

# The Fall of Man

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The story of the fall of man is known to virtually every person in Western Civilization; especially, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. But the particulars associated with Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden is not so well known. "They ate the forbidden fruit" someone says, "and that's all we need to know!" There are truths hidden in this text that are invaluable to the discerning searcher. The text with which are a concerned as a matter of first order is Genesis 2:15-17, concerning the prohibition given to Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16And the Yahweh Elohim commanded the man (adam), saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: 17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:15-17).*

It is curious that of the two trees that were of significant mention "the tree of life" and "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," (Gen 2:9b), one would think that "the tree of life," would have been the most desirable. Especially from what is said in 3:22,

*And the Yahweh Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9And out of the ground made the Yahweh Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:8-9).*

However, it was what bore the forbidden fruit that became a problem. A good number of scholars suggest that both Adam and Eve were created as adolescents, being of the idea age of 18-21. This

would help in understanding why the couple chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it bore the “forbidden fruit,” which would be the typical choice for a couple of adolescents. At first this sounds factious, but on further thought, these are the ages that most couples begin their lives as husband and wife, as this couple does in Gen 2: 21-25. As a matter of fact, acknowledging the probable age of Adam and Even as late adolescence or early adulthood makes the particulars of their story much more intelligible.

### In the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-19)

From the Genesis 3 narrative we learn that Eve was alone when approached by something called a *nachash*, a reptile, snake or serpent; the Greek LXX has *ophis*, the word Paul uses in 2 Cor 11:3, “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” The word *ophis* is translated as “serpent” in all occurrences in the OT and NT, with exception of Rev 12:9, 14, 15, and 20:2, where the *drakon* (dragon) of Rev 12:7 is identified in verse 9 as “the dragon, the great serpent (*ophis*), the ancient one called the Devil (*diabolos*) and Satan (*ho Satanas*, which could be also translated “the adversary or the enemy;” the words also found in Rev 20:2). As far as the narrative of Gen 3 is concerned, as well as the whole of the OT, the one who tempted Eve was a *nachash* (a serpent) with no mention of Satan or an indwelling satanic presence. The connection of Satan with the serpent is found in the Intertestamental Jewish literature; especially, 1 Enoch, chapters 6 through 16, which describes the fall of angels from heaven led by the angel *Azazel*. This tradition is also carried over into the writings of the rabbis. The Apostles Paul and John are the only ones who make the “serpent - satan” connection in the NT. Curiously, the serpent had been created by God, in that God created all creatures “that move along the ground,” (Gen 1:24-25), and God saw that it was good.” How the serpent came to be identified with *Azazel*, *Asmodeus*, *Sammael*, *HaSatanos*, *Diabolos*, or a host of other names for “the enemy,” “the adversary,” or “the evil one” is never explained.

## The Role of Temptation

It is important to note that Adam and Eve possess freedom of will; the choice to eat the forbidden fruit was their choice. The particulars of the temptation of Adam and Eve are repeated in the temptation of Jesus, the second Adam, and the same specific temptations are given in the first letter of John as desire of the flesh, desire of the eyes, and pride of life (1 John 2:15-16).

In the writings of the rabbis, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Intertestamental Jewish writings there appears a teaching that is relevant here; it is the motif of the “evil inclination,” or *Yetzer Hara*, versus the inclination to do good or righteousness (*Yetzer Hotov*), which clearly shows an assumption of free moral agency or freedom of will. One of the most important of the rabbinic statements is that of Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish found in the tractate *Baba Batra* 16a: Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish said: ‘Satan, impulse to evil, and angel of death: all three are the same thing.’ *Sifre Deuteronomy* 45 reads, “My children I have created for you the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*), but I have created for you the *torah* to resist it.” The theme of the evil inclination is found in the Jewish writings of Enoch, 4 Ezra, Sirach, and in the *Manuel of Discipline* (IQS 3 and 4) and the *Damascus Document* (CD 2:15-16) of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls speak more of two spirits within man, the spirit of good and the spirit of evil, and the two spirits fight their battle in the heart of man, the one in whom the spirit of good prevails over the spirit of evil shall inherit the glory of Adam (IQS 4).

### *The Scenario of Temptation*

The arguments used in these writings to establish the principle of the evil inclination are taken from the Genesis 3 account of the fall of man, which begins with the temptation of Eve.

