

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #13

Introduction

We are continuing our teaching in our 'Ask for the Old Paths' series with a title taken from the lying lips of the serpent in the Garden of Eden...

"And You Shall Be Like God"

Before we get to that, remember we've been learning that... We cannot properly interpret our present without an understanding of our past.

We'll begin tonight with 2 lessons from the Book of Ecclesiastes and the wisdom of Solomon.

- (1) History repeats itself. There's nothing new under the sun.
- (2) All the woes of the world began in the Garden of Eden with man's greatest sin...Seeking to be like God by knowing good and evil independent of God's revelation.

I. The Wisdom of Solomon

A. History Repeats Itself: There's Nothing New Under The Sun

1. Solomon, the man who asked God for wisdom, says this in the Book of Ecclesiastes....

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.

a. The wisdom of these words has been echoed by many down through history.

b. French Queen Marie Antoinette, during the days before the French Revolution...

Marie Antoinette

There is nothing new except that which has been forgotten.

c. The great English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge became a Christian in his 40's and gave us this bit of wisdom....

Malcolm Muggeridge

All novelties are nothing but old things happening to new people.

2. History tends to repeat itself; this is especially true when it comes to what the Bible has to say about the condition of the human race.

3. The second saying from Solomon comes from his search to understand the nature of human life and why there was so much suffering in the world. In 7:29, he comes to one great conclusion...

Ecclesiastes 7:29

Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

...many inventions (KJV)

....many devices (NASB)

Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible

The same Hebrew word translated "devices" in verse 29 reads "explanation" in verses 25 and 27. The point is not that people have turned aside to sin, but that they have sought out many explanations about God's plan. Failing to fully understand God's scheme of things, people have turned aside to their own explanations of these things.

4. Solomon says all the woes of this world go back to the beginning in the Garden of Eden. God made man upright. But they sought out many schemes.

Matthew Henry

Solomon traces all the streams of actual transgression back to the fountain of original corruption. The source of all the folly and madness that are in the world is in man's apostasy from God and his fall from his original uprightness.

a. Let's review the story. God made man in His own image and likeness and gave him dominion over all God had created. He only denied him one thing.

Genesis 2:16-17

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

5. God gave Adam the freedom to enjoy all the blessings of the world; think of it! Then think about the ONE THING he denied him; he was not to partake of the tree of the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil.

a. He did not deny him knowledge! He denied him the knowledge of good and evil from any other place than God Himself.

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God made him lord of the world, prince of the inferior creatures, universal lord and emperor of the whole earth. The Lord dealt most liberally and bountifully with him and "put all things under his feet". Only He kept one thing, one tree in the garden, out of his hands, the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

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At first sight it would seem almost incredible that a being endowed and circumstanced as was Adam, probably informed that not only his own happiness, but that of an unnumbered posterity, depended on his obedience to a single command, should have so totally failed in his probation, and provoked a curse which the least steadfastness might have averted.

6. So when the serpent slithered in, he never mentioned all the things God had given him freely to enjoy; he went after the one thing that God had refused him; to know good and evil on his own.

a. along with a GREAT LIE...

Genesis 3:4-5

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

7. The Devil himself defines God as the One who knows good and evil; the temptation was to 'be like God', to know (or decide) good and evil for himself!

B. 3 Lessons To Learn From The Fall of Mankind

1. They Were Discontented with the Divine Revelation.

a. God had given them everything they needed, including His revealed will regarding good and evil.

b. He had proclaimed everything He had made to be 'very good'; then God gave them freedom to access to all the blessings of the Paradise He had place them in.

c. But with all that, they were discontented.

Matthew Henry

Man, instead of resting in what God had given him, was for seeking to better himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house to seek his fortune. Instead of being for God's institutions, he was for his own inventions. The law of God would not hold him, but he would be at his own disposal and follow his own sentiments and inclinations.

d. John Wesley, the great founder of the Methodist Church had similar sentiments...

John Wesley

God made our first parents, Adam and Eve, upright; without any imperfection or corruption, conformable to his nature and will, after his own likeness. But they were not contented with their present state but studied new ways of making themselves wiser and happier than God had made them. And we, their wretched children, are still prone to forsake the certain rule of God's word, and the true way to happiness, and to seek new methods of attaining it.

John Gill, English Baptist Pastor, (1697-1771)

Adam and Eve, not content with their present knowledge and happiness, sought out new ways and means of being wiser and happier than God made them or intended them to be. They sought out many inventions; they sought to be as wise as God himself.

e. The Bible goes on to tell us exactly how they expressed their discontentment.

2. They sought to displace God's Sovereign right to define good and evil and take it unto themselves.

a. They not only sought to be like God, or to be 'little gods'; they sought it in a specific way; they sought the power to define good and evil apart from God's word!

b. This is how history keeps repeating itself.

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Men have sought out or invented many new ways in which to walk, forsaking the good old way in which God originally placed them. Men have forsaken the one living and true God and sought out or invented innumerable false gods and created idols, to which they give that homage and attention which are due to Him alone.

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Men have ceased to be conformed to the Divine law and have sought out many other rules -- rules more agreeable to their present sinful inclinations -- by which to regulate and try their conduct. Some adopt for this purpose new laws for their country; others embrace the opinion of some human teacher; while a third and more numerous class govern themselves by the new thinking currently acceptable in the society of which they happen to be members.

3. In grasping to rise into godhood they fell into slavery to the great sin that ruined the human race; to put themselves into the place of God by creating their own commandments as to what is good and what is evil.

a. This is what we have today.

b. Ungodly men in government (and in some churches) who are redefining good and evil out of their own minds, bringing God's curse.

