

## The Bible in Context Ep 15: The Curses Gen 3 Part 2

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Welcome back to the Bible in Context. It's just going to be me again this week. I think we'll have Nate back with us next time and I'm looking forward to that. Last time we looked at Genesis 3 and the fall as the serpent came and deceived the woman and we ended with Yahweh coming to the man and the woman in a storm, Theophany.

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Yahweh comes, any questions, the couple, and after a little bit of blame shifting by everyone, the Lord asks the woman, what is this that you have done? And that question is actually going to appear throughout the narrative of Genesis. Similar to that seeing something is good, taking and giving that phrase, that coupling of words. This phrase, what is this you have done, appears as well as a

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link back to this passage linking the fall to an action of someone in the future or later in the narrative. So just be on the lookout for that phrase as well as we keep going. But after that question, the Lord comes and addresses the serpent next in a little poetic speech, and he curses the snake above all livestock. Remember the snake started out as a roamer and now he has become cursed, a roamer.

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a roamer that was crafty, clever, now he is a roamer cursed. So just again, a cool little wordplay about this, the transformation of the snake through his little scheme here. Now part of this curse on the snake is that he's going to go on his belly all the days of his life and eat dust. Now there's more to this curse than just the surface level reading of this snake now has to crawl on his belly and he is gonna have to eat dust and that's just a bad circumstance to be in.

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What this actually is, is language of defeat. This serpent is on his belly, face to the ground, before Yahweh. His mouth is to the dust. That's the image here. This isn't a curse on a lizard that gets its legs ripped off and becomes a snake and has to eat field mice forever, which are made from the dust. That's not what's going on here. This is language of victory and humiliation over the serpent.

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Because with this act of rebellion, the serpent has been cast from his high and anointed place in Yahweh's council and is lowered as a defeated rebel. If you go and read, I think it's Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, it's going to talk about this poetic double entendre in a way where it's talking

about human kings, but it's also talking about basically the Nahash, the Satan, this anointed cherub who was in the Garden of Eden and fell.

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Next the serpent is told that he's going to be put at enmity with the seed of the woman. And eventually the seed of the woman is going to crush his head. Now who is the seed of the woman and who is the seed of the serpent? Because we're told also that there will be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Now throughout this narrative we're actually, you know, we're not going to see snakes versus people. But we are going to see those who are...

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acting with disloyalty towards Yahweh and fellow man and those who are chosen by Yahweh and loyal to him. And these two character types are going to be our seed of the woman and seed of the serpent. Just for example, we're going to see Cain and Abel in the next narrative. Cain fails and murders his brother. Abel has remained faithful and he's the chosen one by Yahweh, which we'll talk about. But these are our seed of the woman and seed of the serpent. Cain is the seed of the serpent. Abel is the seed of the woman.

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Likewise, look at Esau. He plots to kill his brother Jacob, and Jacob is chosen by Yahweh. So Jacob is the seed of the woman. Esau plays the role of the seed of the serpent in that narrative. And we already talked about last episode, Goliath, for instance. David is Yahweh's anointed chosen king. Goliath is this rebel leader who is described in serpentine terms. He's just described like a snake. And so in that,

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narrative, David is the seed of the woman and Goliath is the seed of the serpent. And actually, let's just go ahead and take this a little farther into the New Testament. Jesus, we know he is the seed of the woman who crushed the head of the serpent. Now the seed of the serpent, if you remember whenever John the Baptizer, John the Baptist, calls the Pharisees and the Jerusalem leaders, he calls them a brood of vipers. Now they're the ones that ultimately killed Jesus. So

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The Jerusalem leadership is now the seat of the serpent and Jesus is the seat of the woman. That's how this theme plays out into the New Testament. But anyway, we're going to see this curse, or this pronouncement played out through the narrative of Genesis. This is going to be a theme on which the book is built. And the entire time we're going to be looking for the seat of the woman having victory over the seat of the serpent.

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And we'll be looking for the seed of the woman who actually crushes the snake himself, but you know, we don't see that in this book. We actually don't see it in the Old Testament. We get thematic hints of that, such as David killing Goliath, but we don't see the actual victory over the

snake until we get to Jesus. So next we have the curse on the woman. Now this one, there's a lot going on here because this is actually, first of all, this is a very personal thing in that it deals with childbearing.

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and man and woman relationships within marriage. So this one is kind of tricky, or at least possibly a sensitive set of verses. So I wanna take some time to talk about them and think a little bit about what this pronouncement on woman means. Now I wanna point out first that this is not a curse. Man and woman are not cursed in this entire passage. The snake is cursed and the ground is cursed because of man, but the man and woman themselves are not cursed. They are given...

