

The Antagonist Enters Early: The Fall of Man

Chapter 1 of Genesis provides a broad overview of the creation event, culminating with the fashioning of man. Chapter two provides a little closer look at the process of man's formation. We find, as we noted previously, that man received a personal imprint from His creator as God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 1:7)." While woman was not yet created, she would be made from man's rib and would share in that same life-giving spirit. She would join man in the garden, which God had given man to tend, and here she would be a "helper comparable [fit, suitable] to him (Genesis 2:18)." Woman would not be man's servant or tool, but she would be the thing that would make him complete. It appears in this sense that now man became mankind and was fully made in the image of God, for they were now "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) and no longer separate beings.

The relationship was idyllic and innocent. They had one task to perform, "tend and keep" the garden, and one command to obey, "... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat... (Genesis 2:15-17)." They also faced a singular consequence if they disobeyed that one command... death. God said that if they should eat of that forbidden tree they would "surely die." The death was not immediately upon the consumption of the fruit of the tree, but was the result of being banned from this idyllic garden wherein they held a special relationship with their Creator. Expulsion from the garden would remove them from contact with another special tree, the "tree of life (Genesis 3:22)." All these real events and elements become symbols for the effect of sin upon the relationship of man to his Creator. Obedience maintains a relationship with God which provides access to eternal life. Sin separates man from his Creator and, thus, removes him from that source of life. A world that does not have the constant regenerating power of God degenerates and, ultimately, dies. This is true in the physical, non-living world and it is true in the living world. The universe is following a decaying path to destruction; human life is doing, has done, and will continue to do the same. Nothing can deter that eventuality except Divine intervention, another key point in the biblical story.

But, again, we are getting ahead of our story. You might be asking the question "What happened?" Why did not Adam and Eve stay away from that one tree in the garden? Why could they not obey one little command? Why could they not make one simple sacrifice and save all of mankind from this decay, destruction, distress, and despair? The answer is that 1) they were exactly like you and me, and 2) evil is real, it is tempting, and it is pernicious.

Chapter 3: enter Satan! Satan lured Eve to try the fruit of the forbidden tree and Adam not only allowed Eve to disobey the command that God had given to him, but participated fully in it. Eve could see, supposedly Adam also (Genesis 3:6), that the fruit of that tree was good to look at, good to eat, and, above all else, capable of making them wise. It would give them knowledge and knowledge leads to power. Power leads to prestige, and prestige is the food of choice for the ego. Satan asserted

that it was o.k. to eat of that fruit because they would not die. In a sense it was true. They did not die, i.e. not immediately, and the cause of death was not poison in the fruit. The lie was nicely packaged in a deception that disguised the ultimate consequences and was received as believable by human pride. Adam and Eve could now be wise like God, but, unlike Him, they would ultimately be dead. Knowledge of good and evil does not grant life. Satan conveniently left that out. Satan prodded Adam and Eve like he prods the mindless murderer to gratify his lust for hate. Following the urging of God's enemy, he destroys the object of his hate, and often any others in his path, only to find that the evil prodder abandons his charge at his darkest and most treacherous moment. There the perpetrator, left alone to contemplate the evil he has done, often takes his own life. Adam and Eve listened to the voice of Satan and tempted by the promise that they could be like God, ate of the tree that was not theirs to have. In the moment of their disobedience, Satan leaves them alone. They had nothing to do but try to hide from the One no one can hide from. All that was left for them was to face the consequences of their actions. Read Genesis 3:14-24.