

# CREATION

## A study of where we came from and why it matters in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### LESSON 16: The Fall

What is the deal with the human race?! Really, this week begins to put our present predicament into crystalline clarity. Man rebelled against God.

Some reading before a bevy of questions.

a. **Genesis 3:1-6**

b. John MacArthur's *"The Battle for the Beginning"* pp. 204-209

1. What were the names of the two named trees in the garden? What did Adam know about them?
2. Why did God make the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil off-limits?
3. The Serpent shows up. Read a couple of passages about Satan, some definitely about him, some likely about him, and answer the questions that follow
  - a. **John 8:44, Revelation 12:1-9, Ezekiel 28:11-19**
  - b. The Ezekiel passage seems to be against the King of Tyre? Why can this not an earthly king?
  - c. Does the Ezekiel passage speak of Satan past, present or future?
  - d. Was Satan alone in his rebellion? How do you know?
  - e. What things characterize his fall?
  - f. What things characterize him?
4. What did Satan do to lead Eve into sin? How is that relevant today?
5. Based upon Christ's assessment of Satan in John 8:44, what was Satan's purpose behind his chat with Eve?
6. How did Eve sin?
7. How did Adam sin?
8. Why does Adam get the blame for this pot of stew?

garden was not an unexpected event that somehow derailed the plan of God. God had planned for it from the beginning.

### THE STRATEGY

Satan's strategy in tempting Eve is the same strategy he always uses. He is a liar and the father of lying (John 8:44). But he comes disguised as one who brings the truth—"an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Only in lying is Satan consistent. Everything from him is deceptive. "There is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources" (John 8:44). But here he begins with what sounds like a very innocent question from an interested observer concerned about Eve's well-being. "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1).

"Has God indeed said . . . ?" That is the first question in Scripture. Before this, there were only answers; no dilemmas. But his question was wickedly designed to start Eve on the path of doubting and distrusting what God had said. That sort of doubt is the very essence of all sin. The gist of all temptation is to cast doubt on God's Word and to subject it to human judgment. That is what the serpent was doing here.

In fact, notice how Satan cunningly twisted and misrepresented the Word of God. God had said, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Genesis 2:16-17). God's emphasis had been on their perfect freedom to eat from all the trees except one. Satan's question turned the emphasis around and stressed the negative, implying that God was fencing them in with restrictions. Notice also how starkly the serpent's words contrast with God's actual command. God had said, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat" (emphasis added). The emphasis was on their freedom to eat. Satan's version negated the whole point: "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden" (emphasis added). In this way he focused her attention on the prohibition and set her up for the main assault on God's Word.

Satan's motive was the utter destruction of the first couple, even though he was pretending to have their best interests at heart. That's why Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). The serpent had deliberately confronted Eve when she was isolated from Adam and most vulnerable. He

aimed his initial attack at her alone ("the weaker vessel"—1 Peter 3:7). Clearly, his aim was to deceive her by his craftiness (2 Corinthians 11:3) while she was unprotected by Adam.

If Eve was surprised to hear a serpent speak, Scripture does not say so. After all, Eden was new and undoubtedly filled with many wonders, and the first couple were still just discovering all the marvels of creation. In that paradise, Eve had never known fear or encountered danger of any kind. So she conversed with the serpent as if this were nothing extraordinary. She had no reason to be suspicious. She herself was innocent, having never before encountered "the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

Satan's strategy was to portray God as narrow, strict, uncharitable, and too restrictive—as if He wanted to limit human freedom and deprive Adam and Eve of enjoyment and pleasure. He was implying that evil and untruthfulness were part of God's character. He was hinting to Eve that God might be cruel and uncaring.

Moreover, the reptile Satan slyly insinuates that he is more devoted to Eve's well-being than God is. He implies that he is for freedom while God is restrictive. The fact that God gave Adam and Eve *everything* else to eat is set aside as negligible. Thus he casts suspicion on God's goodness.

Eve was unaware of Satan's strategies, so she replies naively—defending God to some degree: "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:2). Evidently she did not know that this was God's supernatural foe. Scripture says she was "deceived" (2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14). Satan beguiled her by taking advantage of her innocence.

But even though she did not know her enemy, she should have been able to thwart this attack. She had sufficient advantage to do so. She knew God. She knew God's character as good—and only good. She had experienced nothing but abundant blessing and unrestrained generosity from His hand. She was surrounded by all of creation, which abundantly displayed God's good will. She also had a clear, unambiguous command from God. And even that command not to eat of one tree was a gracious restriction for her own good.

Eve should have been suspicious of the talking reptile. She should have found out more about her tempter before she yielded to his enticements. Above all, she should have made a strong and emphatic disavowal of the suspicion that God had withheld some goodness from her and her husband.

Instead, her reply was only a partial refutation of the reptile's allegations. She said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'" (vv. 2-3).

Let's analyze her response. Notice first that she omitted the word *all* when she said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden"—suggesting that she was already beginning to lose sight of the vast goodness of God. Then she moved further, recounting the restriction God had imposed on them, and not defending His goodness. And worst of all, she added something to the words of the command, claiming God had said, "nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Apparently beginning to feel the restriction was harsh, she added to the harshness of it.

Her heart had already set its course. She was not defending God and His goodness. She was not affirming His glorious majesty and holy perfection. She ignored the fact that God's desire was only for her good. She did not take offense at the serpent's insult against God's character. And so she played right into his hands. She was already starting to believe Satan rather than God.

The fall was inevitable from the instant Eve began to doubt. The course for her subsequent action was set by that wavering in her heart. What followed was merely the evidence that wickedness had entered her heart already. At this point, Satan knew he had succeeded and he pushed for total victory. Immediately, he suggests that he knows more than God. His next statement is an assertion that flatly contradicts the Word of God and impugns the motives of God: "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (vv. 4-5). This bold denial stated definitely what Satan had merely implied before. Now he openly slanders not only the goodness of God, but also God's truthfulness.

