

Let's start by taking a few moments to reflect on what we learned last week. Let us ask “How did we apply God's Word?” Did we tell anyone what great things God has done in our lives?

Last week's message concluded by considering how Jesus overcame Satan. We saw how Jesus restored peace of mind to Satan's victim whose life he had ruined by insanity and mental torment. Then we briefly looked at our own lives and realized each of us has also been set free from Satan, although perhaps, not so dramatically. We might not be set free from a multitude of demons, but isn't it true we've been released from slavery to the fear of death and sting of sin? In fact, our fear of death is fuelled by Satan. Hebrews 2:14-15 explains that Christ came to earth and became human in order to “destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the Devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.”

We may not fully realize at first, what an incredible and awe-inspiring thing it is, to no longer be slaves of fear. But the more we reflect on it, the more overjoyed we will be. Ultimately, we will have a “glorious and inexpressible joy.” as Peter said in 1 Peter 1: 8-9. Most of us would agree that singing an appropriate song can lift our souls and stir our minds to reflect more deeply on these heartwarming truths. So I want to invite you to join together as we sing a modern hymn by Jonathan Hesler, Joel Case and Brian Johnson, titled, “No longer slaves.”

Personal sharing ...

I realize it may seem politically incorrect in a secular-minded nation like ours to admit that we actually do believe in Satan as a personal evil being. But I can assure you, most people who follow either of the world's two largest religions – Christianity and Islam – believe the Devil is real. Jesus taught us to pray “Don't let us yield to temptation but rescue us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13) Interestingly, Muslims also pray each day for protection from Shaitan the accursed.

There's no denying that Scripture describes Satan as having a vital role in human affairs beginning in Genesis going right through to Revelations. Not only so, Jesus described the Devil in John 8:44 as “the murderer from the beginning.” So, if we want to better understand why Almighty God permitted Satan to exert an evil influence in our world, albeit for a limited time, we should go to Genesis. There we discover how he had a hand in bringing sin and death into the world.

Let us remember that in the first two chapters of the Bible God created the world very good. Chapter 3 is the first time we see something being going astray or out of synch from the orderly and harmonious way God designed it to be. Let us read Genesis chapter 3 verse by verse each of us taking our turn as we go around the circle. Here are the questions we will use to focus our thoughts and comments.

1. What does this teach us about God?
2. What did this teach us about ourselves / people?
3. What do you need to apply / obey?
4. Who are you going to tell?

This chapter begins by making a general comment about the serpent, one of the beasts of the field. It was crafty. But we must be careful not to assume this means God made it evil. Remember that God made everything and “Behold, it was very good.” The Hebrew word, *'arum* translated in our English Bible as *crafty* “does not carry the negative moral connotations of the English words *crafty* and

cunning.” (ESV Study Bible)

It is clear from reading the whole chapter that something went terribly wrong. But it is not so easy to pinpoint from the beginning of the conversation between Eve and the serpent what exact lie or deception the serpent spoke. We do know very well, however, that throughout Scripture the serpent is a deceiver. As it is written in Revelation 12:9, “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Also in John 8:44 Jesus plainly stated, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

What words spoken by the snake clearly show he was lying to the woman or twisting God's words? (compare Genesis 2:9,15-17)

So having seen how Adam and Eve responded to the serpent, what do we learn about humans from this story?

What do we need to take to heart and obey from this story?

The fact that something went terribly wrong means there is a warning to heed.... (Proverbs 14:12 says “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”) Now let us consider; Is there something positive in this chapter that can encourage us? Do you see anything pertaining to God that gives us reason to be hopeful? What do we learn about God from this chapter?