*And the serpent (reptile), said to the woman, “You shall not surely die, for Elohim knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as God (Elohim [MT] the LXX reads “theoi”- as gods), knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that*

*the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate, and gave to her husband with her and he ate (Gen 3:4-6).*

The first temptation of Eve is seen in the words, “*Elohim* knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you shall be as God knowing good and evil.” To a young woman or especially to a an adolescent, to be told that you can have something that will make you equal to the Supreme Being would be a very appealing temptation; especially knowing that the fruit was forbidden. Further, we are told, “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, would appeal to her hunger, or simply the want to taste of something she had never tasted before. Also, it was pleasant to the eyes, one of the most potent wants is the desire to have something that looks good to the eyes. The eyes have been called the window to the soul, going both ways. When something looks good to us, we capture the image in our minds and that image implants itself in the brain as a learning segment. The more we look that the thing desired the deeper the learning segment is driven into our short-term memory and eventually, through repetition, into the long-term memory. Everyone has experienced seeing something they could not get out of their mind, and all the more if it is something we are told we can’t have. That the fruit could make one wise was the final appeal. Eve could possess knowledge equal to God’s knowledge. How powerful would that make her? She could have it all!

It cannot be a trivial circumstance that the temptations of Jesus, the second Adam, experienced the same scenario as that of Adam and Eve in Eden. Luke’s account of the temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13) is more concerned with the morphology of temptation, *viz*, how it works, how it happens, and how the satanic power of *HaSatan*, in person after person has led them to defiance of the will of God and turned them from God. The first temptation was the desire of the flesh. This was more than the need for food, it is the want of the ego that dwells with in the flesh, then the assertion of self: the reach for power, control, the preeminence of the self; the “I want” within all of us. We can satisfy the most immediate needs or wants of the flesh, then enters the ego (the first person personal pronoun) and the

opportunity to insert the “I” in the midst of the glory, the power, the authority, the grandeur, the opulence, the magnificence, the control, the self rule, the want, the desire, the lust for it all. Then comes an even greater desire, the attempt to fly, to rise higher than anyone else. Do you see ME? With this kind of focus on the self, it cannot be “thy will be done,” but “my will be done.” Here is how Satan tempted Eve, and here is why she ate – to make it all happen.

## Rewriting the Story

In the writings of Paul, Jesus of Nazareth was the re-visitation of Adam of old. Paul gives the word Adam a dual meaning. First, he uses Adam as the proper name for the first man who was created by God in the Garden of Eden. Secondly, he understands the word in the root Hebrew sense of “man” or “human being,” this sense of the word is translated in the Greek version of the OT as “*anthropos*” meaning mankind or humankind. In Paul’s letters it is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how he is using the term. Both meanings are applicable to the Hebrew “*adam*’;” i.e. it stands for the first human being who is called by the name “Adam,” but that his name means “*anthropos*” (mankind) as well makes it possible for one to see a dual usage of the word in the writings of Paul. The importance of this is that when Paul says that through Adam sin entered the world (Rom 5:12), he includes Eve as well in that she is also an *adam*’ or *anthropos* (a human being). So Paul is including Eve as part of the “*adam*’ ” that brought sin into the world.

In Paul’s understanding Christ was the second or last Adam, and as a *benAdam*’ (son of Adam) he experienced the human experience. The experience Paul has in mind, specifically, is the temptation of man in the Eden. Luke was a companion of Paul during Paul’s last missionary journey, during that time there was very likely a sharing of the oral tradition of the life of Jesus, including the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. That event had particular significance for Paul, in that he sees Christ, in the role of Adam, re-experiencing the temptation of Adam/Eve, the representatives of the human race (*anthropos*). The temptation of Adam/Eve in Eden is re-enacted by Jesus, the second Adam. In fact, the very same scenario

presented to Eve was used to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. Luke tells us that following his baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus,

*. . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2Being forty days tempted of the devil, and in those days he ate nothing: and when they were ended, he was filled with hunger; 3and the devil said unto him, "If you are the Son of God, command that this stone be made bread." 4 Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." 5The devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 then the devil said to him, "All this power and glory I will give you, for it has been given to me and whoever I desire to give it. 7 If you will worship me, all will be yours. 8 "Jesus answered him, Get behind me, Satan: for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall thou serve." 9 Then he brought him to Jerusalem, and stood him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here: 10 for it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you, 11and in their hands they will bear you up to the end that you will not dash your foot against a stone. 12 "Jesus answered, It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." 13 When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a time 14and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee (Luke 4:1-14).*

