



Lesson 3 – Something Has Gone Terribly Wrong

The Fall

We left off in our last lesson on quite the high note. God created a beautiful world and made two humans to reflect Him to the entire creation. They were to rule over God's world as God would, and to enable them to do that God made them like Him in very significant ways – He made them in His image. After making them He put them in a beautiful garden, and everything was, as God Himself observed, "very good." But then God gave man a choice – a choice to submit to His plan humbly and obediently or to rebel against his Creator and do things man's own way. Adam and Eve decided to reject God's plan, thinking they knew better, and the results have been absolutely catastrophic. God created a beautiful world, and we still see much of that beauty, but the world we are in today is vastly different from the one God had originally intended, because the world as we see it now has been damaged by the fall.

What are some of the ways in which the world right now is not as God had intended it?

What would it look like if the world was as God intended it?

In this lesson, we will see what it looks like when individuals and cultures rebel against God, and then we will see the results of such rebellion. Finally, we will begin to apply some of these concepts to the issue of men and women.

Rebellion against the Creator

Why would anyone rebel against a good Creator? If God is all-wise, all-loving, and all-good, why would anyone reject what He says? If looked at from a purely logical point of view, rebellion is ridiculous. Sadly, once rebellion entered the creation with our first parents' sin, rebellion has become so commonplace that it no longer looks ridiculous.

What are some ways that people regularly rebel against God that are absolutely ridiculous if you stop to think about it?

Individuals Rebel against God's Created Order (Genesis 3)

Genesis 3 tells us the sad story of mankind's first act of defiance against God. This was a literal, historical event wherein a man and a woman rejected the command that God had given them, but it also serves as

an important case study for all subsequent sin. That initial rebellion functions as a mirror, because the more we examine what happened in the garden the more we see reflections of Adam and Eve in ourselves.

- **People sin because they want to be in charge (Genesis 3:4-5).**

The serpent's opening lie to Eve was simple: you can be like God. But notice the *way* in which Eve would be like God. The serpent said that she would know good from evil. Another way of understanding this is that Eve would be the one to decide what was good and what was evil. Essentially, Satan challenged Eve that she should decide what was right and wrong, not God. At the core of all sin is a demand that humans make, a demand to play God and to be the one to decide on our own terms what is good and what is evil.

In what ways do we see our culture demanding the right to determine good and evil?

In what ways can we as Christians fall into the same trap of wanting to be the one to decide good and evil?

Adam and Eve rejected God's Word. People today reject God's Word as well. They may not reject all of it, but they reject the parts they don't like. They may claim to love God, but they can't see God saying... [insert here what God said in the Bible]. We are faced in many ways with the same question that Adam and Eve were faced with – are we going to let God be God and follow His rules? Or are we going to try to be god and live how we think is best?

- **People sin because they think know better (Genesis 3:6).**

In the end, Eve chose to eat from the tree because she thought she knew better than God. Throughout Genesis 1 and the beginning of chapter 2 we read over and over again that "God saw that it was good." Now Eve looks at something that God says was bad, and she decides it is good (Genesis 3:6). She believed the lies that Satan told her and decided she knew what was best, even though that was not what God had said. Sin always comes down to a lack of trust, or as we often call it, of unbelief. We don't believe that God knows best. We don't trust that God knows best. We think we know better.

If all sin is at its root unbelief, how does this impact the way we fight sin?

Consider taking a few example sins (i.e. anger, fear, stealing, lust, etc.) and show how that sin is a lack of trust in God.

- **People sin because they want what they can't have (Genesis 3:6).**

Eve wanted the fruit. Scripture describes the tree as looking appealing in a number of ways: it looked tasty; it was attractive; and she really thought eating it would give her a special wisdom that God had selfishly held back. Nobody forced Eve to sin, and nobody forces you to sin. We sin because ultimately we want what God has forbidden.

If we only sin because we want to, why is it that people continue committing the same sins over and over even when they want to stop?

We reject God's Word and sin against Him when we decide we are in charge, and that we know better and want what God has held back. The temptation story in Genesis 3 comes down to the issue of faith: will Eve trust God's Words or the devil's? The temptation in our lives is much the same: will we trust God or will we listen to someone else?

Cultures Rebel against God's Created Order (Genesis 11:1-9)

The first rebellion that took place involved Adam and Eve rejecting God's command because they thought they knew better. The next few chapters of Genesis tells us about more individuals who sin against God – Cain, Lamech, the generation of Noah,¹ and Ham. But when we get to Genesis 11, we find something new. We find people united and organized in calculated rebellion against God. We find Babel.²

Read Genesis 11:1-9. In what ways is this culture rebelling against God?

This city has a promising start. They are united – that's a good thing. They develop new technology (i.e. bricks) – that's a good thing. But things go south quickly. They decide to use these advantages to build a city and a tower to unite rather than spreading across the earth. Rather than seeking the glory of God, they try to make a name for themselves. Rather than conquering and ruling the world for God's glory, they focus on staying put in their own little corner of the world and building themselves up. They may not outwardly curse God, but they ignore His Word and instead pursue their own glory.

