

2. Crisis in Eden (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

Biblical material: Gen. 1:28, Rom. 8:17, Matt. 6:26, Gen. 2:15–17, 3:1–7, 10–19.

Quotes

- Our fall was, has always been, and always will be, that we aren't satisfied in God and what He gives. We hunger for something more, something other. *Ann Voskamp*
- We can build a relationship only with someone we really know. If we have wrong conceptions about a person, it will negatively affect our relationship with that person. The same is true in our relationship with God. In order to have a loving relationship with Him, we must truly understand His character... Sin did not start with a deed. Rather it began with accepting a wrong image of the character of God! The deed of taking the forbidden fruit was just a consequence of this wrong concept about God. *Michael Doernbrak*
- Nothing hath separated us from God but our own will, or rather our own will is our separation from God. *William Law*
- God did not create evil. Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God. *Albert Einstein*

Questions

Was God being arbitrary over which tree's fruit could be eaten? Was the Fall really a question of picking and eating the wrong kind of fruit? How could this bring such a disaster? Why should they not have the knowledge of good and evil? How much freedom did God give Adam and Eve—and Satan? Why were they banished from Eden?

Bible summary

Gen. 1:28 tells us we are made in the image of God. As such he cares for these beings and wants to restore us and our relationship to him, while Gen. 2:15–17 gives the setting for the Fall: not an arbitrary test but a way of providing freedom of choice to all involved. In Genesis 3 we read the terrible consequences of the Fall—terrified of God. How tragic that the very first person to be feared was our heavenly Father. Adam and Eve we so afraid of God that when they heard him coming, they ran away and hid. What does this say about what the Fall was really about? Surely the real issue here is one of a broken relationship that led to worry and fear... So God has spent much time thereafter trying to persuade us *not* to be fearful, especially not of him. Note in verse 3 that God said “You will surely die not “I will execute you.” Death is the inevitable result of sin, not a penalty imposed by God.

It's important to read Gen. 3:1-15 very carefully. We often *think* we know what it says, right down to the “apple”! But take another look at exactly what happens, and what is said. Notice right at the beginning the serpent's questioning misrepresentation of God. Also note Eve's “addition” to God's command. Then comes the biggest lie of all—that a) they would not surely die, and that b) they would become like God—insinuating that God was being selfish.

Then there are other aspects that we don't often comment on. Like Eve noticing that the fruit was pleasing to the eye, and good for food. How did she know by looking

that it would be good food? She also noticed it was “desirable for gaining wisdom”! How would you ever know that—except maybe the serpent was telling her...

Adam’s bit-part role of “eater” is also worthy of comment, since he doesn’t even get a speaking role! Why not? Then there’s the statement that their eyes were opened. So had the serpent been telling the truth? Interesting that there’s so much double-talk and half-truths in what the serpent says. Almost as if he’s trying to make sure he has a defensible position. Why?

Finally in the aftermath there are the recriminations, the blaming that has continued ever since. Adam blames Eve, and also God, for he says “the woman you put here.” Eve blames the serpent, (also part of God’s creation!), and that she was deceived. She claims she hadn’t been given a fair choice...

Rom. 8:17 tells us we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, while Matt. 6:26 makes it clear how valuable we are to God.

Comment

The invitation by the serpent to experiment, despite God’s warning, seems innocent enough. He even speaks truth: you will indeed know good and evil. His real lie is against the truth of God: you will not surely die. For those who see God punishing sin with imposed penalty, the fact that Adam and Eve did not die immediately contradicts such an assertion. The fruit was not toxic, they did not fall down dead on the spot. Nor did God materialize with an executioner’s sword and demand their blood. No—the penalty was intrinsic in the act, in their decision to choose the way of the Devil (the way of their own self interest—selfishness) over that of God’s, to trust the Deceiver rather than their Heavenly Father. They also knew the consequences before God arrived. They realized their state, and bought into the Devil’s picture of God as a hostile and vengeful Deity. For why else would they have run and hid when they realized God was coming.

And for God, what a tragic experience! His beloved children run to hide from his presence, not wanting to be with him, in fact quivering in fear under some bush. Their actions reveal much of what has happened in this breakdown in the divine-human relationship. Similarly the curse is descriptive of what the consequences will be—for this is what happens when any being is severed from the source of life. Death is the unnatural natural consequence of sin—the denial of trust and the rejection of truth. The banishment from the garden is also demanded by the situation rather than an act of retribution on the part of God. It is to prevent an eternity of sin that God denies them access...

What does God actually say? “That you eat the fruit and I’ll execute you?” That God will kill them for their disobedience? No, he simply says they will die. What does that tell us? That this was the inevitable result of breaking the relationship with God, not that God did anything to them... Ideas of payment and expiation assume that God imposed a penalty on sin. Sin is the broken relationship—that is the key. Sin is lost trust. Only as we accept this understanding can such confusion be cleared up, since the answer to a broken relationship is a restored relationship. We may think that to call sin a disease is helpful, but even here we can be mistaken because then we think that what needs to happen is to provide some kind of antidote or antivirus, whatever. No—sin is only a disease metaphorically—you can’t see sin under a microscope!

The tragedy of the Fall has led to many ideas about what went wrong. To some this is God being “picky” or even malevolent, setting up Adam and Eve with the

expectation that they would fail. Some medieval theologians considered the fall from grace as something positive, the “felix culpa,” or “happy sin,” because then it allowed God to demonstrate how much he loves us and to show his grace which would not have been possible if we had not sinned. Others have questioned the justice of God in creating beings liable to sin and then punishing them for having these faults. Some believe that the Fall teaches the doctrine of original sin, which makes every human being liable for the sins of our first parents, a punishment visited by God on all generations—which hardly makes him out to be a God of justice. Others too dismiss the concept of the Fall as a “fairy tale” produced only to explain the world, having no relevance today.

It’s interesting that the Devil should so want to confuse humanity about the Fall and its consequences. Every image of God noted in the previous descriptions paints God in an unpleasant light. Either he does not exist, does not care, does not act justly, does not demonstrate grace, or does not truly love us.

All such concepts are false. Only by understanding the penalty of sin as an innate consequence of the broken relationship with God can we see how God restores and repairs the damage done. Only by recognizing that God is not as the Devil has painted him will we ever wish to come to him for forgiveness and healing. And only as we accept his ongoing life-changing presence will we be made new and prepared for the life to come.

The issue of what has gone wrong is absolutely essential if we are to understand how God makes it right. The tension between the existence of suffering and evil and a loving God is at the heart of the answers God is revealing in the great controversy. The rebellion of Lucifer and the origin of evil is no myth, but the essential perspective to understanding where we are, where sin came from, and where God wishes to lead us to. The defamation of God by the Accuser demands answers that can only come through demonstration, not mere claims. This practical revelation of the nature and character of God is ongoing, and is time-consuming, but the only way to truly prove God’s motivation and intent.

Ellen White Comments

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109}

Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God... The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. {5BC 1132}.

Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. {LHU 83}