Satan's first temptation was desire of the flesh. Forty days without food and all he need do is will that the stones before him become bread. Jesus never performed a miracle in his own behalf; even his resurrection was the work of God (Acts 2:32). The second temptation was the desire of the eyes, "You can have all the kingdoms of the world, it is yours for the taking," was the temptation. The third temptation is the most curious. When Satan tempted Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple, what was he tempting Jesus to do? It would appear that he was trying to get him to fly down from the pinnacle. This would be clear indication that he was a heavenly being or the mysterious son of man redeemer who is depicted in flight in several text of the Intertestamental Literature (Dan 7; the Books of Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch). Satan's temptations

here were far most sophisticated than with Eve, but the same as the temptations of Eve none-the-less. Eve (w/Adam) was tempted by the lust of the flesh (the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food), she was tempted by the lust of the eye (the fruit was good for food and desirable to the eye), and she was tempted by the pride of life (the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom). She took some and ate it and also gave some to her husband who was with her. The first Adam failed the test and introduced *cattah / hamartia* (sin = failure to obey God) into the world, the second Adam did not. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews writes of Jesus,

*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:15-16).*

### *From Garden of Eden to Garden of Gethsemane*

Also of interest is the sequence of the events leading up to Gethsemane. First, there's the adoration of the people who wanted to make him the king of Israel. This kind of popularity would have been all it took for those who feed on recognition, adulation, and celebrity. Then there's the triumphal entry and the power associated with the cleansing of the temple, followed by the superiority he shows over the hierarchy, his ability to overwhelm them with his knowledge; "You err, not knowing the Scriptures," he charged the scholars of the Sadducees," (Matt 22:29). He could have seized power at any moment; the desire to fulfill a common desire of the flesh for recognition. To grasp power and to rule is pride of life in its fullest expression; especially, the heralding and adoration he was receiving. "Behold, the whole world had gone after him," cried the Pharisees (John 2:19). The opposition the hierarchy had set before him would have generated the desire to seize power and retaliate, to rule Jerusalem on his own terms. All that was left was to seize it; assert himself and his mission would be accomplished on his own terms.

In the garden he prayed three times and when the hour came his decision was made, the Father's will would be obeyed. Where Eve and Adam turned away from God to do what they willed, Jesus said to God, "Not my will but your will be done," (Luke 22:42). There in the garden the reversal of what Adam had done was set in motion.

The problem of temptation, desire or want out of control, began with the first man and woman and has not ceased to be the hinges that have thrown the door open to man's self-destruction. James, the brother of Jesus, in his epistle to the Hellenistic Jewish believers of the Diaspora, addressed the gravity of temptation and warned the followers of Jesus not to deceive themselves into believing that their yielding to temptation was anyone's responsibility but their own.

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own desires, and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death (James 1:13-15).*

## The Concept of Sin

The word "sin" does not appear in the Genesis account of the fall of man. It appears for the first time in Gen 4:7, where Cain is warned about his anger at the time of God's dissatisfaction with his sacrifice,

*Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*

The major Hebrew term for sin is *chattath*, from *chata*, meaning "to miss the mark, to fail, to take the wrong road or way, or to go wrong." In biblical literature it is not failure in a normative sense but failure to be what God created man to be. *Chattah* is the broad term

for failure to be in harmony with the will of God; other terms are also used, *pesha* (transgression, defiance), *awen* (iniquity, corruption), *amal* (wickedness), and *rasa* (evil), but these are more the means of sinning where *chattath* is a generic for the whole concept of sin; i.e., "failure."

The Greek term used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate *chattath* is *hamartia*, which also means, "missing the mark" or "failure;" it is, essentially, the same in biblical meaning as the Hebrew *chattath*. The idea associated with both the Hebrew and the Greek concept of sin is somewhat multicolored in that in the Greek LXX *hamartia* can be (and is) used to translate any of the Hebrew terms listed above. Sin is *chattath* (failure, missing the mark), but it may take the form of *pesha* (defiance, transgression), as well as *awen* (iniquity/corruption), *amal* (wickedness), and *rasa* (evil and/or malevolence); the Greek *hamartia* is used to cover all to above.

