

General Comments on Genesis 3

The text of 2:15 through 3:24 form an inverted parallelism, as follows:

Naive with respect to good and evil (2:15-24)
Naked and unashamed (2:25)
Innocence lost (3:1-6)
Dressed by self, yet still ashamed (3:7-13)
Judgement and justice invoked (3:14-20)
Dressed by Lord and unashamed (3:21)
Perceiving good and evil (3:22-24)

The roles of various states of being clothed/unclothed and shamed/unashamed deal with the issue of the introduction of the carnal nature of man. Before the Fall, man was unaware of his sensual self, the body simply had no obscene, indecent or prurient connotations to the possessor. After the Fall, the carnal self is revealed to the possessor and the man and woman seek to clothe themselves. They create loin cloths in haste (fig leaves employed rather than some woven material of natural fiber) to cover this newly revealed carnal nature. Yet, even when clothed by their own means they avoid contact with God and avoid Him, still identifying themselves as naked. The symbolic implication is man, left to himself, is unable to overcome his carnal nature and will still shrink from God in his carnal state.

Also, symbolism is obtained by considering this new knowledge obtained from a source other than the Lord has revealed to them something entirely different from what the Lord has revealed to them. Furthermore, we see the entrance of irrationality, subjectivity and raw human emotion as even though they are clothed their shame causes them to avoid the Lord and state they are naked. Upon discovering the couple, God pronounces judgement upon them, which they accept. He then clothes them in garments made of animal skins. That the garments are indicated as being made of skins prepared of God implies that the Lord obtained the skins from some animal. Thus, the Law of Sacrifice and the attendant symbolism of the Atonement is implicated in the covering of Adam and Eve's nakedness. That the Lord prepared the skins indicates His intercessory activity in covering their nakedness.

Note only after both of them have eaten of the fruit are their eyes opened and they are opened together. This implies the change brought about was not some immediate biological result of consumption of the fruit but an awareness of exercising their agency to go against the will of God (i.e., the woman ate the fruit then brought it to Adam and he ate well, so the recognition of nakedness was not immediate upon eating the fruit). Thus, they begin to see the difference between good and evil as a result of doing evil. This was probably something of a reasoning process for them that concluded in the realization of the implications of sin.

For the serpent's interaction with the woman, the woman is separated from man and makes the decision independent of him. The serpent asks leading questions that are intended to either pit the woman against the Lord or against the man (For example, he asks "Did God really say: You shall not...?" This kind of open-ended question leaves the woman to ponder over the veracity of her spouse as she herself wasn't present when the command was issued, but note in the woman's reply not the slightest questioning of either the Lord or of the man). Also note that the serpent includes the "You" when questioning the quote from God. This could easily be an attempt by him to imply God specifically told Adam only and not the woman, so she was not included in the command. The woman's response is a distortion of the original command, indicating that it is either a self-deception on her part or a failure of the man to correctly communicate what God told him, or both. Thus, the symbolism from this exchange is that when the man and woman are separated and they fail to properly understand each other, evil is the result. Note this implies fault on the part of both the man and the woman. As the man was the only one to receive the commandment from God, it was his responsibility to communicate it to Eve such that she understood. Also note the statement that a man should cling to his wife in order that they be one flesh immediately precedes this account. Thus, the man failed to cling to his wife and left her alone thereby subjecting her to the wiles of the adversary. Attempting to place blame on one or the other of them is unfair as both failed to do what they were supposed to do. Given the ambiguity of exactly who erred more (which I think was intentional in the text) we cannot say that it is primarily the man's fault for not properly instructing his wife and staying with her or that it is the woman's fault for leaving her husband and practicing self-

deception.

In the questioning by the Lord and the subsequent pronouncing of judgments note the following pattern:

Lord questions man
 Lord cites the commandment to not eat the forbidden fruit
 man defers to woman
 Lord questions woman
 woman defers to serpent
 Lord curses serpent
 serpent will be deferring to the woman
 Lord explains consequences to woman
 woman will be from henceforth be deferring to the man
 Lord states violation of the commandment to not eat the fruit
 Lord curses ground because of man

In the judgments meted out by God, the serpent is informed he will be lower than all animals and will be in this condition for "all the days of [his] life", meaning he will be excluded from even inheriting a lowly animal body for all time, thus being excluded from the Atonement. The woman is informed she will now experience painful childbearing. The man is informed he will now have to labor a great deal to provide for his family. The world will no longer be in his favor as was the case in the garden, it is now a world of adversity (note that thistles, thorns, briars, etc. are symbols commonly employed by the Prophets to represent wickedness, cf. Isa. 5:6, Hosea 10:4, Micah 7:1-4). Also compare the relative amounts of pain inflicted on them: woman's pain is to be acute but periodic; man's pain is not labeled as great or acute but is persistent and terminal, ending only with his demise (and the text alludes to the toilsome tilling of the soil resulting in him returning back to the soil he was created from).

