

Home Group study: week beginning 14th March 2021

Darkness before the Dawn - The Crime

When you see a sign saying 'Keep off the Grass' it suddenly puts an irresistible urge in you to walk across the grass, even if it never entered your mind till you saw the sign (or is that just me...?)! What things have you had a sudden urge to do just because you know it's prohibited? Were there any consequences?

Read: Genesis 2: 8-9, 16; 3: 1-13

What are the two trees God has caused to grow in the middle of the garden?

Why did God forbid man to eat of the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil'?

When we think of the word 'serpent', what do we immediately think of?

How does the serpent in this passage differ from our understanding of the word?

Understanding

Obviously we understand this serpent to be Satan, and we think of Satan as a serpent.

Interestingly the serpent is introduced to us in the third chapter of the Bible; the last reference to him is in the third chapter from the end of the Bible, Revelation 20: 2, where he is described as 'that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan'. That makes it clear exactly who the serpent is.

The notes in the NIV Study Bible for Genesis 3: 1 say 'The great deceiver clothed himself as a serpent, one of God's good creatures'. Do you think that is right? Was Satan the serpent or pretending to be the serpent? And was the serpent ever 'one of God's good creatures'?

Does Satan still disguise himself as 'one of God's good creatures'?

How might he appear to us? And how might we recognise him for who he is?

What techniques does the serpent use to lead the woman astray?

Who actually is the guilty party in this event: the serpent, the woman or the man?

This story is obviously very well-known. How does the wider world regard it? And how does the wider world regard Satan? Very often this story is trivialised; it can be seen as quaint, even comic or ridiculous. How significant is it in:

- Our eyes?
- God's eyes?
- Its effects on the world?

Application

The internet Urban Dictionary has all sorts of definitions of sin (some of them definitely not suitable for home group discussion!). One (from a man) is:

‘I’m going to hell for my sins, I accidentally made eye contact with a female!’,

Another, perhaps rather more considered, one is:

‘The Greek biblical word for sin, “amartia”, means literally “to miss the mark”, like an archer. Sin is not necessarily defined by moral wrongness, by transgressing some set of rules, but is instead doing anything that takes our focus off God (the target), onto ourselves, thinking we are the be-all-and-end-all.

How would you define sin?

Tim described this incident in Genesis 3 as the moment at which ‘humanity fell below God’s standards’. Do you think that is a good definition of sin?

Can you remember how Tim summed up what God’s standards are? Look at Mark 12: 30-31 if memories need jogging. In what ways do Eve’s actions fall short of these standards?

Tim also quoted two acronyms: FOMO and YOLO. Can you remember what they stand for? (*Fear Of Missing Out and You Only Live Once*). How much do you think FOMO and YOLO affect people’s thinking today? How do they apply to:

- The serpent’s temptation?
- Eve’s actions?
- Our own thinking?

Are these ways of thinking fundamentally wrong? If so, how do we guard ourselves against them?

Tim also likened our sin to COVID infection; sometimes it’s ‘symptomatic’ and sometimes it’s ‘asymptomatic’: in other words, sometimes our sin is immediately apparent, sometimes we can keep it hidden. What are examples of both?

What do you think God thinks of people who appear to be nice and good but inwardly are anything but? In what ways can we be like that? How do we guard against it?

Pray for each other that we can keep pure on the inside as well as on the outside.