The idea intrinsic within the biblical concept of sin is that of failure. *Chattath* is to miss the mark or to fail to do what is required. In the writings of the Jews it is failure to do the will of God or to be one with God, as was the intent for man when he was created in the image of God. The means of the failure may be *pesha* (transgression/defiance), *awen* (iniquity/corrupt or perverse), *amal* (wickedness), and *rasa* (evil/malevolence); in fact, these terms are often used together to give emphasis to the specifics associated with failure or sin (*chattath*).

In Genesis 3, the actions of, first Eve and then Adam, was sin (*chattath*), but it took the form of *pesha* - transgression or defiance. They defied the will of God by believing the words of the reptile and disbelieving the words of *Yahweh* concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die," (Gen 2:16-17). In fact, Eve quoted the words of God in Gen 3:3, she knew what God had said but chose to believe the words of the reptile, "You shall **not** surely die!" Adam did the same and defied the word of God. Their sin (*chattath*) took the form of self-willed defiance (*pasha*).

This is seen in the earliest writings of the Hebrews, as reflected in Gen 3, and as seen throughout the history of Israel in her

relationship to God. As perverse as the sins of Sodom were, which would include *awen* (iniquity/perversion), *amal* (wickedness), and *rasa* (evil, malevolence), the angel of *Yahweh* called it *chattath*: “And *Yahweh* said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their **sin** is very grave,” (Gen 18:20). When enticed to engage in adultery, Joseph says to Potiphar’s wife, “There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he (Potiphar) kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9) The sin would have also been *pesha* (transgression) or *awen* (iniquity), but it is called *chattath* - “sin.” The Greek *hamartia* appears to have been the primary term used to translate the several Hebrew terms listed here, especially *chattath*; and this meaning of sin was carried over into the Greek New Testament.

Curiously, the term *hamartia* does not occur with great frequency in the Synoptic Gospels (41 occurrence) and 12 occurrences of the verb *hamartano*, but the term occurs in the letters of Paul in 66 occurrences, (48 in Romans), with 19 occurrences of the verb; a total of 85 occurrences in Paul’s letters. Of the 48 occurrences of *hamartia* in Romans, 41 of these are in chapters 5-8. In thirty of these occurrences it is *hamartia* with the definite article (*he hamartia*), and often with the preposition *huper* (under), which suggests that Paul is using the term as a personification of sin or sin as a cosmic power or force. “The sin” (with the article) gives sin a more objective status (“the power of sin”); with the preposition *huper*, there are those who are “under (*huper*) the power of sin,” (Rom 3:9). To Paul *he hamartia* (the [power of] sin) is a malevolent force set loose in the world to destroy the human race. Man can become enslaved to it (6:6-7, 16-18, 20, 22), humankind is under its power (3:9), the human race is living in it (6:2), and is being destroyed or condemned to death by it (3:23; 5:8, 12, 17; 6:20-23).

It is sin as a power or enslaving force that was brought into the world by the first man Adam, as Paul states in Rom 5:12, “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” In Rom 5:21 Paul speaks of the sin Adam brought into the world as something that had

become a reigning power, but it is controlled by the power of grace (charis); “as **sin reigned in death**, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In Rom 3:21-26 and 5:1-21, Paul develops the message he calls the “mystery of the gospel,” the redemption story of what God has done to bring the reign of sin to an end and deliver his creation from its power. This was accomplished by God entering into the world as one of us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in order to deliver his creation from the power of sin through new creation of the human race. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth God entered into our existence, experienced our experience as one of us, even the experience of human death. Through the resurrection of Jesus God created a new humanity with Jesus as the firstfruit of that new humanity.