Note the pronouncement upon the woman is the first statement of childbearing and immediately after this Adam names her Eve because she is the mother of all living. This is the first comment on childbearing in the conversation between God and the couple as the Genesis 1:28 statement to be fruitful and multiply was not delivered in their presence. Thus, the Fall to mortality has enabled childbearing. Adam naming Eve such also indicates their perceiving what has been brought about by their actions. At this point Adam and Eve are understanding the nature of the plan, and they are reconciled to it.

Also to be noted is that the serpent's head is crushed by

the woman's offspring. While this has obvious messianic overtones, the more "mundane" interpretation is the serpent will now be deferring to the woman because the woman will be bringing forth offspring into the world who possess physical bodies. The serpent is not only excluded from obtaining a physical body but the physical bodies provided by the woman enable all of her offspring the opportunity to obtain glory by virtue of the Atonement. The woman whom the serpent has deceived is now thwarting the serpent's plan by providing mortal tabernacles that allow spirits who kept their first estate to progress beyond the serpent. Hence, the ensuing enmity between them.

Comments on Genesis 3

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ² And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. ⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. ⁷ And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

v1-7 The adversary approaches the woman in the absence of the man and uses misleading questions and half-truths to persuade her (v. 1-5) to eat the forbidden fruit, which she then takes to the man, and he eats as well (v. 6). Eating the fruit results in the man and woman understanding their current state

v1 "the serpent", in the competing creation accounts of their contemporaries, the serpent (in the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish, [Tiamat](#) and [Apsu](#) were the primordial dragons and personification of chaos and order, in the Canaanite pantheon it was [Yam](#), in the Epic of Gilgamesh a [serpent steals](#) a life-renewing plant away from Gilgamesh for itself, depriving him of youth) was a known entity. Calling the adversary the "serpent" was an intuitively obvious statement to the ancient Semite.

"hath God said", the adversary is planting seeds of doubt. Eve was absent when God told Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge. The adversary questions her on how she can really know something she didn't experience first-hand. Did God really say that? Did Adam make it up? Can Adam be trusted? These leading questions are designed to undermine trust and drive a wedge between Eve and Adam.

v3 "neither shall ye touch it", where did this statement come from? Was this an addition by Adam? Was it something Eve interpolated? The text doesn't make it clear where the exaggerated command came from, which is intentional. It is meant to show the poor communication between Adam and Eve and their separation leads to problems. Ideally, as stated just a few verses earlier in 2:24, the man and the woman should be one flesh, which is clearly not the case at present.

v4 The death that is instant is spiritual death. As soon as they take the fruit and recognize their disobedience, they are filled with guilt and shame and seen to hide and cover their nakedness. They blame each other for their mistakes rather than owning up to their actions, which is a typical human reaction.

v5 In order to become acquainted with both good and evil, one must necessarily experience both. In order to know how bad disobedience is, and how it feels to be caught and punished, one must go through the experience. Otherwise, it is just a thought or an idea, not first-hand knowledge. The adversary is telling the truth when he tells Eve she will know good and evil, because without experiencing what evil is, she cannot know what good is by contrast. She has been living naïve in the garden, which is what the adversary wants to end.

The adversary is implying God is withholding something from the man and woman, something they want and need. He is implying selfishness and evil intentions on God's part, when it is in fact himself that is evil.

v7 Nakedness is vulnerability, and committing sin results in vulnerability. In the garden, Adam and Eve were protected and provided for by God, and sinning against him results in them no longer being in His favor. They are therefore vulnerable to danger and hunger. The serpent is a physical and spiritual threat, the lack of food is a physical and spiritual threat, and when you are subjected to these threats, then you are vulnerable

and naked, or exposed to the threat. When we keep the commandments the Lord promises us food and protection and when we break commandments we are threatened with famine and invasion (cf. Lev. 26, Deut. 28).

⁸ And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. ⁹ And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou? ¹⁰ And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. ¹¹ And he said, who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? ¹² And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. ¹³ And the LORD God said unto the woman, what is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

¹⁴ And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. ¹⁶ Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. ¹⁷ And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸ Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

v8-19 The Lord returns to the garden and is walking about (v. 8), apparently looking for Adam and Eve. He doesn't find them, so He calls out to Adam (v. 9). Adam responds, confessing the situation and a conversation follows. The Lord questions Adam, and then Eve, but not the serpent (v. 10-13).

