

## Intro

Psalms 19:7ff. celebrates God's words to his people, using several synonyms in the text. We are focusing on the idea of "testimonies" to think about God's report about the past.

**Testimonies:** "A testimony is a personal attestation of what an eyewitness affirms to be so." [115]<sup>1</sup>

## I. Creation: God's first testimony to the trustworthiness of His words

- A. The Ten Words: "And God said..." (Gen 1)
- B. A Meditation on the ten words: Psalm 33.6-9

## II. The Fall: the first challenge to the trustworthiness of God's words

- A. God spoke in creation, and it was good; God spoke also with authority, and man was responsible (Gen 2.16-17)
- B. The serpent questioned the content of God's words: raising doubt (Gen 3.1)
- C. The serpent contradicted the content of God's words: inciting distrust (Gen 3.4)
- D. The serpent motivated deepening mistrust by maligning the motives of God (Gen 3.5)
- E. Notice the subtlety of suspicion – deception twists truth

## Today:

- F. Our challenge: did Adam and Eve die, or did they not?
  - 1. Adam, according to the Bible, lived for nine centuries (Gen 5.5)
    - a. God assured Adam that death was the consequence of defying his command (Gen 2.16-17)
    - b. Was God wrong? Did God change his mind?

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<sup>1</sup> Layton Talbert, *The Trustworthiness of God's Words: Why the Reliability of Every Word from God Matters* (Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2022), 115 (All other quotations will be noted merely by a page number [in brackets]).

2. Scripture interprets Scripture: we gain a deeper understanding of the death God promised
  - a. The truth is, the first thing that died was spiritual life (Eph 2.1, 5; Col 2.13)
  - b. Physical death followed, a direct consequence of the fall, which affects every man (Rm 5.12, 1 Co 15.22)
3. Some object: "How could Adam and Eve have understood this theology of death? First spiritual death, then physical death"
  - a. A counter objection: "How could they understand death in any sense at all?"
  - b. They had *never seen any death* (Rm 5.12) — death of any creature is a consequence of the fall (Rm 8.19-22)

"To say and not do is human, not divine (Num 23.19). For God to say and not do would be for God to lie; and that's something he is incapable of doing (Titus 1.2)." [122]

#### G. The essence of the fall: distrust before disobedience

1. Satan attacked God's words, which led to disobedience
  - a. Did not entice with the attractiveness of the fruit
  - b. Deceived concerning the nature of the words
    - 1) Questioned
    - 2) Contradicted
    - 3) Insinuated
  - c. As then, so now: Sin begins with emotion, moves to the mind, ends in the act (James 1.14-15)
2. The prohibition in the garden tested trust more than submission (Gen 2.16-17)
  - a. No moral element in the prohibition: nothing evil about the fruit *in itself*
  - b. No supernatural element about that particular fruit or the tree

- c. When emotion distrusts the Word, the mind distorts the word (Gen 3.6, see Num 20.2-13, Moses did not believe God)

“A decision to distrust God’s words is always a decision to listen to someone else, to trust their words instead.” [123]

### III. Genesis on trial: the modern challenge to the trustworthiness of God’s words

#### A. Three major events questioned by weak to liberal theologians

1. Creation and the Fall (Gen 1-5)
2. Noah’s Flood (Gen 6-9)
3. The Tower of Babel (Gen 10-11)

Even professing evangelicals will question the Lord’s testimony, saying these records in Genesis are “myths,” not facts.

#### B. Treating Genesis as a collection of myths is subtle

1. The words are not denied, they have “meaning,” God is still “truthful”
2. However, they say, the testimony is not literal, not factual

#### C. The real trial:

1. Not the accuracy of Genesis
2. Rather, the faith of professors

“The first thing the Bible teaches us about God’s words is that they are reliable — what God says is what happens (Gen 1). The second thing the Bible teaches us about God’s words is our tendency to doubt that.” [127]

<sup>1</sup> Jn 5.9-10 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. <sup>10</sup> The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

## One more thing: fideism

Not simply blind faith (*fideism* — “the view that objects of religious belief should be accepted simply by faith regardless of reason or evidence.” [116])

Definition: a “theory which maintains that faith is independent of reason, or that reason and faith are hostile to each other and faith is superior at arriving at particular truths.”<sup>2</sup>

1. No accounting for evidence
2. No use of reason

## Orthodox view: faith informs reason

1. First, the statement that we only need faith, we don’t need reason, is a reasoned statement (we can’t escape reasoning)
2. It is true that God’s truth comes from God and not from human reason (2 Pt 1.20-21)
3. But God calls men to reason out their faith as well
  - a. Isaiah 1.18
  - b. Psalm 19.1
  - c. Romans 1.20
  - d. Matthew 22.36-37
  - e. 1 Thess 5.21
  - f. Acts 17.11
  - g. 1 John 4.1
  - h. John 8.2
4. Jesus used reasoning to teach truth
  - a. Matthew 22.21
  - b. Mark 12.26-27
  - c. Luke 20.41-44

“Fideism logically reduces to experientialism, the concept of a suprarational comprehension (Gray, 2005, p. 108). A subjective, ‘better-felt-than-told’ experience becomes the foundation for all belief; we cannot know the truth unless we have ‘experienced’ it in some way.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “Fideism,” in *Wikipedia*, February 18, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fideism>.

<sup>3</sup> Caleb Colley, “Reasoning About Fideism,” *Apologetics Press* (blog), February 18, 2023, <https://apologeticspress.org/reasoning-about-fideism-2235/>.