Cultures all throughout history have banded together in rebellion against God and against His Word. This rebellion may look different from culture to culture, but all cultures throughout the history of the world have rebelled against God's Word. Not every rebellion looks the same, and some rebellion might be worse than others, but all of it is a rejection of something that God has commanded.

What are some other ways that entire cultures have rebelled against God's Word?

What are some of the ways in which our culture rebels against God's Word?

This is important to understand because we are all in a culture that is rebelling against God. We need to realize that, and we need to beware that we not joining in with our culture where it rebels against God. Sometimes believers can go with the flow and without consciously realizing it follow the thinking and living of the world around them.

¹ It might be argued that the generation of Noah is a culture in rebellion against God, but the difference is that in Genesis 11 we read of organized, planned, intentional rebellion. Genesis 6 tells us that every individual was sinful, but we don't at that point see them uniting around their sin.

² Babel is the transliteration of the Hebrew name for this civilization (בָּבֶל *babel*). This civilization is given this name because as a punishment their speech was mixed up, and the Hebrew verb for mixed up is *babal*. Everywhere else in Scripture the word *babel* is translated as "Babylon." This is the origin story for the civilization from which Abraham would come from, the country which would serve as the enemy of Israel, and would serve as an image in the New Testament of evil empires (1 Peter 5:13; Revelation 18).

Result of the Rebellion

Mankind chose rebellion, and that choice continues to have consequences. The strongest and most severe consequence was death, but it wasn't the only consequence. We have looked previously at the image of God in man as well as the dominion mandate. As we look at the consequences of man's rebellion, we will zero in each of these categories and see how the fall has distorted each of them.

Rebellion and the Image of God

The image of God has not been destroyed by sin, but it has been damaged. If someone was to go to the Mona Lisa and draw a fake moustache and devil horns, you would still be able to get an idea of what Mona Lisa looked like, but the picture would be damaged. Similarly, mankind retains the image of God, but the image isn't the same. We still reflect God, but not as well as we did before sin.

What do you think the results will be when a creature designed to reflect its Creator does not reflect the Creator?

This understanding of humanity explains the human condition better than any other view. As one famous Christian thinker put it, we need a way to explain the fact that man is both a noble creature and a cruel creature.³ Some see only good in man, and they will point to the Mother Therasas or the Ghandis of the world. They will observe actual instances of genuine concern for others and self-sacrifice. Others will look at the horrors of the world, the Hitlers and Stalins of the world. They will observe instances of unspeakable evil and conclude that man is hopelessly lost.

Christians look at the world and argue that man was created good – in the image of God – but then sinned and became twisted – the fall. As a result, we are left with a puzzling creature that sometimes sacrifices itself for the good of others but most often selfishly uses others for its own personal gain. Christians have a very good explanation for this puzzling situation: the image of God has been marred by the fall.

How should we as Christians think about the “good” things people do if we believe that man is totally fallen and incapable of doing righteousness before God?

Rebellion and the Dominion Mandate

Part of the curse was to frustrate the job that man was given. Man was told to fill the earth and rule over the planet. Those original tasks were not revoked, but they were made a lot harder. Man was told to fill the earth, but now having children would bring great pain. Man was also told to rule over the planet, but now the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles.

The New Testament describes what God created as “made subject to vanity” (Romans 8:20). Another way to put this is that life became filled with futility. Life became frustrating. We are still called to build, create, design, plant, write, protect, guard, and all those other wonderful things packed into the dominion mandate, but now it will be a lot harder. Now there will need to be some real sweat (literally!). Now things

³ Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, chapter 2.

will be frustrating, and creation will not cooperate, and we will battle discouragement and hopelessness as we seek to fulfill that command.

Can you think of practical ways in which the vanity [futility] of creation affects people's work today?

How should the knowledge that the dominion mandate has been frustrated by the fall shape the way we think about our work?

God's Created Order and Gender

As we look at the chaotic world in which we live today, it should be obvious that we are living in a culture that is in rebellion against God. There are no doubt many ways we could trace out this rebellion, but in this series we will be looking at one particular example: the way we think about men and women. Much of what we cover in this series will be considered very offensive to a lot of people, including some Christians. But as we go through we will ask one question: what does the Bible say? We can't simply assume we know what the Bible says, but we also can't assume the Bible says what we want it to say or that it won't say something we wouldn't like it to say. We need to know what it is God says, and then we need to accept it by faith and joyfully live it out.

Why do people tend to assume the Bible agrees with the way they think about life, or that it wouldn't contradict them?

What are some ways that our culture has rebelled against God's plan for men and women?

We will be looking at several areas of rebellion. The most obvious and offensive to us today is the transgender movement, where men claim to be women and women claim to be men. But before that there was the homosexuality issue, where men and women decided they had the right to define marriage. That way of thinking was only possible within a sexual revolution that prized sexual pleasure above all else. Going further back, we can see rebellion in the roles that God has given to men and women. When man decides that he is the standard and not God, we are not far away from the unraveling of society as we are watching unfold all around us. Again, in every instance we need to ask what God's Word has said, and then be willing to submit to God's plan, trusting that He knows better than us what is best.

What are some ways that Christians have gone along with part of this thinking?