There is a lot left unsaid in this brief few verses. The text implies all three, Adam, Eve and the serpent, were hiding together to avoid seeing the Lord, and all three are present when the Lord approaches them to speak to them. The Lord questions Adam about how he has learned he is naked, and then very specifically questions concerning the command given to him earlier in 2:17. Adam deflects to Eve, seeming to blame the

Lord for giving her to him. He asks Eve more generally what it is she has done, note the lack of specific question about the command from 2:17, as she was absent. The Lord does not bother to question the serpent, as there is no point in that.

The Lord then makes a series of pronouncements against the three of them, with the serpent personally being cursed. Eve is then told she will suffer pain in childbirth and will be ruled over by her husband. The ground is then cursed because of Adam, and he will have to work all the days of his life until it kills him. Note neither Eve nor Adam are cursed, only the serpent. Also note each pronouncement is tailored to the individual and rational, as the Lord is not irate and irrational. The Lord expected this and was ready for it, as it was all planned out.

v8 "voice", modern translations render this "sound". Adam and Eve hear the Lord walking through the garden in the evening and they hide themselves.

v11 Note the rhetorical question the Lord asks in verse 11, "Who told you that you were naked?" The Lord reveals to them that He is aware that they are now obtaining information from another source rather than Him. Adam's self-awareness over his carnal state reveals he is now witting when it comes to matters of good and evil, and has therefore been disobedient.

v13 "the serpent beguiled me", the PofGP Moses account retains this wording. Modern translations typically use "deceived" or "duped", which is a good rendering. Despite this clear Scriptural statement there is a [long history of apocryphal readings](#) in the Church of Jesus Christ that Eve made a witting and willful decision to take the fruit in order to force a necessary outcome that Adam was unwilling to bring about. These apocryphal readings are well-intentioned, but ultimately ascriptural. Eve is not to be faulted or blamed for some catastrophic mistake, because the outcome was a necessary and essential good (cf. Moses 5:10-11, 2 Ne. 2:14-29) the Lord wanted to happen from the beginning. Creating a body of apocryphal literature to exonerate Eve from a false accusation is unnecessary and unwarranted in our theology.

v14 The cursing of the serpent with a curse that is effectively saying "you are what you are", as serpents already have no legs and crawl on the ground. The implication is the adversary was serpent-like from the beginning, before he was ever cursed as

such (cf. 1 John 3:8, Ether 8:15-25, D&C 93:25, Moses 4:1-2). It was in his nature to attempt to thwart God's plan and bring sin and suffering into the world, so calling him "serpent" before being cursed as a serpent is just saying nothing really changed in his character. He was a scoundrel from the start, and only got cursed because he got caught.

The PofGP Moses account suggests the adversary spoke through a literal snake. The curse the Lord puts on the adversary is ironic, as the adversary used a snake to deceive Eve, but is now cursed as though a literal snake because of his deception.

v16 In 2:22 the woman is first taken out from man, but now all of humanity will now be taken out of women through childbirth. The Lord's statement concerning the pain of childbirth she now faces is more a statement of fact than a curse, as previous to this Eve has been naïve to matters of sexual reproduction. The Lord is warning her the biological reality she now faces. That biological reality also follows that women will be subservient to men because in a fallen world men have more lean muscle mass and are more aggressive and will use that to physically rule over them. If there is a curse on Eve in this verse, the latter is it.

²⁰ And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: ²³ Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. ²⁴ So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

v22-24 Adam and Eve, no longer naïve to matters of sexual reproduction, recognize their roll in the initial command from 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (v. 22). The Lord makes durable, protective clothing for Adam and Eve before they leave the garden and His presence permanently, which clothing bears palpable symbolism (v. 21). The Lord then expels them from the garden so they will not be able to live forever (v. 22), and must instead work to live (v. 23). They are forcibly removed from the garden, with no possible way to return

in a physical sense (v. 24).

The Lord banishes the couple that now knows good and evil from the garden lest they live forever in this newly discovered carnal state. This being the first time that they are excluded from the tree of life, it is safe to assume that they were free to eat of it previously. This being the case, it can be interpreted that the failure to continually partake of the tree of life results in eventual physical death (and the spiritual symbolism of this is obvious as well). And, had Adam and Eve continued to partake of the tree of life, they would not die and thus have an opportunity to be resurrected, cf. 2 Ne. 2.

v23 "to till the ground", the ultimate resolution of 2:5. In the beginning there was no man to till the ground, there is now.

v24 The cherubim is placed at the tree of life to "guard the way to", and not "entirely exclude from". Thus, they may partake of the fruit again at some future point. The symbolic aspects of this verse could be the cherubim represent Sanctification by the Holy Ghost, the sword may represent the Law/word of God/Word of God, and the tree of life being immortality and eternal life. Adam and Eve are physically prevented from access to the literal tree, but they still have access to the spiritual tree of life, which will in an eternal sense bring them back to the Lord, cf. 1 Ne. 8.

"flaming sword which turned every way", an impassible weapon of divine judgement and power.

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