Suspicion had already found root in Eve's mind. God's majesty had been insulted; His goodness had been maligned; His trustworthiness had been defamed. And she had not responded in faith. So Satan moved in for the kill. "God is a liar," he says. "He has deceived you, taken your freedom, and restricted your joy." Satan's lie is still the same today: "You can be free. Do whatever you want. It is your life. There are no divine laws; no absolute authority; and above all, no judgment. You will not surely die."

At this point, Eve was faced with a clear choice. She could either believe God or believe the devil. That is the same choice that has confronted humanity ever since. Who is telling the truth? God or Satan? Does God want to place undue restrictions on you? Does He want to cramp your freedom and minimize your joy? If God is like that, Satan implies, He doesn't love you. He is not to be trusted.

The lie is the same today. God's authority is often portrayed as too restrictive, destructive of human freedom, and detrimental to our well-being. In the words of E. J. Young:

Modern psychology, we can hear the tempter saying, has brought to light the deep recesses of the human soul. That soul is a very tender thing, and to restrain and bind it by the imposition of categorical law is to harm it. The soul should be free to develop and to express itself, and this it can do only through freedom and love. Narrowness and restriction, such as absolute authority impose, must be abandoned, if there is to be any development of the personality. Would you be warped in your personality? If so, then continue submitting to God and His commandments.<sup>2</sup>

Satan was suggesting to Eve that the only reason God could be so restrictive, forbidding them to eat from that tree, was because there was a flaw in His character. His love must be defective. He wanted to keep them from being all they could be, lest they rival His greatness.

And thus what Satan pretended to offer them was precisely what he himself tried to obtain but could not: "you will be like God" (v. 5).

Satan knew from personal experience that God tolerates no rivals. God said through Isaiah, "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images" (Isaiah 42:8). God yields His rightful place to no one. That is what makes Him God. His glory outshines the glory of all others. He has no equals and therefore all who pretend equality with Him or seek recognition as His equal, He must reject. That is because He is holy; not because He is selfish.

Satan, however, implied that this was some kind of petty jealousy on God's part. As if God must keep Adam and Eve from becoming all they could be lest they become a threat to the Almighty. The suggestion is absurd, but for Eve it

was an intoxicating thought. Perhaps she thought it a noble aspiration to be like God. She may have convinced herself it was an honorable desire.

The reptile's false promise ("you will be like God") is the seed of all false religion. Numerous cults, ranging from Buddhism to Mormonism, are based on the same lie. It is a twisting of the truth. God wants us to be like Him, in the sense that we share His communicable attributes—holiness, love, mercy, truthfulness, and other expressions of His righteousness. But what Satan tried to do—and what he tempted Eve to try doing—was to intrude into a realm that belongs to God alone and usurp His power, His sovereignty, and His right to be worshiped. And those things are forbidden to any creature.

Notice how *Satan* characterized equality with God: "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (v. 5). It was a dangerous half-truth. If they ate the fruit, they would indeed know evil, but not as God knows it. They would know it experientially. What Satan held out to them as the highroad to fulfillment and truth was in reality a back alley to destruction. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

### THE SEDUCTION

James 1:13–15 says, "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." That process was already underway in Eve.

Sin in the mind goes to work in the emotions. That incites the will, which yields the act.

Genesis 3:6 says, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Self-fulfillment has become Eve's goal, and for the first time ever, her own self-interest and self-satisfaction are what drive her. *Sin has already been conceived in her heart.* Now, that sin was beginning to work in her to bring about the evil act. But she was guilty already, for she had sinned in her heart. Jesus illustrated this principle when he said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Eve saw three features of the forbidden fruit that seduced her. First, "the tree was good for food." We have no idea what kind of fruit it was. It is often portrayed as an apple, but the text does not say it was an apple. The specific variety of fruit is not important. What is important is that Eve was seduced by her *physical appetite*. This was not a legitimate hunger. There was plenty of food in the garden if Eve had been hungry. It was an illicit appetite. It was a fleshly lust provoked by a selfish discontent and a distrust in God—as if He were keeping something good from her.

Second, she saw "that it was pleasant to the eyes." This seduction appealed to her *emotional appetite*. The fruit excited her sense of beauty and other passions. Not that there wasn't plenty of other attractive fruit in the garden. There was a rich variety of colors, shapes, and sizes, and it all looked good. But Eve was focused on *this* fruit, because Satan had planted the idea in her mind that it represented something good that God was keeping from her. As covetousness grew in her heart, the forbidden fruit looked better and better.

Third, she saw "a tree desirable to make one wise." This was an appeal to her *intellectual appetite*. Incipient pride caused her to fancy the "wisdom" that would come with knowing good and evil. She desired that knowledge and was tempted by the false promise that it would make her like God.

Thus she was seduced by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—everything evil in this world (1 John 2:16–17). Temptation always comes in one or more of these three categories. When Satan tempted Christ, he urged Him to turn stones to bread (Matthew 4:3). That was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. The devil also showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, promising Him authority over them (vv. 8–9). That was an appeal to the lust of the eyes. And he set Him on the pinnacle of the temple (v. 5), appealing to the pride of life. That's why Hebrews 4:15 says, "[He] was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

### THE SIN

Ultimately, predictably, the doubt and covetousness in Eve's heart gave way to evil behavior. When sin penetrates the mind, emotions, and will, it will *always* be manifest in sinful actions.

Genesis 3:6 says, "she took of its fruit and ate." It was a simple act with a