

# THE FIRST JUDGMENT UPON SIN (PART 3): JUDGMENT UPON MAN GENESIS 03:17–19

## *Introduction*

The first man upon earth sinned, tragically sinned, and he refused to accept the responsibility for his sin. Like so many today, he blamed his wife for his sin. He accused her of leading him into sin, of causing him to sin. It is true, she did approach and entice him to sin, but Adam himself stood guilty before God. In fact, he was guilty of at least three sins. Adam failed in at least three areas.

- ⇒ First, Adam did not try to lead Eve back to God. Just think what a failing this is! He did not *even try* to lead his wife to repentance, did not even bring up the subject of her returning to God. He did not even suggest that she confess and beg God for forgiveness and restoration.
- ⇒ Second, Adam listened to Eve's enticements and persuasions. He did not stop her from talking about and presenting the forbidden fruit to him. He stood there and listened to her persuasive arguments, to her enticements and seduction. Note, this is exactly what God says: *Because you have listened to the voice of your wife*, you are to be judged (v. 17.) Adam failed — tragically failed — by listening to his wife, by not stopping her from talking about the forbidden fruit.
- ⇒ Third, Adam himself chose to eat the forbidden fruit. He blamed his wife, but Eve did not force him to eat the forbidden fruit. Adam *wilfully chose* — made a *deliberate decision* — to sin. He knew exactly what he was doing. He was not deceived; his eyes were wide open when he sinned (1 Tim 2:14). He was guilty, wilfully and deliberately guilty, of...

- rejecting God
- rebelling against God
- disobeying God
- turning away from God

Adam was, therefore, to be judged. He stood before God guilty, guilty of the most terrible sin: Adam had wilfully and deliberately turned away from God. This is the great discussion of this passage: *The First Judgment upon Sin (Part 3): Judgment upon Man*.

- I. He was condemned to live in a cursed world, a world of imperfection and corruption (v. 17).
- II. He was condemned to struggle for survival, condemned to struggle against nature for the most basic necessity of life, food (vv. 17-18).
- III. He was condemned to die (v. 19).

Note one other fact: all of the judgments upon man fell upon the woman as well. There may be one difference, an emotional and psychological difference. In *judgment two*, man may be judged to suffer the pressure of providing the food and other necessities for the

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family more than the woman. Woman, of course, often senses the pressure of necessities, in particular if she is a single parent without a husband. But perhaps judgment two is condemning man to have a nature that suffers the pain of more pressure and stress than the woman. Man's shorter life span may be an indication of this.

### **I. *Genesis 03:17 Man, Condemned to Live in a Cursed World***

Man was condemned to live in a cursed world, a world of imperfection and corruption. The Hebrew text says: "Cursed be the ground *because of you*," "on account of you." God cursed the earth because of Adam's sin.

Why? Why would the earth have to suffer a curse when it was Adam who sinned? Very simply stated, the earth was Adam's home. Adam and the earth were *interrelated*. Adam was now imperfect, a fallen creature. God could not let imperfect Adam continue on in a perfect world. Imperfection is not compatible with, not able to live with, perfection. Imperfection and sin do not belong with perfection and righteousness. Therefore, God had to curse the earth as part of the judgment upon Adam. The earth belonged to Adam and Adam belonged to the earth; they were as closely related as they could be. Therefore, whatever fall Adam suffered, the earth had to suffer the same fall as well.

Scripture explains what happened even more in Romans 8:19-22. This is an important passage for understanding what happened. Because of its importance, the commentary of Romans 8:19-22 are being repeated here. Note what Romans says: all creation — the whole universe, not just the earth — was corrupted by sin.

Note that the creation suffers and struggles for deliverance from corruption. The word *creation* refers to everything *under* man: animal, plant and mineral. All creation is pictured as living and waiting expectantly for the day when the sons of God will be glorified. The words *earnest expectation* (apokaradokia) means to watch with the neck out-stretched and the head erect. It is a persistent, unswerving expectation, an expectation that does not give up but keeps looking until the event happens. Note three facts revealed about the universe in which man lives.

