

WINTER 2019–2020

# The Living Word

SERIES

## Enduring Faith



LESSON  
MANUAL

# Lesson Manual

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# The Better Plan

## FOCUS THOUGHT

Because Adam's plan failed to cover his sin, God instituted a better plan for our salvation.

## ▶▶ FOCUS VERSE

### Hebrews 1:3

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

## ▶▶ LESSON TEXT

### Hebrews 1:1–8

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

### Luke 1:30–33

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.



## YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH—OH, WAIT!

In recent elections, James O’Keefe became a name Americans mentioned because of his work with *Project Veritas*—an undercover journalistic sting operation. He and his people plant cameras and microphones in places or on persons, unknown to their target. The undercover journalists get a politically significant person to open up about what the candidate really believes or to spill juicy details of what is going on behind the scenes. While O’Keefe’s efforts have turned some red with anger, others appear to be overjoyed with his revealing investigations.

The whole idea of a hidden camera capturing one’s deepest darkest secrets seems unsettling. Humans have secrets they do not want others knowing. As much as we are curious about and interested in the secrets of others, we double down security on our own closeted skeletons. Somehow in perfecting this lifestyle of hide-and-seek, humanity has overlooked the hidden camera from above.

On the flip side, knowing the secrets of others can become burdensome. According to a study of 237 participants, if one must keep a friend’s secret from other mutual friends with whom he or she has frequent contact, the levels of stress and emotional weight increase greatly (Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D., “Dangerous Confessions,” *Psychology Today* November 3, 2018). It seems the thing we seek could be our own undoing.

The only safe secret-keeper is the Lord. Those who turn from sin have their secrets safe with Him. However, those who continue to hide it will be exposed.



### OUTLINE

#### I. ADAM SINNED AND NEEDED A SAVIOR

- A. Sin Brought Shame
- B. Sin Caused Adam and Eve to Hide from God
- C. We Have All Sinned and Are in Need of a Savior

#### II. ADAM’S PLAN WAS TO COVER HIS OWN SIN

- A. Fig Leaves
- B. The Skin of an Animal
- C. We Try to Cover Our Own Sin

#### III. GOD HAD A BETTER PLAN

- A. The Offspring of Woman—the Messiah—Would Crush Satan’s Head
- B. God Became Flesh
- C. His Blood Has the Power to Cover Our Sin

think of it as sin, but some dictionaries offer the word *sin* as a synonym for “crime.” So, for now, let’s use the word *crime*, since we cannot wrap our minds around the notion of a “perfect sin.”

Here they were. Who would ever know? Sure, God had told him not to eat of this tree. But where was God? He did not usually visit until the cool of the evening, so they could probably get away with it. The snake wouldn’t tell . . . he was in on it with them.

The tree was beautiful, and it was clear its fruit was good to eat. Besides, who would not want to be like God, having the power to make their own decisions?

Just one bite, and she knew she had to share this experience with her husband. He accepted her offer, and everything suddenly changed.

Nothing was perfect anymore.

We knew it. There is no such thing as a perfect crime, just as there is no perfect sin.

Their sin found them out, as it always does. (See Numbers 32:23.)



### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The perfect crime. That’s how crime seemed to begin for humanity. We usually

## **I. ADAM SINNED AND NEEDED A SAVIOR**

Eve was not yet created when God said to Adam, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17). So why did Eve say to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”? (Genesis 3:2–3).

Where did “neither shall ye touch it” come from?

Apparently, Adam failed to accurately communicate God’s command to Eve. What she said may sound close enough, but we learn elsewhere that God’s words are not to be amended. Whether we add to them or subtract from them, they are no longer His words. (See Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18–19.)

Adding to God’s words does not strengthen them; it corrupts them. To do so gives the serpent a clue we really do not know what God said and sets us up for further deception; our own *Ye shall not surely die* (Genesis 3:4).

Another indication of Adam’s failure is that he was with Eve during this episode of temptation, did nothing to help her resist, and shared in her sin (Genesis 3:6). Adam placed the blame for his sin first on Eve, then on God Himself (Genesis 3:12). Paul read Genesis correctly: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Paul wrote, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (I Timothy 2:14). Eve was deceived. Those who are deceived are convinced they are doing the right thing. Because she was deceived, Eve fell into transgression. But Adam sinned purposefully, intentionally, and knowingly. He did not fall into it, and he was not deceived. He knew full well what he was doing was rebellion against God with dreadful consequences, but he did it anyway.

