

Paradise lost. This momentous chapter presents the basis and explanation of all the history of mankind and sets the stage for God's marvelous display of the glory of His grace and the glory of His power to all creation. That is what the Bible is all about. The simple but profound story is very familiar, though it is the basis for many irreverent cartoons, jokes and stories commonly circulated. It is detectable in the legends and myths handed down by many people around the world. Its theme is found behind the plot of many novels, plays and movies as well. It is told so simply a little child can understand and begin to grasp its message of responsibility and doom for sinners. Adults may attempt to shrug it off as a harmless fable but they know its message well. And they can't help but notice the consequences of sin daily in the world around them and in their own lives as well. Is this nursery story for real? Yes! Really? Both tragically and wonderfully, yes! And it couldn't be simpler or more profound. We are all lost sinners who have inherited a sinful nature from our first parents. And we each have proved that fact by sinning ourselves. We are accountable to God our Creator. Paul explains it all.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

You and I are born sinners by nature and are subject to death because we sin. But Christ has intervened.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Death. But Adam didn't die the day he sinned. He lived over 900 years. Oh, but he did die, spiritually! He was spiritually separated from God just as his spirit was separated from his body when he finally did die. And his physical decline toward death began that first day he sinned as well. The Hebrew, "dying thou shalt die," puts it precisely. Whose fault is it? God's? God's because He made man a free spirit able to make his own life and death decisions? No! Ironically "free will" is the most passionately defended of the so-called "human rights." Yet man's free will is not really free. It is bent and twisted by his own sinful nature. Adam and Eve were indeed innocent, intelligent creatures without knowledge of good and evil. They each had a free will to make life decisions. God had made them able to respond voluntarily to His desires and to fellowship with Him. To actually love Him as He loved them. Not mere programmed robots or trained animals.

The Serpent. Scripture reveals who the Serpent really is. He was created before mankind. He is called Lucifer and was the crowning protective cherub over God's throne. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 tell his story, how he was deposed by God from his prominent position because he was lifted up in pride. And sin was found in him.

Luke 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Lucifer took a following of angels with him when he rebelled. He is described in many forms, ranging from an angel of light, 2Corinthians 11:14, to a great red dragon, Revelation 12:3. He hates the Christ, the Son of God. He wanted the throne in heaven. But it is reserved for Christ the Son. Seeking to usurp Christ's rights Satan conned Adam out of his God-given position as head of all Mankind and head over all God's creation on earth. Adam forfeited his right to that position by yielding to Satan's will when tempted.

Roman 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

The Prince of this World. Satan owns the whole earth having stolen it from Adam. When the Son became the Man Jesus, Satan sought to deceive and tempt Him to give up His rights to the earth. He even brazenly offered it to Jesus when tempting him in the wilderness,

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him

1John 5:19 (NKJV) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies [under the sway of] the wicked one.

Then Satan saw his opportunity to engineer the betrayal and crucifixion of the only sinless man to ever live on earth. Jesus refers to Satan as the prince of this world.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Christ came to conquer Satan, and retake the earth by His death on the Cross. And He has. Jesus led Satan's captives captive by dying and rising again.

Hebrews 2:2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. {captivity...: or, a multitude of captives}

2Timothy 2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Satan today. Christ died. But He rose again, victorious over

death and Satan. But Satan persists even now in seeking to usurp Christ's place as Head over the Creation, Israel and the Church. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended as Man to the right hand of God awaiting His go-ahead to return to judge the nations, including Satan. Christ will stablish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Christ being now out of reach, Satan has turned again to harassing God's people upon earth. First Israel, by the Romans, then the Church, by the Jews and the Romans. All Gentiles, all civil and pagan religious entities on earth, and much of Christendom is under Satan's sway. He is still at it. He's still using deception, delusion and the pleasures of sin to keep sinners away from the gospel. He uses the same in seeking to thwart the believers' attempts to walk with Christ our Savior. His vicious hatred for Christ often triggers outright persecution. But if that fails to stop the spread of the gospel and growth of the Church he turns to deceit and moral corruption. If he can induce men to follow him it feeds his pride and if he can induce a believer to sin, thereby dishonoring Christ, he "wins a round." So he persists in his specialties, infiltrating Christian gatherings with doctrines of demons and human reasoning, setting up religious systems, schools of philosophical opinions, erroneous teaching based upon intellectual reasonings, religious traditions, superstitions and outright lies. And he mounts attacks upon souls with trials and temptations and with fiery darts of doubts and fears, Ephesians 6:10-18.

