

Genesis – Lesson 4

The Fall of Humanity

Read Genesis 3:1-7.

1. (a) Do you think that Adam and Eve were *meant* to eat from the “*the tree of knowledge*” or “*the tree of life*?” What would they have *gained* from doing so? How does this relate to God’s *divine decree*?

It is clear from God’s command that they were *not* meant to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; by prohibiting them from doing so God implicitly assumes that he never meant for them to eat from it. The tree of life has the *opposite* rendering: since no command is ever given regarding it, we can assume that they *were* meant to eat from it and live by consuming its fruit. By eating from the tree of life, the assumption is that they would find the nourishment that would grant them immortality (or sustain their immortality; see 1b below); eating from the other tree would produce disobedience and a *direct* knowledge of evil leading to shame and a broken relationship with the Creator. However, stepping back from the story, it is reasonable to assume that because God had *purposed* to save a people by sending his Son *before* he created the world (see Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8), it can be concluded that God *intended* for the first human pair to eat from the tree of knowledge. It is *only* through this disobedience that sin could enter the world and the *purpose* of God to save humanity be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God’s *divine decree* to create a people and then rescue a people for himself through the redemptive work of Christ can *only* be fulfilled if Adam and Eve sin. Thus, the original sin was, in fact, *purposed* by God as all things are. He did not *tempt* them to sin, nor did he *cause* them to sin, but he *foreordained* that they would, and they acted in accordance with his purposes and plans.

(b) Would God have granted Adam and Eve “*knowledge*” and/or “*life*” if they had *not* eaten from the tree? If so, *how*?

Adam and Eve were *innocent*: they had no experiential knowledge of evil, they were physically immortal, and they possessed the *unhindered* ability to choose. They *already* possessed life immortal, and their knowledge of good and evil was already a part of their nature as beings created in the image of God. So, eating from *either* of these trees was unnecessary, although eating from the tree of life was allowed (and, maybe, encouraged by God) as a part of the relationship that they had with their Creator.

2. (a) In what three (3) ways did the serpent *tempt* Eve? Which was the most *difficult* to resist? *Why*?

First, he *questioned* the command of God, as to whether Eve *understood* what God had commanded (3:1). Second, the serpent *denied* the explicit statement of God regarding the consequence of eating from the tree (3:4). Third, the serpent *offered* Eve something that might be better than what she currently possessed (3:5). The *third* of these was probably the most irresistible to her. Eve herself was able to deflect the serpent’s first claim, and the second statement would have been difficult for her to grasp, given her lack of *experiential knowledge* of death. But the third, that she would *gain* something by her actions, compels her to see the fruit on the tree as inviting and to *desire* to have something (i.e. wisdom; see v. 6). So, for *this* reason, she eats.

(b) *Where* was Adam while Eve was being tempted? How does this *relate* to Paul's assumption in Romans 5:12-14?

According to 3:6, Adam was *with her*. In other words, it would appear that Adam was there observing what was taking place, or (at a minimum) was nearby and able to intervene without doing so. Paul assumes (then) that *Adam is guilty* and that the first sin came *through him*. Although Eve is the *direct* one guilty of sin, it is *Adam* who is held accountable because he *failed* to subdue the serpent (and his wife!) and prevent this tragedy from happening. Adam is the *federal head* of the human race (in Paul's mind); because the original command is given to Adam, *he* stands as the one representing the human race before God in this original sin. Eve may have eaten from the tree, but Adam is held accountable before God (and humanity) for his *failure* to do what God commanded.

(c) What were the *immediate* consequences of their act?

The immediate consequences included: 1) their eyes were "*opened*" (v. 7a); they now had an *explicit* knowledge of evil and disobedience, 2) they became aware of their "*nakedness*" (v. 7b); for the first time they saw themselves as *exposed*, and 3) they were ashamed (v. 8); they hid themselves from God because they *knew* that what they had done would be displeasing to God (see 3b below).

Read Genesis 3:8-19.

3. (a) What do you learn about God's *relationship* with Adam and Eve from v. 8?

The appearance of God "*walking in the garden*" reveals a number of things to us: 1) that this was probably the *norm* for how God related to his human creation, 2) that God took a human "*form*" in relating to them, and 3) that the relationship that God had with them was deeply *personal* and *relational*. This verse tells us that God had a very close and intimate relationship with the first human pair, that he appeared to them in a form similar to their own, and that he walked and talked with them in a way that *no* human has ever experienced. This, of course, is a *foreshadowing* of the coming of Jesus, for 1) it is the Second Person of the Trinity who is here (given our more *progressive* understanding of him throughout Scripture), and 2) the coming of the Second Adam would also allow God to walk and talk with humanity, in a way very similar to the close and personal relationship God had with Adam and Eve.