1. Creation is subject to corruption. This is clearly seen by men; and what men see is constantly confirmed by such authorities as the botanist, zoologist, geologist and astronomers of the world. All of creation, whether mineral, plant or animal, suffers just as men do. All creation suffers hurt, damage, loss, deterioration, erosion, death and decay; all creation struggles for life. It is full of *vanity* (mataios), that is, condemned to futility and frustration, unable to realize its purpose, subject to corruption. Note the two things said about creation in this verse (v. 20).
  - a. Creation was condemned to vanity — futility and frustration — by God. Creation did not willingly choose to be condemned to corruption. The world was made to be the home of man, the place where he was to live. Therefore, when man sinned, his world was doomed to suffer the consequences of sin with him. Man's world was cursed right along with him.

**Gen 3:17** “Cursed is the ground because of you.”

**Isa 24:4-6** *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.*

**Jer 12:4** *How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished.*

**Thought 1.** Just picture the enormous hurt and damage and decay that takes place in our world. Think about...

- the disease and savagery of the animal world
- the hurt and damage that so easily happens in the plant world
- the destruction and deterioration that takes place in the mineral world

Think about the earthquakes, tornadoes, storms, diseases, starvation, attacks and struggles for survival that take place. And these are only a few of the myriad happenings that show the corruption of the world.

- b. Creation has been subjected to corruption “in hope.” The news of Scripture is glorious: the situation of the world is neither hopeless nor final. Creation has the same *hope of redemption and of renovation* as man. The world was made for man; therefore, all creation will be ultimately delivered from corruption just as man will be delivered from corruption.
2. Creation will be delivered from corruption. This is the wonderful news of the glorious gospel. Note a most significant point: whatever happens to man is bound to happen to his world. Man is the summit of God’s creation; therefore, all that is under man is intertwined, interwoven and interrelated to him. Man and his world are one and the same; they are dependent upon each other. This is enormously significant: since man and his world are interrelated, it means that the world will experience whatever man experiences. When man fell, his world was bound to fall with him. But this is the glorious news as well. When man is liberated from corruption, his world will be liberated as well. God had to subject man’s world to man’s fate, but God also had to subject man’s world “in hope.” Creation will experience the glorious hope of living forever with man, of being completely and perfectly renovated. There will be a “new heavens and a new earth” (see Psa 96:11-13; 98:7-9; Isa 11:6-9; Rev 5:13).

**2 Pet 3:10-13** *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. As you look forward to the*

*day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

**Rev 21:1** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (see Heb 12:26-27).*

**Isa 65:17** *“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*

**Isa 66:22** *“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.”*

3. Creation groans in labour for deliverance. Note that *all creation* suffers together: all creation is interrelated, intertwined and interconnected. The whole universe is dependent upon its various parts for survival. The earth could not survive without the heavens, and the heavens would have no purpose apart from God’s creation of man and his earth. This does not mean that man is to be egocentric or egotistical, nor that man is the only rational being within the universe. It simply means that man and his earth are the focal point of God’s unbelievable creation, of His eternal plan and purpose in Christ. Being the centre of creation *before God* is not a truth to make man proud, but to make him humble — a truth to cause him to bow in worship and praise, appreciation and thankfulness — a truth to make him carry the gospel to the far ends of the universe if there are rational beings there. Being the summit of God’s creation is not a gift of privilege, not presently, but of enormous responsibility.

Note the word *groan* and *travail*. The picture is that of a woman giving birth. Creation experiences “birth pangs” under its struggle to survive. And note: it has been experiencing the “birth pangs” *until now*, that is, from the fall of man up until this present moment.

In conclusion, the whole scene of these four verses is that creation awaits a renovated world. Creation resents evil and struggles against decay and death. It fights for survival. It struggles against the bondage of being slaughtered or changed.

The idea expressed is that creation awaits the Day of Redemption: anxiously, expectantly, longingly and eagerly awaits for its deliverance from corruption. Creation moans and groans and cries for the unveiling of the Son of God. God cursed the earth because of man’s sin, yes, but God has also given the greatest hope imaginable to the earth — yea to the whole universe — the hope of eternal redemption.