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hope and a promise of a offspring that will crush the serpent. Now first before we look at the woman's sentence here, let's think back to the blessing and the purpose given to humanity in the first couple chapters. They are to be fruitful and to multiply. That is they are to have children and expand the family, and they are to work the ground and expand the garden. So I think these curses, or sorry, not curses, these...

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these sentences on Adam and Eve are thematic, related to the purposes given to humanity in the first couple chapters. These are not cover-all blanket statements about the experience of all of humanity throughout time in every situation. But rather, these sentences are going to be reinterpreted and changed their form as, for instance, the working the ground and keeping...

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the garden temple changes. So we've already looked at how to subdue the ground and expand the garden. For Joshua, that turns into subduing the land from the wicked Canaanites who are enemies of Yahweh. And fast forward up to today, our subduing the land and expanding the temple is discipleship and evangelism. As people are now the temple of Yahweh, as people believe the gospel, the temple is expanded. So that is our working and keeping the garden.

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That's our garden-keeping work. And that's why you see the sentence pronounced on Adam is difficulty in farming the ground, essentially. Now let's back up and keep talking about the woman. In the ESV, verse 16 reads, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain, you shall bring forth children. Now the ESV actually kind of compresses the Hebrew a little bit. Actually, a lot of translations do this. I'm not sure why they've stuck with this, but the Hebrew more literally says,

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I will surely multiply your pain and your childbearing, or a better translation is conception. In pain you shall bring forth children." So the Lexham English Bible actually has a footnote that has this

translation in it. The I will multiply your pain and childbearing. This is really cool because yes, the childbearing process is going to become more difficult, but

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Yahweh is also going to multiply the conception of the woman. He's going to help her to become more fruitful and to multiply and to work towards this coming seed of the woman, this Redeemer. I do want to say something about these two words, conception and childbearing. Those two words are kind of set in parallel in this verse, so that I think the way we're meant to read these is that this encompasses the entire spectrum of getting a child, from conception to bringing this child forth.

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in birth. So that process now, since the woman has taken wisdom outside of Yahweh's wisdom, is going to be much more difficult and fraught with pain. Whether that's, you know, the woman's risk, the death of the child, the difficulty in conception, all of those things. But Yahweh is also going to help her, to help make her fruitful and multiply as the story builds to the coming seed of the woman. And we see this play out actually through the

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because throughout the narrative we see these families that are just exploding. Their family trees are just growing at exponential rates. So I think we see this exact statement, if read correctly, playing out in the narrative of Genesis. Yahweh is not only going to multiply the pain in childbearing, but also the fruitfulness of the woman, to help her to carry out that be fruitful and multiply blessing. Although the realization of that blessing...

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is now going to be a frustrated process. Now this next verse is a little bit more fun to tackle because it deals with the relationship between men and women in a marriage setting. Now in the ESV the verse is, your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. Now for a few reasons I think we need to take a look at this translation. The word behind the English word desire in Hebrew is tashuka.

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and it actually doesn't really mean desire. There's been a recent article by a guy named A.A. McIntosh named the meaning of Hebrew tashuka, and he goes through the ancient translations. He goes through the other context that appears in the Bible and the other contexts in which it appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which, if you know anything about the Dead Sea Scrolls, those are a relatively recent find, and so we didn't have those to compare to until the past hundred years or so.

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and he was able to show that this word, instead of meaning desire, means something more along the lines of preoccupation or single-minded devotion. The word submission would fit as well. I think the strictest definition you could give to this, it is one's giving overness. It's giving

yourself over to something. And so just to give an example from the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1QS 1122, it's speaking of man's mortality.

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and it says that man's tashuka is to dust. It doesn't make sense that humanity wants to die, that they want to go to the dust, but it does make sense that they are submitted to the dust or they are given over to the dust, maybe even preoccupied with going to dust in some way. So you can see there that to be given over or maybe even to submit makes sense.

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in at least that context outside of the Bible. Now the reason that this word has been so hard to translate is because it only appears three times in the Bible. It appears here in Genesis 3, in Genesis 4, chapter 7, which we're going to talk more about that when we get there, and then here's once in Song of Solomon 7 10. Outside of that, it is not used in Hebrew.

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anywhere else that we've been able to find until we found the Dead Sea Scrolls, where it only appears six times and even half of those are illegible. Like all the words around the word teshukah are illegible. So it's really hard to define this word based off of its basically six usable occurrences. Beyond that, we have to look at how the word was translated long, long ago and see how they understood the meaning of this word as well.

