

The Fall of Man

Genesis 2:16-17, 3:1-6

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Genesis 2:16-17 – *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

What was the first prophecy in Scripture?

When the divine work of Creation had been completed and Adam had been created, God gave him the first command which is in the form of a conditional prophecy.

- God not only made His command clear to Adam, but He also clearly explained the consequences for disobedience.

What is this tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

The presence of this tree was the presence of a choice for Adam. It was good because for Adam to be a creature of free will, there had to be a choice, some opportunity to rebel against God.

- If there is never a command or never something forbidden there can then never be choice. God wants our love and obedience to Him to be the love and obedience of choice.

How have things changed for us since Adam’s choice?

Adam had one way he could sin and we have countless ways. There are many trees of temptation in our lives, while Adam had only one.

What is the significance of Adam receiving this command before Eve was in the picture?

God had not yet brought woman out of man. Adam’s role was to be the spiritual leader... Eve was to learn of this command via Adam.

Genesis 3:1-6 – *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in*

the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Who was this serpent?

The text here does not clearly identify the serpent as Satan, but the rest of the Bible makes it clear this is Satan appearing as a serpent.

- In Ezekiel 28:13-19 tells us that Satan was in Eden. Many other passages associate a serpent with Satan (such as Job 26:13 and Isaiah 51:9). Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 speak of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan.
- Apparently, before the curse pronounced in Genesis 3:14-15, the serpent was different than what we know today as a serpent. This creature didn’t start as a snake as we know it, it became one.

What do we know about Satan?

Ezekiel 28 tells us Satan, before his fall, was an angel of the highest rank and prominence, even something of a leader of worship in heaven.

- Isaiah 14 tells us Satan’s fall had to do with his desire to be equal to or greater than God, to set his will against God’s will.

Why did Satan appear to Eve as a serpent?

Satan probably possessed a serpent.

- Demonic spirits have the ability to indwell human or animal bodies (Luke 8:33).

The serpent was more cunning than any beast: Satan’s effectiveness is often found in His cunning, crafty ways. His choosing a cunning animal reflected his nature.

2 Corinthians 11:3 – *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

What was strange about Eve carrying on a conversation with a serpent?

Perhaps Satan made the voice supernaturally seem to come forth from the serpent, or Satan communicated this to Eve in her thoughts.

- Perhaps it was normal in the Garden of Eden to converse with animals.
 - Or maybe since everything was new to the first humans, this was not considered to be a big deal.
- What Satan said is more important than how he said it.

Why did Satan approach Eve rather than Adam?

Satan brought his temptation against the woman because he perceived she was more vulnerable to attack since she had not received the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil directly from God.

- Perhaps Satan knew by observation Adam didn't do an effective job of communicating to Eve what the LORD told him. This failure on Adam's part made Eve more vulnerable to temptation.

It was also in God's plan to allow Satan to tempt Eve. If Adam would have sinned first, she might have a partial excuse before God: "I was simply obeying the head of our home."

How did Satan tempt Eve?

After Eve was created, Satan approached her in the form of a serpent (cf. Rev. 20:2). The serpent's question implies God's restriction necessarily deprived her of something that is rightfully hers.

- Satan's attack was leveled against the Word of God. If he could make Eve confused about what God said, then his battle was partially won.

How is Satan undermining God's Word today?

From the beginning, Satan has tried to undermine God's people by undermining God's Word. He can undermine just as effectively by getting us to neglect God's Word as by getting us to doubt it.

How did Satan alter the Word of God?

Satan took God's positive command in Genesis 2:16-17 (*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat*) and rephrased it in a purely negative way: "*God won't let you eat of every tree.*"

What did Eve have to say in response to Satan?

In her reply Eve added the restriction that she was not to touch the fruit and omitted the word "surely."

What mistakes did Eve make?

Eve's first mistake was in even carrying on a discussion with the serpent. We are called to talk to the devil, but never to have a discussion with him. We simply and strongly tell him, "*The Lord rebuke you!*" (Jude 9).

Eve's knowledge of what she should not do is partially correct, but what she doesn't seem to know makes her all the more vulnerable to deception.

- Eve does not seem to know the name of this tree; she only calls it the tree in the midst of the garden, instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Eve misquoted God's command to Adam. Her words, you shall not eat it and lest you die are close enough, but she added to the command when she said, nor shall you touch it.
- Eve's ignorance of exactly what God said was really Adam's responsibility. He did a poor job of relating to his wife the word God gave him.

Why was adding to God's Word dangerous?

While it was a good idea to completely avoid the temptation; no good could come from massaging the fruit you're not supposed to eat.

- But it is a dangerous thing to teach the doctrines of man as the commandments of God (Matt 15:9).
- An erroneous understanding of God's Word gives you a vulnerability for Satan's attack.

How did Satan exploit Eve's response?

The devil immediately attacked the certainty of death by denying that Eve would surely die. He found fault with the restriction by affirming that when the fruit was eaten, they would be like God and would know good and evil.

- What he did not say was that they would know the good without being able to do it and know the evil without being able to avoid it.

What was the big lie of Satan?

