

Our Father (East of Eden Series – Part I)

1/25/2009

1. Read Gen. 3:1-10 and describe the relationship between God and man before and after Satan successfully tempted Eve and Adam.

It would appear that God was present in a very real, knowable form in the Garden of Eden. He may not have been “walking” on two feet, but His movement was observable (v. 8). After they left the garden, God is only recorded as making an appearance on rare occasions until the Holy Spirit comes after the resurrection. Before the temptation, man was naïve about things like nakedness. Afterwards, he was afraid (v. 10) even in front of his creator. Once they had the knowledge of good and evil, they felt they needed to take things into their own hands instead of relying on God.

Thus, after Eden God looked at us differently, and we looked at God differently.

2. Continue on with Gen. 3:17-19. What changed?

The soil in the garden was blessed; the soil outside the garden will be cursed. Weeds evidently didn't exist inside the garden. It is likely that food was plentiful in Eden, but would require hard work outside.

3. Finish with Gen. 3:21 – 24. What changed?

Before, Adam and Eve could eat from the Tree of Life and live forever; afterwards that was no longer available. Death had entered the equation. They were now banished from the place God had made for them and now had to live in the place they had brought about themselves.

4. How did Pastor Steve describe “What We Had in Eden”?

We had an intimate fellowship with God. Four rivers converged here and God carefully created man to live here amongst the flora and fauna that God had spoken into being. It was this close relationship with God, doing what He wanted in the place He wanted us to be that made life in Eden so sweet. All that was lost in a swift wrong choice. Whether we realize it or not, we yearn for that situation all the days of our mortal lives.

5. Read Acts 17:16-20, 22-28. How did Pastor Steve then describe “What We Have Now”?

Today we have “religion”, which is a bunch of formal rules, laws, principles, disciplines, and/or rituals. Paul describes some religious Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, and philosophers as having made traditions, symbols, and thoughts that he described as “very religious”. But then he confronted them with the fact that the God they admitted they

didn't know was really the only God they needed to know, since He was the Creator of the Universe.

6. How was their relationship with their gods different from what Paul described?

They had developed a "religion" in which traditions had become burdens, rituals were mechanical actions, and the goal was to manipulate or control God, so that He would do what they wanted Him to do for them. But rules don't impress God and mechanical devotions don't replace faith. The key is to have a deep, personal relationship with God.

7. Formal religion tends to focus on rules and outward behavior. Why is that?

We are trying to use "works" (actions, deeds) to earn our way to heaven. If we do certain "good" things and refrain from doing certain "bad" things, then we will impress God and prove that we deserve to spend eternity with Him. Unfortunately, while we might be doing some of the right things, our focus is on the works rather than on our relationship with God.

8. The third question then is "How Do We Get Back to Eden?" Read Galatians 4:4-7 and talk about what is required.

Recognize that God is our Father in a perfect way that our real fathers could never be. We then need to accept that we are children of this God. We don't all have to act alike. It's who we are, not what we are. (see also Ephesians 2:13-22) We will then naturally do good things, not to impress God, but because we love Him.

9. Read Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5. In what ways does that describe a return to a relationship with God that is similar to that which man originally had in Eden?

God is again dwelling amongst His people – a very real presence. It is pretty clear that the time for toil, sweat, and tears is over. Our only purpose is to fellowship with God.