

EVE

Over the last few weeks, we've been looking at some of the women of the bible and, in particular, those from the Old Testament – the ⅔ of the bible written before Jesus came to earth. We've had a look at Sarah, Abraham's wife; her servant, Hagar; at Miriam, Moses' sister; at Rahab from Jericho; at the Moabitess, Ruth and her mother in law, Naomi. Last week, Pastor Dayo talked about a woman called Abigail, who became King David's wife (one of them).

Today, Pastor Dayo has asked me to go back to someone rather important who we missed out. But first, I'm going to tell you about my first day at school 54 years ago (yes – that long ago)!! Although it's so long ago and I was only 5, I still remember something of that day because something very strange and memorable happened. After our mums had left, we were taken into the school hall which for a little kid looked huge. Set out in rows and spaced a bit apart were desks and chairs. We were told to sit behind one of the desks. On each desk was a sheet of paper and a pencil or crayon (I can't remember which). And we were told not to do or touch anything.

Well, at the time, I was really into trains which, in 1957, were largely steam ones. I particularly liked ones that looked like the Mallard which was the fastest steam locomotive ever (and still is – you can still see her in the National Railway Museum at York).

And so, being a bit of a train nut and having a pencil and paper – I drew a picture of a steam engine. (Remember - we'd been told not to do anything.) After a while, we were told to pass our bits of paper to the end of the row where they were collected together. The teacher in front of us looked through all the sheets of paper and they were all blank, except one. And then the teacher held up my picture of the steam engine and said, "Who drew this?" and I was pretty scared because I thought I was going to be real trouble. But, I think I knew I had to own up and I did – and nothing happened. Phew!! – the relief.

Now I don't know to this day what was going on and why the teachers did this, but I can remember drawing, feeling scared I was going to be in trouble, owning up, and then being relieved and confused when nothing happened.

When God created the first man, He put him in a place called Eden. And Adam's job was to work it and tend it. He was given one instruction.

"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Gen. 2:16-17

Then Eve was made and things were even better; Adam was no longer alone. It was paradise ...

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"
The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

In six verses it all goes wrong. How does it happen? To understand, we need to look very carefully at what is said. First, the devil begins by giving a distorted version of what God is like and he does this by a mere hint through a wrong suggestion. “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” God had said nothing of the sort – in fact, He said almost the opposite – they could eat of any fruit except just the one he forbade. But by suggesting otherwise, Satan pulls Eve off balance. He hints that God is very restrictive and has put lots of rules on the humans. And Eve begins to buy the lie. “No, we can eat any fruit but that from the tree in the middle of the garden (true) – we’re not even to touch the tree (untrue). If we eat of the fruit, we’ll die (true).” And that’s enough – a questioning of God, some untruth in the middle of truth and Satan goes in for the kill and now he flatly contradicts what God had said (you won’t die, says Satan). He gives wrong motives to God (He wants to hold). He gives wrong motives to God (He wants to hold you back (says Satan).)

At this stage, Eve is well and truly hooked and she goes and looks at the tree and finds the fruit attractive – it’s good for food, it looks delicious and, as a bonus, it will make her wiser and so she takes and eats. She also gives some to Adam and he eats as well.

Until that point, our ancestors had known nothing but good. A good God, a good creation, and their own relationship is described in Gen. 2:23, in terms of greatest happiness and contentment. Now having disobeyed God, they now knew evil as well. What they thought was going to be increased wisdom turned out to be evil and death.

In Proverbs 14:12, this is set out very clearly for us:-

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

And Satan will tempt us in the same way and we need to watch out for him. “Has God said ...?” is the first question in the bible and also the most dangerous. It is best answered in the way Jesus answered it when He, too, was tempted ... IT IS WRITTEN Jesus knew the Father, He knew the word of God and He used it against Satan, who then withdrew, defeated. Watch out for that questioning of God and God’s word - danger is near.

Earlier this year, we had the privilege of visiting the Daintree rain forest and river in the Northern Queensland area of Australia. And we went on two boat trips on the Daintree river, which is home to salt water crocodiles. And we were shown the large male crocodile, which was the biggest predator on a stretch of this river – he was 12-15 feet long and was stretched out on a mud bank and resting. Our boatman came in close so we could all take pictures and we disturbed him, so he slid back into the water and disappeared, and we all experienced fear. The hairs on the backs of our necks prickled and we all kept our arms right in the boat. We need to be aware, too, of the danger of temptation when we perceive God, or His word, being questioned.

Now, you may be wondering why I told you the story of my first day at school and I am now hoping to explain why. After 54 years, I can still remember that strong feeling of being scared of getting into trouble. I'd done what I'd been told not to do and now I was being asked to confess to my disobedience.

We tend to think only of Eve taking the fruit and eating and then we act as if she dropped dead in that moment. It's true that there was a spiritual death and a separation from God, but her physical life went on for a while. And for the rest of her life, she lived in the knowledge of that separation and of what they'd lost when they sinned. Yet, even as God cursed the serpent and described the bad consequences that would come to Eve and Adam, He introduced the hope of how He would restore things. To the devil He said,

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will bruise his heel.”

Gen. 3:15

One day, one of the offspring of a woman would take on the devil and crush him. Jesus Christ won the great victory over evil and death when He took over our sins upon himself and died in our stead on the cross, releasing us from the curse of sin and death if we believe in Him. Eve knew none of this detail; only that there was hope through her offspring.

And sure enough, along came Cain (whose name means acquired – “with the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man”). Abel, whose name means “breath”, followed soon after. I wonder if Eve had hopes that through Cain, her offspring, or Abel, her other offspring, that Satan would have his head crushed. Cain was not the answer to her hope – in Genesis 4, we have the terrible story of Cain's sloppy offering to the Lord, his jealousy of the acceptance of Abel's offering, and, finally, Cain's murder of Abel, and now, Eve truly has no hope. Cain has turned killer and Abel is dead. And Eve knows she and Adam are responsible – they set it all off.

There may be someone here in despair or guilt about what they have done or not done. You know you have blown it big time. A dark train of events has been set in motion and you are responsible. Your hopes have been dashed. You feel like Eve after Cain turned murderer.

Yet, there is still a hope. When God announced that the woman's offspring would crush Satan's head, He would make it happen. Listen to the end of Genesis 4.

“Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him. Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time, men began to call on the name of the Lord.”

Genesis 4:25 & 26

Seth means “granted”. Cain was acquired, but through God's mercy and divine plan Seth was granted. Do you see the difference? Through Seth, came the succession right down to Jesus Christ (see Luke 3:48). There is a hope of redemption and salvation that can be found only in Him. You may have messed things up in a major way, but God can bring all things together for good - He can transform darkness into light. Eve sinned and failed – God sent His only beloved son to restore and save.