**Rom 8:21** *In hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

**2 Pet 3:13** *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

**Rev 22:3-5** *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city [New Jerusalem], and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

## **II. Genesis 03: 17c–19a Man Condemned to Struggle for Survival**

Man was condemned to struggle for survival, condemned to struggle against nature for the most basic necessities of life. Note three things about this particular judgment upon man:

1. Man was condemned to suffer *sorrow* in meeting his most basic need: food. The word *sorrow* (itstsebhon) means pain, misery, toil, arduous labour, strenuous work. Before the fall of man into sin, his labour was not a strain. He was never miserable. His work and activity were always a pleasure and joy. Both he and his world were perfect; therefore, he never experienced the pain of aching muscles, nor of mental and physical exhaustion. But not now, not after his sin. Man now has to suffer...
  - the pain of stress, pressure, tension
  - the pain of toil, labour and work
  - the pain of mental and physical fatigue

And note: he has to suffer this pain *all the days* of his life. The ground — nature itself — had been cursed because of man's sin. Consequently, man is condemned to struggle for survival, to struggle against the forces of nature for the very basic necessities of life.

2. Man was condemned to struggle against the thorns and thistles of the earth. Before man's sin and fall, the earth had produced every good fruit and plant imaginable for man. Nature was completely under control. All of man's necessities were abundantly met. But not now, not since man's sin. Nature is no longer under control. It produces thorns and thistles and all kinds of problems for man. Man always has to struggle against nature — struggle to control nature — in order to protect his most basic necessity, the very food he eats.

Imagine! Just to eat — just to meet his most basic necessity — man would have to struggle and fight to control nature itself.

Note: the idea in this particular judgment is not just thorns and thistles, not just man struggling against thorns and thistles in order to eat. The idea is that nature is no longer under control; nature is no longer going to produce plenty for man, not naturally, not orderly, not regularly. Man has been condemned to struggle against nature — against the thorns and thistles of nature — against all of nature in order to meet his most basic need, that of eating. Food — man's most basic need — is just an example of all the basic necessities he needs. Man has to struggle against nature for all his necessities — shelter, clothing and food. He could live without shelter and

clothing, but he could not live without food. Apparently, God chose to talk about the struggle for food because it was the most basic need Adam had. But, again, the point is this: nature is no longer under control, no longer perfect. Nature is, therefore, to produce both good and bad things, to be both under control and uncontrollable. Man had to straggle against nature for survival, straggle to meet his most basic needs, even his need for food.

3. Man was condemned to sweat in order to eat, in order to control nature and meet his most basic need. The point is twofold.
  - a. Man's straggle against nature is strenuous and difficult. Man has been condemned to sweat — to work hard — in order to have anything. This is true even in securing his most basic necessity, food. The struggle against the earth — against nature and its irregular and uncontrolled features — is a strenuous and difficult struggle. Man's needs, his most basic needs, are to be met by sweat, tears and toil.
  - b. Man's struggle against nature has to go on and on, to last all of his life, until he returns to the ground. Everything man has and owns — even food — is uncertain since the fall of Adam. Some happening — some quick, some uncontrolled event in nature — can snatch away everything a man has. Man is condemned to straggle for survival all the days of his life.

**Thought 1.** God's mercy is seen even in the midst of this judgment. Man's hard labour and sweat will produce results. He will be able to feed himself, to meet the necessities of life. But note: he must labour and labour diligently in order to have his necessities met.

**Gen 2:15** *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

**Gen 3:17c-19a** *“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.*

**Eph 6:5** *Slaves [workmen], obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.*

**Col 3:22** *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.*

**1 Tim 6:1** *All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.*

**Titus 2:9** *Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them.*

**1 Pet 2:18** *Slaves, [employees] submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.*

**Prov 24:30-31** *I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.*

**Eccl 10:18** *Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks.*

**Heb 6:12** *We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

### **III. Genesis 03:19b Man, Condemned to Die**

Man was condemned to die. Remember: Adam and the world were created perfect. In a perfect world, there is perfect fellowship and sharing between God and man. God must have discussed death with Adam when He warned Adam about sin and its consequence of death. God is bound to have shared with Adam what sin and death meant, its terrible tragedy and consequences. Just as we understand all about the tragedy and consequence of sin today, so Adam understood. God would not have left him in the dark even as He has not left us in the dark. Note three significant points about this judgment of death.