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Based off the Hebrew usage, that idea of submission or to give oneself over makes a lot of sense, and it makes sense of some of the ancient translations as well. For instance, the Septuagint translated to Shuka as to turn towards. So in a sense, you'd say that it's similar to the idea that one is being given over to something, they are turning themselves, their attention or their devotion towards something and giving themselves over to it or submitting. So.

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You see how the idea was attempted to be brought into Greek there in the Septuagint. I do want to point out that Macintosh, he doesn't use the exact definition of giving over oneself or submission. He actually sticks with that kind of preoccupation or devotion idea. I think that's largely because of his translation of Genesis 4-7 where this word occurs. In that, submission doesn't make sense.

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According to the traditional translation, however, we're going to talk about soon, there is a better translation of Genesis 4-7 that a guy named Michael Morales has argued for that I believe is correct. And in that retranslation, the idea of giving oneself over or submission fits very well. And so I think it does lean towards the inclusion of submission or the giving oneself over within the meaning of this word.

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So now that we've talked about that, let's go back to the text, to Genesis 3, and see what this means for our reading of Genesis 3 verse 16. So the verse reads in ESV, Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. Now what it literally is, is your teshukah will be to your husband, and he will rule over you. Now this traditional translation has been taken a lot of ways and explained sometimes.

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It's been explained in a sexual way as the woman is trying to reproduce. She has desire for her husband in that way. I've heard it most often preached that or taught that it's the male having headship and the woman is now trying to fight him for it, which given this word choice, that makes sense. But I think it actually flips that around to understand Tashuka as submission or the giving over of oneself. So what-

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Yahweh is actually saying to the woman is, you're going to give yourself over to your husband, and he's going to rule you. Rather than the lower woman fighting for the top position that the man has, she is rather going to willingly, or at least because of her circumstances, perhaps, lower herself and submit to her husband's authority. Now this could perhaps be part of the childbearing difficulties.

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Whenever she is pregnant and giving birth, I mean, you think about how long it takes a woman to bounce back today to do small physical things. It's, you know, going through childbirth is not an easy process. Well, I mean, think about back then whenever it's all farming or hunting, that's how you, that's your livelihood. It's going to take a woman quite a while to bounce back after having a child, much less with the concern of the child's safety and nursing and sleeping and just all these things that...

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You really just you really can't do much when you are in those first months or even years of having a child So she is going to become dependent on the man who can still go out and hunt and farm and all those things That may be what's going on here. But in either case it seems that she is willingly Submitting herself to her husband and he is ruling over her and that is you know the case in a lot of ancient cultures, we are actually kind of the the odd ones to

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see men and women on more equal standing, which I think is correct, but we're kind of the odd ones from a world history perspective. Now as far as the relationship between man and woman here, I think we need to realize, first of all, this is speaking about a marriage context. This is not men in general having authority over women in general, and this is also not the ideal. This is not a creation pronouncement from Genesis 1. This is a, hey.

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you made a mistake, you took the fruit and now these are going to be the consequences. They're not necessarily even consequences that Yahweh is putting on them. They're perhaps consequences that He is recognizing are just going to be the natural result of what they have done. And in the woman submitting herself to her husband, you have really two options for the headship and authority debate. I'm not going to come down on a solid place on this, especially not right now. Again, there's a whole...

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corpus of other literature we have to look at to really make an intelligible decision on that. I just want to point out what our options are from this text, only because this text gets used in that debate. So again, we need to remember that this is in a marriage context, not in a general public context. And if the woman is submitting to the husband, and that is a result of the fall, then before the fall, she was either already in a state

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submission to the man's authority and now the woman is going to submit even further and the man is going to rule and domineer over her or they were equals and now she is going to because of her circumstances and the state of creation now she is going to Submit and he is going to rule and domineer over her in a lot of situations So I just want to point out that this is not a clear-cut verse in either direction of the debate

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It could be that the original design was that man is the head and authority over the wife, and now she is falling into a twisted version of that where the man domineers and she is more passive. Or it could be that they were supposed to be co-heads of the family, and now she is falling from that and he is perverting his role as head and becoming domineering. So I just wanted to point that out. I'm not really making a decision on either side of that at this point because

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My goal is Genesis. If we were doing something on, you know, Paul or the New Testament, then that issue would definitely come up. But what we know of man and woman right now is that they are co-images, co-images over creation, ruling on Yahweh's behalf. And at this point, however you see the family dynamic working as co-images, in this pronouncement, the woman, because of the fall,

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is going to give herself over to the rule of her husband and he's going to rule her. And in a lot of cases that we see, even within the Bible, it's going to be a negative ruling, a bad domineering ruling. The word there, rule, doesn't always have to mean bad. It actually just means to rule. King David rules the nation of Israel. So it can be a good thing, but it can also be used in a bad way.

