



THE PROMISE OF REPAIR

We're going to kick off a new series this morning, looking at those great prophecies of the OT – prophecies about the coming of Jesus. And they're important, partly because they help us to realise that God is a God who keeps His promises; but also because they illustrate ways in which Jesus can – and will - meet the needs of the world.

We're going to begin at the beginning, and with something that isn't really a prophecy at all. But it is a promise.

Genesis 3

I've called today's talk 'The Promise Of Repair.' Because the world is not in a good place, is it? 24-hour news-channels say it all: war, terrorism, global warming, rape, drug addiction, famine, people-trafficking, theft, racism, poverty, debt, prostitution, STDs, corruption, slavery, murder, depression, deforestation, child-abuse, drought, ethnic-cleansing (some of you are thinking, "Wow, Steve! And a Merry Christmas to you too!").

Now before you start reaching for the meds, understand this is a good news message, not a bad news one. But it's important to understand what has gone wrong before we can understand how Jesus is going to put it right. So how did things turn out this way? What's the solution?

The answers are here, in Genesis 3. Because if we're going to see this world repaired, we need to recognise 3 things:

1) The Cause (vs1-7). Genesis begins on a positive: God creates the human race, and we start off enjoying this amazing relationship with Him. But then ... human beings mess up, and things begin to go pear-shaped.

And the writer describes it all using parabolic language. When it refers to the Garden of Eden, it's talking about a place of relationship with God. When it refers to the serpent it's talking about the devil or Satan (because let's face it, snakes aren't renowned for their communication skills). When it refers to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it's talking about *us* deciding what's right and wrong.

So Satan uses doubts and distortions to get Eve to disobey, and she falls for it, hook, line and sinker. But why? Why did she listen? Because she wanted *Eve* to be in charge, not God. And we're all guilty of that one, really. We all want to rule the world – or our part of it. That's the reason most kids kick off against their parents, and (truth be known) most parents kick off against their kids!

It's also the basis for every temptation we face.

And every bit of trouble we get ourselves into.

2) The Symptoms. Eve eats the fruit, and gives some to Adam (and before you start to blame all women for this just remember that sometimes it works the other way round). And we're still living with the consequences:

- **Spiritual consequences.** We've ended up handing ownership of this world to the devil. But even more importantly, we've lost the greatest friend we could ever have – God. Because like Adam and Eve, we've all rejected Him (done our own thing, gone our own way). We've all hidden from Him (covered up our sin or called it by another name). We've even accused Him (held God responsible for the way the world is). That's why so many of us feel as though there's something missing, in us, in our world. It's because there *is*.
- **Relational consequences.** There's another bit of the story, missing in most Bibles, where Adam turns to Eve and says, "How did you get to be so beautiful and so stupid at the same time?" And Eve responds, "Adam, allow me to explain: God made me beautiful so you would be attracted to me; God made me stupid so I would be attracted to you!" I'm kiddin', of course. But it does kind of highlight the game of one-upmanship that now exists between men and women – and it has a knock-on effect on marriage and family, too.
- **Physical consequences.** God says to the woman, "Your birth-pains will increase." Now I remember those antenatal classes, and in particular, *the video*: Kellie was OK, but me - I was watching it like this (saucer-eyes), then like this (hands over eyes), then like this (keel over). But in reality, birth was always going to be painful – so perhaps what God is really saying is, "Your kids are going to be born into a sinful world – and Eve, it's gonna break your heart." And to the man, "You slog your guts out and then you drop dead."

I.e. sin has ramifications for every relationship we enjoy – spouse, children, parents, siblings, friends, neighbours, workmates, communities, nations, the natural world, the supernatural world. But as I said, there is good news –

3) The Remedy (vs21-24). Adam and Eve are thrown out of paradise, and you've got these angels and a sword (a picture of judgement) guarding the way to the Tree of Life. I.e. they've lost their relationship with God. To get it back we need someone to take that judgement for us – and in vs14-15 we're told who: the 'Seed / Child of the Woman.' Not the child of a man *and* a woman – just a woman. So what God is saying to the devil is: "A Child is coming, born of a virgin. And you're going to wound Him - but He is gonna destroy you!"

Who is God talking about?

He's talking about Jesus.

Now, most people know Jesus was born. But ask people why, and even some Christians have trouble explaining it. So here's why: so that we can know that God loves us and forgives us. But also, to reverse the impact of the Fall. And that's why, when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple, a curtain embroidered with angels and palm trees like the ones at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, was torn from top to bottom.

God was saying, to the world, "Come in!"

Time To Get Fixed

So that's promise #1: the promise of repair. Now here's a thought to end on: a few years back I received a warning about an apparently harmless email with a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Life is beautiful." If you were foolish enough to open the file, a message was supposed to appear on the screen: "It's too late. Your life is no longer beautiful." You would then lose everything in your PC and the hacker would gain access to all your information – name, email, passwords. Now in reality, the virus was a hoax. But even so, it's a great illustration, isn't it?

The good news is: Jesus died on the cross so that we can get everything back. And one day He's going to return to re-install it! But you have to sign up to enjoy the benefits; you have to give your life to Him.

So will you?