(b) How did Adam and Eve *react* to God after they sinned? How does this reaction *continue* today?

Adam and Eve *hid themselves* from God because they *knew* that what they had done was wrong in the sight of God and that the relationship they had with him would *never* be the same. This is how humanity has "*gotten along*" with God ever since: because we have sinned (and are sinners) we "*hide*" from God. We do not *desire* to have any relationship with this God (on his terms), and we *rebel* against any requirements that he places upon us (see Romans 1:18ff). We no longer "*seek*" any relationship with God, but (instead) seek to do our own will and follow our own path (see Romans 3:9ff). As fallen human beings, we are perfectly content to live *without* God, and even go so far as to reject his existence (see 4b below).

4. (a) List the *curses* imposed on the serpent, Adam and Eve and explain *why* they were given.

The serpent was cursed to become of *less value* than any other animal, and to crawl on his belly in the dust (v. 14). He was also cursed to be destroyed by the “seed” of the woman (i.e. her eventual offspring; v. 15; see 5 below). Eve was cursed to pain in childbirth (v. 16a), and to an *unnatural* desire for (or against) her husband that would be offset by *his* dominance over her (v. 16b). Adam was cursed to toil to produce food from a *uncooperative* earth (vv. 17-19a) and to his end in death and a return to the ground from which he was formed. The curses upon the serpent are (of course) curses upon the Tempter; they were given to demonstrate that God’s purposes of redemption would eventually destroy him through the One sent for that purpose (i.e. Jesus Christ). The curses upon Eve were designed to demonstrate to her the importance of *submission*, particularly the submission of obedience to God. The curses upon Adam were given because Adam had *failed* to subdue the earth and everything in it, thus it would dominate *him* from this time forward.

- (b) From Romans 1:18-32, list some of the *natural* consequences of sin that continue in humans.

Some of the natural consequences of sin that continue in humanity include: 1) the suppression of the knowledge of God (vv. 18-20), 2) a refusal to honor God or give thanks to him for the gifts of life (v. 21a); 3) a futility of thinking, particularly about *ourselves* (v. 21b-22); 4) a worship of things in the created order rather than of God (v. 23); 5) impurity of heart and mind (vv. 24-25); 6) dishonorable physical passions, particularly homosexuality (vv. 26-27); 7) and every conceivable form of unrighteous behavior (vv. 28-32).

5. Who is the “seed” (or “offspring”) of v. 15? What is the *prophecy* that God makes here?

The seed is One who would come to destroy the Tempter; he is a future ancestor of Eve (i.e. a human being) who would suffer at the hands of the Tempter, but would ultimately defeat him and destroy him. The progressive revelation of Scripture informs us that this “seed” is Jesus Christ, who came from heaven as the Son of God into human flesh and, through his death and resurrection, would overcome the Tempter and destroy him. This is known as the *proto-evangelion*, the *initial* prophecy of the gospel.

Read Genesis 3:20-24.

6. (a) Before God banished them from the Garden, what did he *do* for them? Why is this *significant*?

According to v. 21, God made for Adam and his wife skins to cover their nakedness. To do this, God had to *kill* an animal and use the hide of the animal as clothing. This is significant because, in this act, Adam now *sees* with full clarity what his sin has cost. Death has now come into the world, and Adam hears the fatal cry of the animal to remind him of the horrific cost of his disobedience. But, it is in this act that God *foreshadows* the coming of his Son, the Lamb of God, whose death cry would robe a people in his own righteousness. God uses this act to remind Adam of his sin, but also to give him *hope* that one day a full *restoration* would become available.

- (b) *Why* does God banish them from the Garden? According to Revelation 22:1-2, what will he eventually *restore*?

According to vv. 22, God banishes the first human pair from the Garden because he does not want them to eat from the tree of life and live forever in this fallen, shameful, guilt-ridden, continually degrading state. Death would be *merciful*, in that it would stop the tide of physical degradation that came as a result of sin. However, the Tree of Life will eventually be restored on the New Earth, and human beings, in their glorified state, will once again be allowed to eat from it and enjoy the eternal nourishment it will provide.