

The Fall (Genesis 3)

In Genesis 1-2, God created the heavens and the earth, including Adam and Eve. In chapter 2, “the LORD [Yahweh] God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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’” (v. 16-18). The presence of this tree and the oral commandment not to eat from it created a moral choice for both Adam and Eve – to obey or not to obey – that was the question, until the serpent asked Eve another question.

In Genesis 3, the reader meets a talking serpent described as the most cunning of all the animals. At this point, neither Adam nor Eve nor the reader knows that the serpent is Satan – the arch-enemy of God. Revelation 12:9 describes him as “the great dragon [that] was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Satan and ‘his angels’ suggest that God created Satan as an angel and that he fell from a position of innocence to guilt.

When Satan fell is up for debate. This author believes it happened in the Garden of Eden when Satan saw Adam, the creation God made in God’s image and likeness – the being that God gave dominion over the earth. Adam occupied the position of authority that Satan desired, and Satan sought to dethrone Adam – God’s image-bearer on the planet.

A study of Satan's tactics to bring humanity down with him in a state of disobedience is helpful. First, the serpent asked Eve, not Adam, ‘did God really say you can’t eat from any tree?’ The serpent said, ‘any tree.’ Actually, God said they could eat from any tree except one. God had yet to create Eve when He gave the commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Perhaps Satan went after Eve because she did not hear the commandment directly from God. Genesis 2:16 reads ‘the man’, not the ‘man and woman’ or both. Eve added to what God had said, she told the serpent they were not to “touch it” (v. 3). But God did not say anything about not touching it. Next, the serpent lied (John 8:44). Eve said they would die if they ate or touched the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. The serpent preyed on this confusion and said, ‘you will not surely die’ (v.4). This bold lie created a choice for Eve: trust what God said or believe Satan’s lie. The serpent said eating the forbidden fruit would make her like God, but Adam and Eve were already like God – they each were made in His image, both male and female (1:27). Eve chose to believe a lie – she was deceived (1Ti 2:14). When Eve touched the fruit and did not die, as she thought, the conditions were set for her to eat it. Eve thought that eating it would bring wisdom and knowledge beyond what she and Adam presently had. They would now know both good and evil. Eve shared the fruit with Adam; and he ate it. Both of them fell from a state of innocence before God to a position of being guilty of violating the single dietary restriction He gave them.

The fall of man brought consequences – sin and death entered the world (Rom 5:12). Both would need to be defeated to restore man’s relationship to God. God had not lied, and now Man would have to die. The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened to evil, and they knew they were naked. They felt shame and guilt and hid from God among the trees of the garden. The serpent’s mission was complete. The beings that perfectly reflected and represented God in the garden were no longer perfect. They each were culpable for their individual choice. In this state of disobedience, God came calling – asking, ‘where are you?’ (v. 9). God knew where they were. His voice brought accountability; they would need to answer for their sin. Each played the blame game. Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent. To this day, humans’ default to the blame game. They seldom take full responsibility for their moral choices and behavior.

The fall changed everything. Would humans forever be making coverings for their nakedness? Would they always hide from the presence of God in a state of guilt? Immediately, God decreed consequences for the Serpent, Eve, and Adam. The serpent was cursed (v.14). There would be hostility between him and the woman and their offspring. Childbearing would forever be painful, and the husband-wife relationship would be fraught with difficulties and struggles. The good ground that God made was now cursed. Working it would require painful labor. It would produce thorns and thistles. Man would live by the sweat of his brow and eventually return to the dust he was created from (2:7, 3:19). But the same God that issued judgment showed mercy. Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden to keep them from eating from the tree of life and living forever in this fallen state. Before God banished them to the cursed world, He clothed them with skins that would endure the harsh world and gave them a promise of hope. Someday an offspring of Eve would attack the head of Satan (v. 15b). This promise of good news is called the **Proto-Evangelium**.