The Berean

Daily Verse and Comment

Genesis 3:17-19

(17) And to Adam He said, "Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree—of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat *of* it!'—the ground is cursed for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. (18) It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and *thus* you shall eat the herbs of the field; (19) In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return."

A Faithful Version

Some commentators make a great deal out of the fact that God addresses this curse to *adam* rather than to "the man" (*ish* in Hebrew), seeing this as proof that this curse was to fall on all mankind. This semantic argument means very little in the end, since both *ish*, the man named Adam, and *adam*, mankind, received the effects of the curse, just as both Eve and all other women have suffered from her curse.

English-speaking peoples have a saying that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." God, of course, understood this, and thus His curse on Adam centers on eating. In fact, eating is a major theme of the first three chapters of Genesis (see 1:29-30; 2:9, 15-17; 3:1-6, 11-13).

Eating, however, stands for more than simply nourishing the body; it is one small part of mankind's daily struggle to survive his hostile environment, planet earth. The Garden of Eden was a place where man's work "to tend and keep" what God had made was pleasurable, fulfilling, and probably not overly strenuous. The earth worked with the man to produce his needs for food, clothing, shelter, and whatever other need he might have.

Once God pronounced his curse, though, the ground—from which comes all material wealth and produce—turned uncooperative. Instead of man and nature united in productive labor, the situation became man versus nature, a competition for dominance. Now, man would have to use all his physical and mental powers to subdue the earth.

The earth would yield its fruit only after a man forced it through hard labor in plowing, planting, watering, cultivating, and reaping. Animals from insects to deer to wolves, fearful of man, would become pests and destroy his crops, herds, possessions and even his life on occasion. Materials for building homes, crafting tools, making clothing, and manufacturing items would be gathered only by raping the land of minerals, metals, wood, and stone.

The earth would protest through natural processes like earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, wildfires, erosion, and infertility. Denuded of trees, the land would become a desert. The weather would turn foul, sending too much or too little rain. Windstorms like hurricanes and tornadoes would devastate vast stretches of territory. The sun would beat down mercilessly or withhold its heat for long stretches.

Such was the situation Adam and Eve faced after God drove them from the Garden of Eden. For six thousand years all their descendants have struggled to survive the harsh conditions of life separated from God and in competition with nature. Surely it has affected their eating, but it has also had an impact on every other endeavor of mankind—from breaking horses for riding to blasting satellites into orbit. Men accomplish nothing except by the toil of hard work and overcoming the obstacles the environment places in their way.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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The First Prophecy (Part Three)

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