1. Adam himself brought death and corruption to the world. God had warned Adam: if he ate of the forbidden fruit, he would surely die (Gen 2:17). Adam turned away from God; he disobeyed and rejected God's Word.
  - => Adam set in motion the law of disobedience, of disorder and of imbalance which results in corruption.
  - => From the point of Adam's sin onward, he and all that were in the world were to experience...
    - aging                      • disorder                      • wasting away
    - deterioration            • imbalance                  • returning to dust
    - decay                      • wearing away
2. The judgment upon Adam was a judgment upon all mankind. Adam was the father of the human race. History, experience and the Bible — all three — proclaim the judgment of the earth's curse and of man's death. Adam stands as a figurehead, as a representative man, for all men (see note, Rom 5:12-14).
3. Adam was condemned to death. What does death mean? What does it mean to die? (See *Death*, Gen 2:17.) ■

## GENESIS 03:19 JESUS CHRIST — JUDGMENT

*“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* **Genesis 03:19**

Mathew Henry gives an excellent description of how the death of Jesus Christ answered the judgment passed upon the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. (*Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 33-34.) Mathew Henry asks:

1. Did sin bring travailing pain into the world? Scripture declares...
  - that Christ’s death was “the travail of His soul” (Isa 53:11)
  - that the pain of death that held Him was a pain (odinai) just like the travail (odinai) of a woman (Acts 2:24). Note how the two Hebrew words are the same
2. Did sin bring subjection into the world? Christ was made “under the law,” subject to the law, for the very purpose of dying for the transgressions of the law (Gal 4:4-5).
3. Did sin bring the curse upon the world and man? Christ was made a curse for us (Ga.3:13).
4. Did sin bring thorns upon earth? Christ wore a crown of thorns for us (Mk. 15:17).
5. Did sin bring sweat into the world? Christ sweated drops of blood for us (Lk. 22:44; see Heb 12:4).
6. Did sin bring sorrow into the world? Christ was the man of sorrows. His death involved so much agony that the sorrow of His soul almost killed Him (Mt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34).
7. Did sin bring death into the world? He was obedient to death, even to the death of the cross (Phil 2:8). □

## GENESIS 02:17 DEATH

*“But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”* **Genesis 02:17**

The basic meaning of death is *separation*. Death does not mean what some people think: ceasing to exist. Death never means extinction, annihilation, non-existence or inactivity.

The Bible speaks of three deaths.

1. Physical death: the *separation* of a man’s spirit or life from the body. This is what men commonly call death. It is when a person ceases to exist on this earth and is buried (1 Cor 15:21-22; Heb 9:27).



**1 Cor 15:21-22** *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

**Heb 9:27** *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

2. Spiritual death: the *separation* of man's spirit from God while he is still living and walking upon earth. This death is the natural state of a man on earth without Christ. Man is seen as still in his sins and *dead* to God (Eph 2:1; 4:18; 1 Jn. 5:12). Spiritual death speaks of a person who is dead while he still lives (1 Tim 5:6). He is a natural man living in this present world, but he is said to be dead to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God and to spiritual matters.

- a. A person who wastes his life in riotous living is spiritually dead.

**Luke 15:32** *“But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”*

- b. A person who has not partaken of Christ — allowed Christ to live within him — is spiritually dead.

**John 6:53-55** *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”*

- c. A person who does not have the Spirit of Christ is said to be spiritually dead.

**Rom 8:9** *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

- d. A person who lives in sin is said to be spiritually dead.

**Eph 2:1** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,*

**Col 2:13** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

- e. A person who is alienated from God is said to be spiritually dead.

**Eph 4:18-19** *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

- f. A person who sleeps in sin is spiritually dead.

**Eph 5:14** *This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

- g. A person who lives in sinful pleasure is spiritually dead, dead while he lives.

**1 Tim 5:6** *But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

- h. A person who does not have the Son of God is spiritually dead.

**1 John 5:12** *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

**Rev 3:1** *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*

3. Eternal death: the *separation* of man from God’s presence forever. This is the second death, an eternal state of being dead to God (1 Cor 6:9-10; 2 Th 1:9). It is spiritual death, separation from God, that is prolonged beyond the death of the body. It is called the “second death” or eternal death.

**Rom 8:6** *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

**2 Th 1:7-9** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

**Rev 20:15** *If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. □*