



THE ENTRY OF SIN INTO THE WORLD AND ITS EFFECTS

Reading: Genesis 3

“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden” (Genesis 2:8-15)

In Genesis 2:8-15 we are given details of the delightful garden in which Adam and Eve were placed. The geographical details mentioning the rivers indicate that the area of the garden was near where the Euphrates River enters the Persian Gulf. The Bible describes the area of Eden as the tract of land stretching from the Mediterranean Sea through to the Persian Gulf (Ezekiel 31:9-18; 28:13). The garden was “*eastward in Eden*” (Genesis 2:8). Eden means “delight or pleasure” and this garden could certainly be so described.

We are told of two particular trees that were placed in the midst of this garden. They were “*the tree of life*” and “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” (v 9).

“Thou shalt not eat of it” (Genesis 2:16-17)

Adam was given the enjoyable task “to dress and keep” the garden. However God placed a restriction on Adam and Eve saying, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it”. God had well catered for their every need and there was an abundance of food, so this law did not restrict the satisfaction of their needs. Why did God give this law? Adam and Eve were created to render glory to their Creator. It is under trial that **faith** and **love** are tested. They had a “free will”. Would they render faithful and loving obedience to their Maker or would they disobey His command?

Not only was this law given to them, but the penalty for disobedience was also clearly stated: “**In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**”. What would such a penalty mean to Adam? Although he had been created “very good” like all the other creatures that were made, his life was one of probation. His destiny was to be determined by his obedience or disobedience to his Maker.

Why was the penalty of death to be given for disobedience to this simple command? Let us look at the situation from God’s viewpoint. It was God who established the law that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). All that He had created was “very good” but sin would disrupt this glorious harmony between God and His creation.

What is Sin?

“*Sin is the transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4). A better rendering is: “*Sin is lawlessness*”. We need to appreciate how God views sin. When we sin we are in effect saying to God, “I will not do what You ask, but I will do what I want to do.” We remove God from the central position of our faith and love, and enthrone sin (the desire to serve our own desires and passions; James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:15-17) in the place that is rightfully God’s. Thus God was right in sentencing sinners to death. The alternative was for God to abdicate His supreme position and allow sin to rule for ever in men’s lives. The sentence of death for sinners shows God’s wisdom and mercy. If He had allowed sinners to live for ever, man would have been without hope of ever being saved from sin and its consequences.

“Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:1-7)

Adam and Eve were now put to the test. We read of this in the discussion between the serpent and Eve.

“**the serpent**” The serpent was one of the creatures that God had made (cp 2 Corinthians 11:2-3). The Hebrew for serpent is “nahawsh”, from a root meaning “to perceive or observe”, and is translated “*diligently observe*” (1 Kings 20:33), and “*learn by experience*” (Genesis 30:27). We must note that the serpent, like all animals, had the capacity to reason to satisfy its sensual desires. However **it could not reason on a moral plane**. Animals do not have this capacity as they are amoral creatures (that is, they are without moral characteristics, they act from instinct). God gave the serpent the power of speech. But the serpent could only express the animal mind, which is unenlightened and unable to comprehend divine moral principles.



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“subtil” = “shrewd, crafty” (cp Job 5:12; 15:5). The word is also used in a good sense as **“prudent”** (Proverbs 12:16,23; 14:8,15). Christ mentioned this quality of the serpent when speaking to his disciples (Matthew 10:16).

God gave the serpent the ability to speak and so it commenced the following discussion with the woman. The serpent had observed and heard what God had spoken, and therefore questioned Eve. Eve replied, truthfully stating the prohibition that God had placed upon eating from the tree of knowledge. She not only spoke of the restriction but also of the penalty for disobedience: **“Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”** (v3). **Eve understood this quite clearly.**

“Ye shall not surely die” This was the first lie. The serpent was not reasoning on a moral plane whether it was right or wrong to eat the fruit. It could not do this, as it was an animal. Its animal reasoning saw an advantage in eating the fruit. It would make the man and the woman equal to the angels. It said, **“Ye shall be as gods** (Hebrew “*elohim*”, or “*mighty ones*”), *knowing good and evil*”.

The woman was beguiled by the serpent’s reasoning (Genesis 3:13). She had begun to doubt that God meant what He said. By putting from her mind the commandment of God, she now looked at the tree and its fruit in a different way:

- 1 She saw that **“it was good for food”**. She had never looked at it like this before, for God had said that they could **“freely eat”** of all the other trees that were in the garden, and this had satisfied her.
- 2 **“It was pleasant to the eyes”**. It had never looked as attractive as it did now. How true it is that forbidden fruit always looks so much sweeter!
- 3 **“It was a tree to be desired to make one wise”**. She saw the opportunity to be equal with the angels, knowing good and evil. Her pride was excited at this prospect.