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» *What is the significance of the fact that sin was introduced into the world by Adam, not Eve?*

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### **A. Sin Brought Shame**

There were four immediate consequences of the sin committed by Adam and Eve: (1) Shame (Genesis 3:7); (2) Spiritual alienation (Genesis 3:8); (3) Fear (Genesis 3:10); and (4) Blame (Genesis 3:12–13).

When people are ashamed, they tend to cower and hide. They may do this literally—as did Adam and Eve—by fleeing from those they love most. More commonly, they simply withdraw into themselves, becoming distant and uncommunicative. Shame leads to spiritual alienation from God and other people. This kind of alienation produces fear that results in blame. Those who blame God for their sins effectively cut themselves off from the grace of God.

## **B. Sin Caused Adam and Eve to Hide from God**

In order to grasp the meaning of God’s warning to Adam, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17), it is necessary to explore the biblical meaning of death. Death involves some kind of separation. We can gain immediate insight from James 2:26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” When our material part—the body—is separated from our immaterial part—the soul/spirit—we are dead. This does not mean we no longer exist. It means our material part is no longer animated. Similarly, we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) before we experienced the new birth. This is the kind of death to which God referred in His warning to Adam.

God did not create people to die. He created them to live forever. That is why He placed the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). When Adam and Eve ate instead from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they experienced the death of which God had warned: separation from fellowship with God. The reason for their newfound fear of God, which drove them to hide from Him, was that they were now dead in sin. They still existed, but in a spiritually lifeless state. There is no evidence that Adam or Eve repented, and there can be no spiritual life where there is no repentance. Thus, they were expelled from the Garden with its life-giving tree (Genesis 3:22–24).

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» *In what way is spiritual death different from physical death?*

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## **C. We Have All Sinned and Are in Need of a Savior**

Paul spent most of the first three chapters of Romans explaining why all people are sinners in need of a Savior. First, he addressed the situation with Gentiles in Romans 1:18–32. These were people who had no Scripture to read. Their revelation consisted only of creation, conscience, and perhaps what had been communicated to them by their ancestors. (See Romans 1:18–20, 32; 2:9–12, 14–16.) Then, Paul included Jews in his assessment of universal sinfulness. (See Romans 2:1–13, 16–29; 3:1–22.) After providing abundant support for this claim, he declared, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

## **II. ADAM’S PLAN WAS TO COVER HIS OWN SIN**

### **A. Fig Leaves**

How quickly Adam and Eve transitioned from their shameless pre-Fall nakedness to their failed attempt to conceal their sin with fig leaves! (See Genesis 2:25; 3:7.) Why fig leaves? Perhaps the reason is that fig leaves are the largest in Canaan (John H. Walton, *Bible Background Commentary*). If so, maybe this gave Adam and Eve the quickest way to attempt to deal with their sin. A fig leaf can grow more than a foot wide. However, there is no quick, easy solution to the sin problem.

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» *Why do you think Adam and Eve resorted to fig leaves to cover their nakedness?*

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## **B. The Skin of an Animal**

In an apparent move toward offering spiritual recovery for Adam and Eve, the LORD God replaced their fig leaves with “coats of skin.” (See Genesis 3:21.) Covering more than a loincloth, the tunic was for common wear and work, reaching to the knees (James A. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*).

It is often noted that an animal needed to be slaughtered to provide this covering in anticipation of the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world. (See I John 2:2.) This is probably the case, since Jesus declared Moses wrote about Him and that everything written concerning Him in the Law, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled. (See John 5:46–47; Luke 24:27, 32, 44–45.)

But the choice of the Hebrew *kutonet* (tunic) may also imply the transition from the peaceful, shameless, somewhat effortless life Adam and Eve enjoyed in Eden before their sin, to the life under the curses that followed. Life before sin involved tending the Garden (Genesis 2:15), but it was a weed-free task requiring minimal exertion. Now, in this common work garb that masked God’s likeness and glory (I Corinthians 11:7), Adam would toil with sweat over thorns and thistles until he returned to the very ground from which he was taken. (See Genesis 3:17–19.)

## **C. We Try to Cover Our Own Sin**

The first thing we should do following an episode of sin is often the last thing we actually do. First, we should confess our sin to God. Instead, we make doomed attempts to conceal our sin from God and others. In this, we have Adam and Eve for our models, followed by such copies as Cain, Achan, and a long list of biblical sinners. The warning Moses gave to Reuben and Gad is relevant to all: if we disobey God, we may be sure our sin will find us out (Numbers 32:23).