Isaiah 5:20-21

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

c. All the woes of this world come upon those who depart from God's definitions of good and evil and redefine it for themselves.

d. Imagine the arrogance of those who are 'wise in their own eyes' and 'prudent in their own sight!'

e. This is what we have today. This is what explains...

C. The Current Condition of the Culture

1. Here is the meat of this message...

Theme

Nothing proves the depravity of an anti-Christian culture more than when it seeks to redefine good and evil apart from the revelation of God.

2. We have pastors in our pulpits and people in the halls of political power usurping that which belongs to God alone, the right to define good and evil, right and wrong.

Examples of Redefining Good and Evil

- Abortion-Thou shalt not kill. (Exodus 20:13) God hates the shedding of innocent blood. (Proverbs 6:17) But they call abortion 'good'!
- Gender-God says He created us 'male and female' and it was 'very good'. (Genesis 1:27,31) But they say it is 'not good' to require us to accept our assigned birth gender
- Gay marriage-God defines marriage as a man and a woman. (Genesis 2:21-25) God calls homosexuality an abomination. (Leviticus 18:22) But they say gay marriage is good and acceptable for those who choose it

Examples of Redefining Good and Evil

- Socialism-God says, 'Thou shalt not steal'. (Exodus 20:15) But the Socialists believe they are entitled to redistribute wealth to achieve economic equity.
- Socialism-God says 'Thou shalt not covet'. (Exodus 20:17) But they seek power by creating class warfare between the economic classes and teach that the poor that they are entitled to be supported by the rich
- God says our problem is that we are born sinners. (Romans 3:23) The Critical Race Theorists tell us our problem is that we are born white!

3. Testimony: When I look at what's happening in Washington, I find myself thinking, 'these people are crazy'!

Eddie Dura, "Echoes of Edent"

No society in human history has fought so hard for the rights of animals, treating them as if they were humans, while fighting so hard for the right to kill human fetuses, treating them as if they are animals.

a. In a way, they are crazy. But the Bible tells me it's worse than that. They are actually sinning by setting themselves up as 'little gods', wise in their own eyes, seeking to redefine right and wrong as public policy.

4. Meanwhile, many churchgoers have never been given God's word on what we might call...

D. The Epistemological Question

1. The great issue in the Garden of Eden was not a debate about good and evil; it was a debate about the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil.

a. There is a whole field of study on the subject of knowledge known as...

Epistemology

The study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. Epistemology considers the relationship between knowledge, truth, belief, reason, evidence and reliability.

2. The best way to understand epistemology is to remember that it deals with some of life's basic questions:

Epistemology Asks:

How do we know what we know?

- **How do we know truth from error?**
- **How do we know good from evil?**

3. When it comes to ethical issues or questions about good and evil or right and wrong, how do we know what we know?

- a. We say we know that murder is evil; stealing is a crime.
- b. We say we know that abortion is wrong; homosexuality is a sin; marriage is between a man and a woman.

4. The epistemological question is, “How do we know what we know?” And there are only 2 answers...

- We know good and evil by revelation; God has told us in His Word.
- Or...Any other way
- We will either live by God’s revelation of good and evil or we will ‘seek out many inventions

The Great Temptation

The serpent’s temptation was epistemological; instead of accepting the knowledge of good and evil from God, become ‘like God’ and define it for yourself.

5. Every generation, every individual person faces the same temptation from the Garden of Eden.

Rev. John Clayton (1754-1843)

Each successive generation, in a civilized country especially, makes advancement on the experiments of the former. But In religious matters it is different. We are to expect no new Bible, no new ordinances, no new Messiah, no new discoveries in the substance of truth any more than we look for a new sun, moon, and seasons, in the institutions of nature.

6. And yet we do; history repeats itself; each generation must be reminded of the tendency to ‘become like God’ and redefine good and evil.

E. Words of Wisdom from Past Generations That Apply To Us Today

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Our present time is noticeable for an extraordinary outbreak of activity along new lines of thought and belief. Men are generally inclined to doubt the social and moral results of past experience, and to repudiate long-accepted social manners and customs.

1. Has there ever been a time when so many 'new lines of thought and belief' have appeared in a culture? Has there been a time when so many 'doubt the social and moral results of past experience' and 'repudiate long-accepted social manners and customs'?

2. Even many of God's people seem to easily swallow the lies of the government and the mainstream media!

Malcolm Muggeridge

The great modern sin is credulity.

'Credulity'

The tendency to be too ready to believe that something is real or true.

- a. Vaccines are the answer!
- b. The climate will kill us within 5 years!
- c. Much of what's done is about controlling us through FEAR.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

We need to love freedom more than we fear the virus.

3. God is using this crisis to expose our value systems; what do we really believe? who do we really believe?

Malcolm Muggeridge

It has been said that when people stop believing in God they believe in nothing. The truth is much worse. When people stop believing in God they believe in anything.

Peter Marshall, Chaplain of U.S. Senate, 1946-1948

If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything.

4. This is the same thing God says through the prophet Jeremiah. If you walk away from God, you WILL put something in His place.

Jeremiah 2:13

For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water.

5. What we're watching is what happens when we walk away from God and pave some new paths out of our own mind that can't hold water.

III.. Close

A. What Have We Said?

Review

- **History repeats itself**
 - **God made man upright; but he sought out many inventions**
- **The fall of man came from his sinful desire to 'be like God' and define good and evil for himself**

The ONE THING God denied man in the Garden was to take God's place as the definer of good and evil! Therefore...

The Bottom Line

The greatest sin we can sin is to seek to 'become like God' by 'knowing good and evil' independent of the revelation given us in His word.

1. *Someone* will dictate our knowledge of good and evil! Will it be God, or man?

Malcolm Muggeridge

What will finally destroy us is not Communism or Fascism, but man acting like God.

This is the war we are in. We can turn the tide standing for the truth!

Title