You will not surely die: Satan planted the seed of doubt about God's Word, and he exposed Eve's incomplete understanding of God's Word. Then he moves in for the kill, with an outright contradiction of what God said.

- Satan can only effectively work when he has established a foothold.

This is why we are called to never *give place to the devil* (Ephesians 4:27). This shows how remarkable it is that Jesus could say, "*Satan has nothing in Me*" (John 14:30).

How did Satan's lie cause Eve to doubt God?

Satan's direct challenge tries to get Eve to doubt the *goodness of God*. If God lies to her, how can He be good?

- Satan also tries to get Eve to doubt the *badness of sin*. If this fruit is something good for her, why doesn't God want her to have it?

Satan wants us to see sin as something good that a bad God doesn't want us to have.

- His lie to us is "sin is not bad, and God is not good."

What made Satan's lie believable?

In the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened: Satan's temptation was all the more powerful because there was *truth* in it. It was true **your eyes will be opened**, and this was fulfilled (Genesis 3:7). But their eyes were instantly opened to their own sin and rebellion.

- It is as if a deaf person was promised to be able to hear again, but all they could hear was screaming.
- Their eyes were opened, they did know good and evil, but not as *gods*.

A complete lie is rarely effective in temptation. If Satan doesn't couple it with some truth, there is little power in his temptation.

What is the problem with wanting to be like God?

This is how Satan himself fell, wanting to be equal with God. The goal of becoming God is the center of so many non-Christian religions, including Mormonism. But in our desire to be gods, we become like Satan.

- It was Satan who said, *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High* (Isaiah 14:13-14).
- In contrast, we should be like Jesus, who came as a servant (Matthew 20:28).

The New Age movement and the desire to be "god" are just as strong as ever. If all the people interested in the New Age were brought together in a church-like organization, it would be the third largest religious denomination in America.

- More than 90% of the subscribers to New Age Magazine are college graduates, compared to half the general population.

How did Satan's temptation follow the pattern described in 1 John 2:16?

1 John 2:16 – *For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

The temptation which Eve faced was her belief that the fruit was good and appealed to actual desires of man described in 1 John as *"the cravings of sinful man."*

- That it was *"pleasing to the eye"* corresponds to *"the lust of his eyes."* That it was *"desirable for gaining wisdom"* appealed to pride which relates to *"the boasting of what he has and does."*

Where else have we seen this pattern of temptation?

In approaching Christ in His temptation Satan tempted Christ along these same lines:

- appeal to the desires of the natural man appeal to hunger, and
- appeal to pride in tempting Christ to cast Himself down from the temple as the Son of God.

- In the revelation of the glory of the kingdoms of the world, Satan appealed to the desire of the eyes for beauty (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:13).

The same avenues of temptation are illustrated in Saul who tempted by pride (1 Sam. 13:1-14), David who was tempted by desires of the human nature (2 Sam. 11:2-27), and the desire for beautiful things as illustrated in Solomon (1 Kings 10:14-29; 2 Chr 9:13-28).

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- Perhaps Satan knew by observation Adam didn't do an effective job of communicating to Eve what the LORD told him. This failure on Adam's part made Eve more vulnerable to temptation.

What rationalization did Eve make in thinking the tree was good for food?

Eve's perceptions were partially true and partially false. The tree was *not* really **good for food**, though Eve was deceived into thinking it was so.

- The fruit probably was **pleasant to the eyes**, though that shouldn't mean much. It was only true in Eve's *mind* that the tree was **desirable to make one wise**.
- Eve was *deceived* when she sinned. In her mind, she thought she was doing something good for herself.

To what did Eve's temptation lead?

She took of its fruit and ate: Satan could tempt Eve, but she didn't have to take it. The taking was all her doing. Satan didn't make her eat the fruit, Eve was responsible. She couldn't rightly say, "the devil made me do it."

What provision does God make for temptation?

1 Cor 10:13 – *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

As with every temptation, God had made for Eve a *way of escape*. She could have simply run from Satan and the tree, but Eve didn't take God's way of escape.

What made Eve's sin of giving into temptation worse?

She also gave to her husband with her: Not only did Eve sin, but also she became the agent of temptation for Adam.

- But when Adam ate, he was not deceived as Eve was. Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, in open rebellion against God.

Why do we associate the Original Sin of mankind with Adam and not Eve?

Romans 5:12 – *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned*

It was Adam and not Eve who bears the responsibility for the fall of the human race and for the introduction of death into the created order...

- Eve was tricked into sinning; Adam knew exactly what he was doing (1 Timothy 2:14).

What is the significance of sin being passed on to humanity through the man and not the woman?

This made it possible for Jesus to be born without a sin nature because He did not have a human father.

Why did Adam sin so readily?

Some have speculated that Adam sinned because he didn't want Eve to be alone in the fall and so he ate the fruit out of a romantic impulse. (And, besides, what man wouldn't eat the food given to him by a naked woman.)

- Whatever Adam's rationale was, it does not make his sin any less rebellious. Rebellion against God is not "better" when motivated by a romantic impulse.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Satan's temptations are not new, his same old tricks still work.
- Satan can tempt us but we don't have to succumb
- Sin can be rationalized but that doesn't change that it is an affront to God and has consequences.