

Pastor Don Nelson

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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“ADVENT HOPE”  
Genesis 3:1-15

Who created the universe? What is this God like?

What does it mean to be a human being?

What is our purpose? Why do we exist?

How does God intend for us to relate to him, to each other, to the world?

These are the questions God’s Word begins to address in the first two chapters of the very first book, Genesis. It is dynamite stuff, isn’t it?

In the next chapter Scripture starts tackling other questions that are equally profound, yet deeply troubling:

What went wrong?

Why doesn’t life go the way it is supposed to?

Why do otherwise good people do bad things? And why do bad people inflict horrible evil on the world?

Why must we suffer and die? And what is God doing about it?

It does not get more raw, real and relevant than this. Critics who say the Bible does not speak to the glories and terrors of life either haven’t read it, or do not understand it.

Please turn with me to Genesis 3.

The first man and first woman live in unspoiled unity with God, each other and their environment. The Creator has blessed them with work that is important and meaningful. He has given them a world of beauty and adventure to explore. He has provided for all their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

This is only the beginning! Paradise is not a static, stagnant place; it is brimming with fresh possibilities and opportunities for greater things. The best is still to come – if Adam and Eve remain in union with the Giver of Life.

Then the Enemy desecrates Eden. This should not happen: God has ordained Adam {Ge 2:15} “**to take care of it**” (literally, “**to guard it**”). It is his job to make sure {Rev 21:27} “**Nothing impure [enters]**” the Garden.

But Adam allows Satan in, Satan tempts Eve, and Eve disobeys the LORD’s one prohibition: she eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She {Ge 3:6} “**also [gives] some to her husband, who [is] with her, and he [eats] it.**”

Everything begins to unravel. They experience the weight of shame, the pain of fear, the insecurity of distrust, the ache of alienation – all for the first time. Relationships become difficult. Work becomes drudgery. Beauty becomes ugliness. And it will end, not in blessed immortality, but in cursed extinction.

Reading Genesis 3 is like watching a scary movie. There is always that point when the pretty but foolish young woman puts her hand to the doorknob. It doesn’t matter that someone in the audience shouts, “Don’t go in there!” She does, and the monster gets her.

The narrative of the Fall is familiar, both because we have heard it many times, and because it is our story. Yes, it reports the long-ago origins of sin

and death; but doesn't it also nail my failures, your wrongdoings, our self-ruin?

God clearly warns us that {Ge 4:7} **“sin is crouching at [our] door,”** but what do we do? Like Adam, like Eve, like the horror movie girl, we let it in.

Going back to those profound, but troubling questions we asked a few minutes ago:

What went wrong? *We* went wrong!

Why doesn't life go the way it is supposed to? It is because *we* don't go the way we are supposed to!

Why do otherwise good people do bad things, and why do bad people inflict horrible evil on the world? It is because *we* {Ro 3:23} **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

Why must we suffer and die? It is because {Ro 6:23} **“the wages of sin is death”** – that is how sin ends.

Stop there and we'll “have a blue Christmas” for sure. But Genesis 3 raises and begins to answer one more question: *What is God doing about this?*

In verses 14 and 15 the LORD confronts the Enemy: **“Cursed are you...! I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

This is not about our common fear of snakes, for {Eph 6:12} **“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil.”** This is a promise that God will raise up a Savior whom Satan will wound (“**you will strike his heel**”), but who will defeat the Enemy (“**he will crush your head**”).

That is what God is doing about sin and death.

Why am I preaching from Genesis 3 when Christmas is only twenty-seven days away?

It was precisely *because* things went wrong that God the Son took on flesh; precisely *because* good people do bad things, and bad people do evil in the world that the Messiah entered it; precisely *because* we suffer and die that Jesus was born a human infant.

The events described in Genesis 3 are what made it necessary for the Lord Jesus to come the first time. It has everything to do with Christmas!

Jesus' birth made it possible for him to establish God's kingdom through his teachings, miracles, relationships, death, resurrection and ascension. His kingdom is alive and well and growing – but it is not complete. If it were, everything would go right, life would be the way it is supposed to be, we would do all the right things, and people would not continue to suffer and die.

The fullness of our salvation awaits the completion of God's kingdom. That will happen when Jesus comes a second time – not incognito as a lowly infant, but openly as the glorious {Rev 19:16} **“King of kings and Lord of lords.”**

After his return, his people will live in unspoiled unity with God, each other and their environment. The Creator will bless them with work that is important and meaningful. He will give them a world of beauty and adventure to explore. He will provide for all their needs.

That will only be the beginning. Paradise will not be a static, stagnant place. It will be brimming with fresh possibilities and opportunities for greater things.

Therefore, the Season of Advent (of which today is the first Sunday) is not only an opportunity to celebrate Christ's historic First Coming (his First Advent); it is also a time to prepare for his future Second Advent.

Today and every day, the LORD is inviting us to experience the Good News of Genesis 3:

- Our sins are terrible, but God is merciful and kind!
- Our darkness is deep, but God is deeper still!
- Our suffering is profound, but our God is more than able to help and to heal!
- Our Enemy is ferocious, but our God is victorious!

Let us prepare for Christ's Second Coming by receiving him as Savior and obeying him as Lord.