These ideas which came into her mind as a result of listening to the serpent’s reasoning, aroused in her the three “lusts” of which John speaks in 1 John 2:15-17.

These three “lusts” were:

- 1 **“the lust of the flesh,**
- 2 **the lust of the eyes,**
- 3 **the pride of life”**

John points out that these lusts are **“not of the Father, but of the world”**.

We should understand that the word “lust” is used in the Bible to speak of those strong desires that tempt us to sin. All of us have desires to satisfy the natural needs of our bodies. For example, we all become hungry and desire food. God made man and woman with a desire for a partner. These natural desires, when fulfilled in harmony with God’s moral laws, do not result in sin. However, when desires seek their gratification outside God’s moral law, they lead to sin. The Apostle Paul calls these desires “the motions (or passions) of sins” which, if followed, “bring forth fruit unto death” (Romans 7:5). Such sinful desires are called “deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22), for they can deceive a person into transgressing God’s law. Thus James says: “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

Because the woman was deceived by the reasoning of the serpent, she introduced sin into the world. Having eaten of the fruit, she then enticed her husband to eat. Instead of upholding the word of God, Adam listened to Eve and deliberately ignored the commandment. The effect was immediate. Their eyes were opened, their consciences aroused, and they knew that they had sinned. The immediate effects of sin were fear and shame. This was a new experience for Adam, who said, **“I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself”** (v10). Nakedness throughout the Bible became representative of shame as a result of sin (Revelation 16:15-16).

Then followed God’s interrogation of Adam. Adam first endeavoured to blame God for giving him the woman, and then Eve who gave him the fruit to eat. Then Eve was questioned and she blamed the serpent: **“The serpent *beguiled me* and I did eat”** (v13).



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Paul in his writings refers to this incident on two occasions (2 Corinthians 11:2-3; 1 Timothy 2:14). It is always helpful to have passages of the Bible explained by other inspired writers in the Bible.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman” (Genesis 3:14-15)

God now addressed the serpent. There is no doubt from the language used in verse 14 that God was speaking to **one of His animal creation**.

“I will put enmity” God instituted this enmity between His ways and the ways of sin (Romans 8:7; James 4:4).

“between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed” The serpent was the father of that sinful way of thinking that dominates those who allow their natural feelings to develop into one or more of those three “lusts” or sinful desires. Thus both John the Baptist and Jesus speak of those religious leaders in their day as *“a generation of vipers”* because they walked in the ways of sin and wickedness (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; cp John 8:44).

“Her seed”, that is **the seed of the woman**, points to the Lord Jesus Christ who, though born of a woman, was the Son of God (Luke 1:33-35). He always did the will of his Father, never giving in to the will of the flesh: *“Not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42; John 5:30). In his death he finally *“condemned sin in the flesh”* (Romans 8:3), destroying that mortal nature that he inherited from Adam—the nature that gives rise to sin in us but which never led to sin in him.

“it shall bruise thy head” Other translations use “he”, thus pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord dealt a fatal blow to the thinking of sin when in death he *“destroyed that which had the power of death”* in his own nature (Hebrews 2:14).

“thou shalt bruise his heel” In the mortal combat that was fought against “sin” by the Lord Jesus Christ, he was victorious and destroyed the power of sin, but in doing so he was wounded “in the heel” in that he died. The bruise however was only of a temporary nature for God raised him from the dead, never to die again (Acts 2:24; Romans 6:9).

Jesus Christ Explains this Incident

Jesus states that through the serpent’s lie it became both the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44). He uses the word “devil” to define the spirit that motivated the serpent. The word for “devil” (Greek “diabolos”) is also translated *“slanderers”* (1 Timothy 3:7), and *“false accusers”* (2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3). The word “diabolos” is used to personify that natural tendency to sin which can mis-represent and oppose God’s ways.

A simple example of this is seen in the following quotation that speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in overcoming sin. *“He (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same (“flesh and blood” nature that is common to all mankind); that through death he might destroy that which has the power of death (sin has this power; Romans 6:23; 5:12), that is, the devil (Greek, diabolos)”* (Hebrews 2:14). Thus Jesus, who shared the same sin-prone nature as all men, was tempted in all points as we are (Hebrews 4:15), yet he overcame these temptations in his life and finally destroyed them in his death upon the cross. The word “devil” is used to describe that sin-power as it is seen in individual, religious and political opposition to God’s ways.