The crucifixion of Jesus was the result of the power of sin at work in the lives of those it had enslaved, giving them what they believed to be victory over Christ. The resurrection of Christ, however, was a victory over death and brought an end to the reign of sin and death’s power over him, and if the end of sin is death, then the end of death implies the end of the power of sin. The power of the recreated spirit of man can resist the power of sin as Paul affirms in Phil 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” a belief that is reinforced by the John in his first letter,

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whoever is born of God overcomes (nikeo – is conquering) the world, and this is the victory (nike – conquest) that has overcome (nikeo – has conquered) the world – our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes (nikeo – is conquering) the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3-5.)*

## Conclusion

The sin of the Genesis 3 text is that of self-willed defiance of the will of God, resulting in a destruction of the oneness that existed between God and man. The only way man can be one with God is

for his will to be one with God's will. Man's failure to make that happen has been, and continues to be, his greatest failure. In a word, this failure is called "sin" (*chattath / hamartia*). No matter what other forms of expression the choice takes (defiance, iniquity, wickedness, evil), it is sin (*chattath / hamartia*). Man as a volitional being is the cause of his estrangement from God, his freedom of will, and his choice to be unwilling to be at one with the will of God.

Even though none of the terms used for sin discussed thus far are found in the Genesis 3 account of the origin of sin, there is a clear presence of sin found in this ancient story, which informs us concerning the meaning and the nature of sin as it relates to man and his relationship to God.

From a practical perspective sin is a diverse concept because so many behaviors of man are associated with sin in Scripture and in our culture. C. S. Lewis thinks of sin as a power but it is a dehumanizing power that reduces human beings of the humanity they were given by God. It is not simply an infraction as much as a decision to live in defiance of the will of God, which was, according to Lewis, the sin of the fall of man in Genesis 3. In his chapter on "The Fall of Man," in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, he defines Adam as a man whose fall was the result of the abuse of his free will, (p 63). Every man who abuses his free will in defiance of the will of God loses something of the being he was created to be as the image of God.

The first sin was the result of man's desire for autonomy from the lordship of God. He was not willing to be a servant of God in a realm of paradise if he could have lordship over himself. His sin or "failure" (*chattath / hamartia*) was his decision to choose his own will rather than the will of his Creator. Through the ages, sin has continued in this same course, reducing the being created in the image of God to less and less of a person until all that is left is a semblance of what he was as a being created in the image of God. To Lewis, then, sin is a life-long narcissistic focus on oneself that reduces the human soul (life) to a mere human shade of a person. In his book, *Mere Christianity*, he calls pride or self-conceit "The Great Sin," (the title of chapter 8, pp 121-28).

In his book *The Great Divorce*, Lewis develops the effects of sin on mankind. The “lost” are those whose self-centered, self-serving life has cost them the loss of their identity as human beings through their life of narcissism. This occurs progressively each time a person chooses himself over God or others. Each time he so choose, he surrenders another spark of his humanity and the more he slips away from the image of God or his likeness to God. The more he refuse to surrender his will to the will of God the more he deteriorates into an insubstantial nonperson or ghost until his humanity and the image of God is gone. He has lost his humanity altogether and has become ashes of what he once was or could have been. But if there is only one trace of humanity left in the person, the angels can blow on the ashes until the whole pile is red and rekindled. But if there’s nothing but ashes, they will not go on blowing them in there eyes forever (*The Great Divorce*, p 77).

What has all this to do with us? Just this: what Christ's resurrection accomplished for him it will do for all those who come to him in faith in order to experience new creation. With the fall of man in Eden mankind became a pilgrim journeying through this earth as a vale of soul-making with the challenge before him of fitting himself for eternity. What was lost in the fall must be restored. The story of Adam is the story of every descendant of Adam; we are all sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. All members of the human race are beings “in Adam,” their human characteristics are drawn from Adam, including the effects of the fall and the curse of death.

God has written another chapter to the story of Adam in which he has created a second Adam whose purpose is to reverse the fall of the first Adam and the curse of death, thus becoming for the human race the paradigm for the new creation of man. Through the incarnation of God in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a new existence has been created out of the human race. Where the existence of man on the planet earth has been identified with the first Adam; i.e. existence “in Adam,” man can now experience new creation “in Christ,” wherein his spirit is renewed in the image of Christ, who is the image of God.

Through becoming one with Christ, the last Adam, men can break their identification with the first Adam. The person who has not completely lost their humanity through their willful enslavement to sin can be created anew in Christ, if the embers of the image of God are still present within them. This renewal occurs in the human spirit where the image is found; it is not to be found in than the Adamic flesh that identifies man as a son of Adam. Christ's death and resurrection was the model for how one escapes the satanic power of sin and death. He dies to that existence wherein the power of sin and death rules, *viz.* existence in Adam.

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