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» *What kind of things do we do in an effort to hide our sins?*

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## **III. GOD HAD A BETTER PLAN**

### **A. The Offspring of Woman—the Messiah—Would Crush Satan’s Head**

When it comes to dealing with the sin problem, there is something far better than fig leaves. To the serpent, God said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

This early prophecy of the coming Messiah includes three distinct phrases. Each must be considered carefully to avoid misinterpretation. First: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman*. From that time forward, there would be enmity between a human being, Eve, and a member of the animal kingdom; the serpent that had been an instrument of Satan to tempt her.

Second: *I will put enmity between . . . thy seed and her seed.* The enmity introduced between the serpent and Eve would be expanded to include their descendants (i.e., snakes and human beings). In Eden, up until this time, there had been no enmity between people and animals.

Third: *It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* The focus shifted from the enmity between the serpent and Eve, and from the serpent's descendants and Eve's offspring, to the enmity between a specific male descendant of Eve and the serpent himself. The pronoun translated *it* is masculine singular, which is why many translations render it *he*.

Allusions to this messianic prophecy are found elsewhere in Scripture. For example, Psalm 91:11–13 recognized even by Satan as a prophecy of the coming Messiah, reads, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.” (See Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10–11.) In His words to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, God said of the seed of the woman, “He shall bruise thy head.” Psalm 91:13 expands on this statement. The *adder* is a serpent and *dragon* is also a symbol of Satan (Revelation 20:2), as is lion (I Peter 5:8). Satan's error in quoting from Psalm 91 was not to think this text was about the Messiah; it was to think God's hand can be forced.

The prophesied enmity between the serpent and Eve's descendant would result in death for both, but the Messiah, the seed of the woman, would rise from the dead (Hebrews 2:14–17; I John 3:8).

For Satan, there would be no resurrection. His eternal destiny is to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

## **B. God Became Flesh**

How could a descendant of Eve crush the head of Satan? First, this promise indicated Eve's offspring would be human. Second, He could not be merely human, or He would be unable to destroy Satan. But how could Eve's descendant be more than human? Paul recognized this as a mystery solved by the Incarnation (I Timothy 3:16).

Since the Subject of this verse was manifest in the flesh (i.e., human existence), He was a descendant of Eve. Because He was God, He was qualified to rule the realm of creation, which takes in angels, including fallen angels like Satan, as well as reptiles appropriated by Satan for his purposes, as in Eden.

## **C. His Blood Has the Power to Cover Our Sin**

By Himself, Jesus purged our sins. He needed no help from us nor from angels. The ultimate purpose for the incarnation was “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Cross was God's final answer to the sin problem, the means by which the barrier between God and man was removed (Hebrews 10:12, 14).



Any suggestion that something in addition to the blood of Jesus is required to deal with man's sin is heresy of the worst sort. The atoning virtue of the blood of Jesus is limitless precisely because His death was of infinite value. This is so because in His death He was not just a man, but God manifest in the flesh. Had He been just a sinless man, His death could perhaps have atoned for one other person. But since He was truly God, His death was "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2, NKJV).

After Jesus purged our sins, He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3, NKJV). The term *right hand* in Scripture is often a metaphor for power and authority. When the Bible speaks of "the right hand of God" (e.g., Acts 2:33), it refers to the ultimate power and authority. The point is He who suffered the humiliation of assuming solidarity with His creation now occupies the supreme position of exaltation (Philippians 2:5–9). In that position, He is due the homage of all creation (Philippians 2:10–11).

Concerning the phrase "the right hand of the Majesty on high," F.F. Bruce comments,

*That no literal location is intended was as well understood by Christians in the apostolic age as it is by us: they knew that God has no physical right hand or material throne where the ascended Christ sits beside Him; to them the language denoted the exaltation and supremacy of Christ as it does to us.*

The statement that Jesus *sat down* would have been significant to the original readers of Hebrews, for they were acquainted with priests who never sat, for there was no end to the sacrifices they offered. (See Hebrews 10:11–12.)

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» ***How many comparisons can you draw between Adam's failed plan to deal with sin and God's successful plan?***

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## **»» INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

What will you do about your sins? Do you acknowledge you have sinned? (See Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:10.) Do you have your own version of fig leaves? How is that working for you?

The only way we can have peace with God is to deal with our sins God's way. Otherwise we will hear His voice in the garden of our life and learn of His disappointment with our excuses. The consequence of our actions will be *Paradise Lost*.