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So let's go ahead and move on to Yahweh's pronouncement to Adam. It starts out by telling him that he listened to the voice of his wife and took of the tree, which he had heard the command, you shall not eat. So here he listened to foolish advice from the woman that he was given. And because of this, the ground is cursed. And now his commission to be fruitful and multiply, to work the ground, and to serve in the garden is going to be hampered.

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not only because of the exile that's about to happen, but because now the ground is going to produce thorns and thistles and no longer produce food easily. It will come by sweat and hard work. So just like was the case for the woman, the Edenic commission for the man is now hampered. Again, I don't think these are all about the surface meaning of the text. This is not just about farming is going to be hard, so it's a bummer if you're a farmer.

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I think it even means more than work is going to be hard, which that is true, and that's part of us living in a fallen world. But I think in this context, he was supposed to expand the goodness in the Garden of God, the temple. And now that effort is going to be difficult, it's going to be thwarted, and it's not going to be an easy process at all. It's going to be filled with strife and difficulty and sin. So in this story, the garden is the image of that.

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expanding goodness of God. And as I mentioned, in our day, that expanding goodness of God looks like ministry, looks like discipleship and evangelism and people believing in Christ. And I think this verse, while it may apply to things like our day-to-day jobs and life, the means by which we get our own food, I think it applies to ministry things as well, to the work that we as Christians engage in to try and make Christ known and believed.

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Yahweh telling the man that he's going to return to dust, he's going to die because of their fall, because of their active disability and their taking of wisdom by themselves. And we'll see in verse 22 that the reasoning Yahweh gives is because they could have had the tree of life, but for them to live in this fallen, sinful state, choosing wisdom for themselves, it'd be better for them to be exiled away from the tree of life and to not live forever in this state than to be able to take of it and live forever. So.

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because of their failure, because of their disloyalty and the taking of wisdom, they lose the chance to live forever with Yahweh for now, until that Redeemer comes, that seed of the woman. So after all these pronouncements are done and the curse on the serpent, the man calls his wife Eve, in Hebrew, Chava, which means life. I think this is a statement of faith because she is going to be the mother of the seed of the woman and the mother of all humanity.

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So he is taking the promise that Yahweh has made and believing it in naming her. Which I think is really cool because after this whole scenario, we talked about the act of naming as part of the creation and how the first time he called her woman, and that was part of Yahweh allowing him to take part in creation. In this, as the one who's going to bring forth the seed of the woman, after their fall, she is given a new name. And I think throughout the book of Genesis we'll see renaming.

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as part of the new creation motif. After this fall, there is, in a sense, a redemption, sort of a miniature exodus in this one statement that he renamed her. She is given hope, and they are given hope, and she is a new creation on the other side of this failure. And I think that makes a lot of sense with the fact that, again, the man and the woman, they aren't cursed. The serpent and the ground are cursed.

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but Yahweh doesn't want to curse them, he wants to redeem them. So for them to come out of this with, yeah, a bad scenario, you know, but they're not dead and they have hope of redemption, and now she is a new creation that is going to bring forth the new, faithful humanity, which will ultimately be seen in the seed of the woman Christ. And after this renaming, there are actually some priestly language that kind of backs up this new creation motif. So after giving them the...

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hope that they have, and I think, at least potentially, making Eve into a new creation within this narrative. It says, the Lord made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them. These words, to make garments and to clothe, it's *asa*, *kutonet*, and *lavash*, respectively, those are not used again together until Exodus 28, 39-41, where Moses is making and clothing

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with his high priestly garments. Again, this is how the author often uses words. He uses concentrations of specific words to link stories together. So in this clothing of Adam and Eve, they are being, in a sense, commissioned as priests. So again, here is part of the redemption of Yahweh on Adam and Eve. So after this little act of recreation and priestly adornment, they are sent to the east, out of the Garden of Eden, and cherubim and a flaming sword are placed in the way.

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to the Tree of Life, to the Most Holy Place. And that is where Chapter 4 will pick up next time with the story of Cain and Abel. So we covered a lot of ground in this one, a lot to think about with the meaning of these pronouncements on the man and woman, the curse of the serpent, how it relates to their Adenic commissioning, and what it means for their relationship to one another. But at the end of it, we do see that Yahweh has a plan of redemption for humanity and acts for their protection.

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So I hope this was helpful as you read through Genesis 3 and just gives you some better insight into this passage