

The Fall of Man

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Adam and Eve were the crowning jewels of God's creation. They were endowed with His image. This trait was to be used to fill the earth with God's glory. They were instructed to reproduce and tend the earth as good stewards (Gen. 1:28, 2:15). They kept this trust for a time. Sadly, their lives dramatically changed in Genesis chapter three.

The serpent tempted Eve and effectively tricked her into eating from the forbidden tree. Then, she persuaded Adam to eat from this tree. Sin and death enter the world through these actions. In time, God confronted the serpent and the first couple. Each was punished. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden. Yet, God promised to defeat the serpent and redeem the human family through the seed of woman (Gen. 3:15).

The events of Eden represent a case study in the natures of God and man. They show us how our relationship with God can be sustained or ruined. Let's take a closer look at the fall of Adam and Eve.

Features of the Fall of Man

1. God's will was clearly expressed and understood. We do not know all the details of the relationship between God and Adam and Eve. Without question, Adam knew his Creator. God had greatly enriched Adam's life by the gift of Eve. Also, God gave Adam and Eve a purpose and a restriction. By fulfilling their purpose and abiding by God's restriction, Adam and Eve lived in harmony with one another and God.

Adam and Eve were not unclear about their purpose or how to fulfill it. When questioned by the serpent, Eve expressed a complete understanding of God's law. She knew how to live faithfully to the Creator.

2. God permitted man self-determination. Adam and Eve possessed self-determination. They may have made many choices in their marriage and stewardship of the Garden. God was not specific in how they were to tend the Garden. They would have to learn and decide on methods for caring for the Garden. Of course, poor choices were made in Genesis three. God did not stop Adam and Eve from making bad choices. He permitted them to make decisions and they bore the consequences.

3. Truth was distorted. A crafty serpent is introduced in Genesis chapter three. The serpent used deception to gain influence with Eve. He asked Eve, "...Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1). Eve responded by stating what God had actually said: "...We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Gen. 3:2-3).

Then, the deceitful serpent distorted the truth: "But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5). Of course, this was a lie. The irony of what the serpent told Eve was that Eve was already like God. Adam was already like God. They were made in the image of God. However, the distortion of truth caused Eve to reevaluate everything she knew about God, herself, and life.

4. A distorted mind led to a distorted heart. The serpent distorted the mind of Eve. With a distorted perspective, she looked at the forbidden tree differently. Before the distortion, Eve desired to be like God by living in harmony with Him and Adam. However, a distorted mind led to a distorted heart. Her heart's desire changed: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6). Once the serpent changed Eve's desire, he ruled her.

5. Sin. Sin was the culminating act of a distorted mind and heart. Sin was committed in an attempt to fulfill wrong desires. When Eve's desire was right, she obeyed God and brought Him glory. Her life was fulfilling. Just the opposite occurred when her desires became selfish. Now, the human race would experience decay and death.

6. Exile. Everything changed after Adam and Eve sinned. Stewardship became harsh. Childbearing became painful. Decay and death were inescapable realities. Additionally, Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden. They were banished from the place of tranquility. However, this punishment was given with their best interest in mind: "Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Gen. 3:22).

Learning from the Fall of Man

1. God makes Himself known to man. God has consistently revealed Himself and His will to the human race. Most significantly, God has revealed Himself through Jesus (Heb. 1:1-3). Therefore, we have no excuse for being ignorant of Him or His expectations (Rom. 1:19-25).

2. Truth can be distorted. Distortions cause intellectual dilemmas. When confronted with a distortion, we will respond in one of two ways. We will change our perspective according to the distortion or we will reject the distortion and hold to what we know to be true. There is danger in aligning our minds to a distortion.

3. The heart's desire matters. We all have desire. Our desire is influenced by our minds. When our mind is focused on God, our desire will be intent on being with Him. When our mind is focused on self, our desire will be intent on gratifying selfishness. Selfish desires lead to sin. Sin only produces death (Rom. 5:12; Jas. 1:14-15).

4. We must desire to be with God. The desire to be with God is to be the chief human desire. If we allow a distortion to change this desire, we will sin and be exiled from our Creator.

If we use the truth of God's existence and rule to guard our hearts, we will remain focused on drawing closer to Him (Jas. 4:8).

Conclusion

Thankfully, the human race was not doomed by the actions of Adam and Eve. God crushed Satan by the seed of woman: Jesus. By faith in Jesus, the Creator's image can be restored in us. Once restored, we can fill the earth with God's glory in the hope of being eternally united to Him.