Deceit. Satan lied to the woman while successfully tempting her to disobey God's command to her man, Adam.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

2Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; {imaginations: or, reasonings}

2Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Note how he chose to approach the woman with his deceit. The man is not said to have been deceived. He apparently knowingly partook of the forbidden fruit from her hand after she had eaten some. What was he thinking? Now therefore, the woman is not to teach because she was deceived. And she is not to usurp authority over men because she took the lead in listening to the Serpent, acting independently without consulting her husband.

1Timothy 2:8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. 11 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not

permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. [NKJV]

Christians today are to note and recognize the original sin of our first parents. We do so in our behavior, differentiating between men's and women's roles in life, particularly with respect to the Lord's things.

God sometimes uses Satan's enmity toward Christ's own to train us or discipline us when needed. One example is Job, whose story explores the whole mystery of man's relationship to God. And there are two New Testament instances given of God delivering to Satan a professing Christian who is sinning.

1Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus

1Timothy 1:20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Satan's End. In the future Satan will be cast out of heaven and, having fallen to earth, will go about persecuting the believing Jews of that time.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

Humans become his spiritual children and agents on earth.

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels

God will use Satan's implacable hatred of Christ and the believers to destroy him and his followers.

Revelation 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

After being released he will immediately go out and round up the multitude of people hiding out, chafing under the law-and-order reign of Christ to lead them in open rebellion against Him. Thus flushed out into the open God righteously will simply rain fire on them. They will be raised and judged before the Son sitting upon a great white throne. Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Satan tempted the woman with three features of the tree, These correspond to the three lusts that characterize the world,

1John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Conscience. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave mankind a conscience. The first couple had no conscience before eating of it. They didn't need it. Disobedience furnished them with the conscience they would need as sinners—the ability to discern good and evil. But this knowledge which we now are all born with doesn't give us the ability to choose the good over the evil. It just gives us the responsibility to do so. Without the serpent's urging, Eve, in her innocence, would not have even considered disobeying her husband's instructions. She was not compelled by her innocent nature to obey Satan. But she did. She made a free will choice, choosing to heed wily suggestions instead of consulting with her husband. Since the Fall every human has a conscience and a sinful nature so we cannot avoid sinning. Christ died to sin on our behalf and we can now reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Sin has no more dominion over us who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please read Romans 6:6-14.

Without Christ we cannot help but sin, though are responsible to never sin. We are free again to make wise, godly choices to please the Father rather than ourselves. We each have a conscience which can alert us to danger and a born again nature that can heed the warnings. Our consciences can be defiled by actions we take despite its warning so are not always reliable guards to good decisions and behavior. The Holy Spirit is our guide, through prayer and dependance on Christ. Some men's consciences become seared (unfeeling) and worse than none at all. 1Timothy 4:1-5.

Hebrews 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Our consciences are best trained by scripture but are usually influenced parental instruction and discipline and by laws and commandments of man, human traditions and feelings. These often will form a "weak conscience" in a person which may actually be more strict than God requires

in scripture. But in fact, if we override conscience thus formed we sin. See Romans 14 and 1Corinthians 8 and 10 for examples.

Wives and Husbands, Toil and Rivalry, Curses and Death, Promise of a Messiah born of a virgin.

She would suffer pain in childbirth,
they were sent out of the Garden,
Cherubim posted to prevent their return,
the ground was cursed to bring forth thorns and the like ,
the man was set to toil tilling the cursed turf,
perpetual enmity was established between the Seed of the woman and the Serpent,
the Seed of the woman, a man to be born of a virgin, would crush Satan's head but in the process the Serpent would wound the heel of the Seed of the Woman,
the Serpent was caused to go on its belly and eat dust,
humans were destined to die and return to the dust from which they were made.

God specifically placed the wife in subjection to her husband. But He prophesies that husbands will typically tend to exert authority to enforce her subjection, producing what sounds like a very unpleasant marital relationship indeed—more like master and slave than loving mutual submission.

Christ is our example, brothers. Love her. She will respond with respectful, loving submission.

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Walk with God personally, together in marriage and together in Christ's assembly. Let love and respect characterize our marriages and our assembly. Bless God and praise Him for His Creation and His Grace.

By Ronald Canner, March 17, 2010