



Does God want pain, thorns, sweat, and male-only dominion?

Of course not. Then why did God say in Genesis 3:16-19:

“and he will rule over you...through painful toil you will eat from it... It will produce thorns and thistles for you...By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground.”

If God describes a situation, does that mean he wants it that way?

God created the world with perfection and unity (Gen. 1-2). Genesis 3 details the tragedy of the Fall. Sin marred God’s perfect world, and God’s image-bearers became ashamed, afraid, and sinful. The fallen world no longer represented God’s ideal.

Key Term
<p>יִמְשַׁל</p> <p>yimshal - he will rule</p>

PRESCRIBE OR DESCRIBE?

Did God state his desire for people, or the consequences of the Fall in Genesis 3?

In Genesis 3:14-19 God made many pronouncements, and now we have a choice to make. Do we believe that God was prescribing how he wanted the world to be, or was he describing the broken world? For example:

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| • Thorns and thistles | Did God want thorns, or was he describing hardship? |
| • Food by the sweat of your brow | Did God want sweat, or was he describing difficulty? |
| • Pain in childbirth | Is God pleased with this pain, or was he describing a consequence? |
| • Woman will desire her husband | Is woman’s desire/turning (t’suqah) God’s plan, or result of the Fall? |
| • Man will rule over woman | Is man’s rule (mashal) God’s plan, or result of the Fall? |

If God desires human pain, thorns, and sweat then people disobey when we seek to alleviate thorns, sweat, or pain! Farmers should plant thorns, not remove them. We should increase sweat while working rather than trying to stay cool. And for women in childbirth (uh-oh!) - no pain-relieving medicines, no cool cloth, and no comforting words. Instead...God wants more pain! Does that sound right? Obviously not.

MASHAL = RULE

The five consequences of Genesis 3:14-19 show that something changed from God’s perfect design. Still, some Bible teachers claim the last two phrases, woman’s “desire for her husband” and man’s “rule over woman,” contain God’s plan that we should seek to live out. Again, these consequences are NOT God’s ideal. T’suqah indicates the woman will “turn” her gaze from God to man (see One Pager: Should a Woman Desire Her Husband?). Man “ruling” over woman changed God’s design of co-rule and co-dominion. In Genesis 1 and 2, neither was told to rule over the other, but God commanded both to have dominion over creation in Genesis 1:28. Ruling over each other resulted in many sinful actions and systems including pride/abuse, patriarchy/matriarchy, and machismo/feminism.

Conclusion

In Genesis 3, God described the consequences of a fallen world. Female t’suqah and male mashal were not God’s plan for a harmonious and powerful world-changing family. They indicated the horrendous tragedy that occurred at the Fall— the breakdown of God’s powerful, harmonious, and collaborative team.

4 Crucial Questions
1. What does this teach us about GOD?
2. What does this teach us about PEOPLE?
3. What command should I OBEY?
4. With whom can I SHARE this?