sinners that are lost.** What's the difference? **Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**Sin is conformity.**

Cain is romanticized as a rebel. Excuse me while I gag. Cain followed the way chosen by Adam, who had chosen the way that Eve had dictated. Adam was wrapped around Eve's little finger and Cain was tied to her apron strings. She, of course, went along with the serpent.

**The rebel was Abel**, who broke from his family and walked the Way of the LORD alone. He is the Christ-like figure who chose what would become the Way of the cross-- and paid the consequences of his rebellion.

The word "conformed" occurs just twice in my KJV Bible--because everybody ends up conforming in one of just two ways. Cain *conformed to this world* (see Romans 12:2). Abel *conformed to the image of Jesus Christ* (see Romans 8:29). Abel's conformity makes him my favorite rebel. Think of it: he faced what then was the entire world and, seeing that their ways were not God's ways, he went the way which was to be the Way of the cross—and he went that way alone. **Conformity to the image of Jesus Christ is rebellion in this world.**

Abel is the first person in Scripture who depicts the pattern of righteousness by faith. His rebellion against the prevailing culture--against everyone, it would seem, but God--and his death at the hands of his own kin prefigure the supreme rebel, Jesus Christ, who was condemned to die by His own nation.

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this could be your day

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah.

After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

*So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.
And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5:21-24)*

About a month ago, Stand in the Rain answered this question:

Q. Is hell pictured in the Bible?

A. Yes, a clear and definitive picture of hell can be found in scripture:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46)

I've been asked, since then, if there is a corresponding verse that gives us a picture of heaven. There certainly is:
Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5:24)

I could go on and on about Enoch. There are only a few verses in scripture about him, and yet he means so much to so many.

I could tell you how he has become a symbol of what is called the Rapture of the church, when God will take believers out of an unbelieving world just before judgment falls.

Or I could tell you how, like many of us, Enoch did not turn to God until later in life--when, it seems, the birth of a child caused him to take stock, and turn his life around.

But I think I'll step aside and let a little girl tell us about him instead. The story begins when her Mom asked her what she'd learned that day in Sunday School:

"Our teacher told us about Enoch and how he walked with God."

"Well," her Mom asked, "what about Enoch?"

"It happened that every day God would come by and say to Enoch, 'Enoch, would you like to walk with Me?' And Enoch would come out of his house and down to the gate, and he'd go walking with God. He got to the place that he enjoyed it so much that he'd be waiting at the gate of his house every day. And God would come along and say, 'Enoch, let's take a walk.' Then one day God came by and said, 'Enoch, let's take a long walk. I have so much to tell you.' So they were walking and walking, and finally Enoch said, 'My, it's getting late in the afternoon. I'd better get back home!' And God said to him, 'Enoch, you're closer to My home than you are to your home; so you come on home with Me.' And so Enoch went home with God."

Enoch had never walked with God until, one day, he did. I had never walked with God until, one day, I did.

You may have never walked with God. The only thing that means is that this could be your day.

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### **time to put the crayons away**

*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5)*

*And the LORD shut him in. (Genesis 7:16)*

Noah's Ark--a floating zoo! What a neat story for the kids: Noah builds the big boat. The animals enter two by two. We see the raven, the dove; the olive leaf, and the rainbow. Now where's that unicorn?

We were all kids once, but it's time to put the crayons down and see this story in the context of biblical history (the past) and biblical prophecy (the future).

The story starts right here, with the darkest line in scripture:

*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* (Genesis 6:5)

**Every...only...all.** It was all evil, all the time. And so the LORD God decided that he must cleanse the earth. He decided to give it a big bath!

And he told a man named Noah what his plans were. Noah believed God and started to build an ark, a big ship, according to the plan God showed him. Noah told everyone that a storm was coming, and that they were welcome to enter the safety of the ark.

Noah preached this warning for 100 years. But nobody outside his family believed it. Then a hard rain fell. Only those in the ark escaped judgment.

In the context of scripture as a whole, Noah's Ark is to be seen as a prefigurement of the judgment that is coming upon the earth in the future. That's how Jesus Christ saw it:

*When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the Flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. So be prepared, because you don't know what day your Lord is coming.* (Matt. 24:37-42)

In that passage, Jesus is both Noah and the Flood and the Ark!

He is Noah, warning us that sin is going to be forcefully obliterated.

And he himself is the Force that will obliterate it.

And he is the Ark, because those who are "**in Christ**"--whose sins were judged at the cross--will not be judged with the unbelieving world on the "outside."

Let's look at the most meaningful verse in the story:

**And the LORD shut him in.** (Genesis 7:16)

You're safe in the "ark"--in Christ. Once in the ark, you're not going to fall out, because you are *sealed unto the day of redemption.* (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)

But what about those on the other side of the door? The closing of the door of Noah's ark is a subtle prophecy of both God's mercy and judgment, combined in a single image,

**a single image which represent God's utter forgiveness and his uncompromising hatred of sin--all at once, combined in a single act.**

If we look at Noah's Ark long enough, we begin to see it as a prophecy of the perfect mercy and the pitiless judgment of Jesus' all-encompassing cross.

### **the Land of Promise**

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* (Genesis 12:1-3)

God started with Adam, who was created in God's image. But his sin marred the image and separated him from God.

Then God started over with Abraham, who was re-created (born again) with the righteousness of God (think of it as God's

image restored and suffused all the way to the core) and re-united with God.

So God is Adam's Creator. But God is both Abraham's Creator and his Redeemer.

Every human being who ever lived is linked to Adam. We are all born with his marred image. He is our progenitor ('father') in the flesh.

But only some are linked to Abraham, because the blessing is inherited by faith. Only those who share his faith are credited with the perfect righteousness of God (Genesis 15:6; 2 Cor. 5:21). Abraham is the progenitor ('father') of those with faith in Jesus Christ:

*It is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.* (Romans 9:8)

*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* (Galatians 3:7-9)

Adam and Eve could see their blessings: the perfection of paradise surrounded them. God didn't have to promise them anything because he'd already given them everything! But despite the evidence of their own eyes, they didn't trust God. They are exhibit A and A-1 that seeing is not believing.

Abraham did not live in an Eden of empirical evidence. **He lived in the Land of Promise:**

**By faith** Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **By faith** he went to live **in the land of promise...**(Hebrews 11:8-9)

Then he was promised a son, even though he and Sarah were old. Ten years passed, and all they got was ten years older. But Abraham believed what he could not see, **because God said so.**

As you read your Bible, remember that it is God's Word. Be Abraham as you read, and you will see the word of God materialize before your very eyes.

One of the very first concepts that the Bible teaches is that **God's Word will materialize:**

*God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.* (Genesis 1:3)

There was no cosmos; there was no nothing. Then God said a word--and there it was.

**But the cosmos is just a warm-up for the Logos, Jesus, who was the Word before he materialized in the flesh:**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* (John 1:1, 14)

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We start out hoping the Word will come true. Then we believe it will come true. Then we expect it to come true. Then we reach the point where we flat-out know it will come true.

We reach the conclusion that the Word of God has never deceived, while eyes often have--that Eve was deceived despite all the empirical evidence in Eden. At that point --when faith proves to be a more reliable guide than sight-- a revolutionary reversal occurs, and faith becomes our habit of mind, our *modus operandi*. **In fact, faith becomes the only sane and rational--the only trustworthy--way to proceed.**

Thus we find ourselves *walking by faith, not by sight* (1)--all the way from here to the Land of Promise, in the direction of faith.

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(1) 2 Corinthians 5:7