“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19)

As we know, man was made from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), and now God sentenced him to return to the dust. Because of sin man was sentenced to mortality or a dying state. All mankind has inherited this mortality that came by sin (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21). God was right in sentencing sinful man to death, yet in His mercy He then set forth a plan of redemption for sin-stricken man. The skins for covering Adam and Eve’s nakedness were a type or way of foreshadowing the covering that God requires for sin. It involved the death of an animal and the shedding of blood.

The Effect of Adam’s Sin upon Himself and all Mankind

The apostle Paul very clearly sets out the effects of Adam’s sin when he states, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).



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Adam, through his sin, not only brought the sentence of mortality or death upon himself, but that mortality has passed through to all his descendants. Added to this, he became hardened in his heart by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13), and this inclination to sin has been passed on to all his descendants. These “deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22), which are not of God (1 John 2:15-16), have inevitably led all his descendants (except the Lord Jesus Christ) to sin against God.

This proneness or natural inclination to sin inherited from Adam, which is so strong within every one of us, has been described in the following manner:

- “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin” (James 1:14-15).
- Jesus states: “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts...”. He then lists some of those sinful ways that men follow, concluding with these words: “All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23).
- Paul declares: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:15-20).

This strong desire to satisfy our sinful lusts is part of our nature, and had its roots in the first sin of Adam. It has been passed down to all his descendants and has led all to sin, thereby justifying God’s sentence of mortality upon mankind. This sinful influence in our nature can rightly be termed a “diabolical power” for in the New Testament the Greek word “diabolos”, often rendered “devil”, has been used to personify or indicate these “deceitful lusts” that can develop within us.

In His mercy God provided His Son who, though bearing the same sin-prone nature in common with us all, overcame these temptations and always did the will of God. Through his perfect obedience, which culminated in his death upon the cross, Jesus overcame and destroyed that sin-prone nature in himself, and thus provided a way of escape from sin for all those who believe and obey him (Hebrews 2:14; 4:15; Acts 2:24; Romans 6:8-11).

The Bible Definition of Death

The Bible is very specific in defining the state of the dead. Following are some of those statements regarding death:

- In death there is no remembrance of God nor thanksgiving to Him (Psalm 6:5)
- The dead do not praise God (Psalm 115:17)
- The dead do not know anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6)
- At the day of death their thoughts perish (Psalm 146:3-4)
- Death is likened to the unconscious state of sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20, 51-54)
- The sleep of death for some will be interrupted by the return of Christ and a resurrection to life (Daniel 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

“The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21)

Adam and Eve had made themselves a covering of fig leaves to hide their nakedness. However human inventiveness cannot cover sin against God. God Himself must provide a covering for sin. It is a fundamental principle that man must first acknowledge **the righteousness of God** in sentencing sinners to death before he can receive His mercy and have his sins forgiven. God determined that “shedding of blood” would be the basis upon which forgiveness of sins would be offered to man (Hebrews 9:22). The slaying of an animal by shedding its blood was to ensure that man understood the deadly consequences of his sins and the need to turn away from them.

Therefore an animal was slain and God clothed Adam and Eve with skins as a sign that He would provide a covering for their sin. This animal pointed forward to the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was “*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29; Revelation 13:8). By baptism into Christ a person identifies with the death of Christ (Romans 6:3-9), and “*puts on Christ*”. In this he acknowledges that death is rightly the consequence of sin. Because in symbol he “dies with Christ” in the water of baptism, he can look forward to sharing in Christ’s victory over sin and death. He has his sins covered or forgiven through him (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:9-10).



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“Lest he put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Genesis 3:22)

Adam had been sentenced to mortality. He was now a dying creature. All mankind has inherited this mortality which came by sin (Romans 5:12). The tree of life was there in the garden and Adam could have been tempted to grasp at immortality by eating its fruit. Foreseeing this possibility, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden, and placed Cherubim there *“to keep the way of the tree of life”* (v24).

This *“way of the tree of life”* has been kept or preserved ever since. Those who are obedient to God’s commands will be granted immortality at Christ’s return - they will *“have the right to the tree of life”* (Revelation 2:7; 22:14). Immortality is God’s gift which will only be granted to those who acknowledge their sinfulness and seek forgiveness for their sins through baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who faithfully do this and continue to follow the example of Christ will be rewarded with immortality at his return to the earth (1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 50-55).

Summary Points

- 1 God placed Adam under a law which, if he disobeyed, would bring death (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Adam broke that law and was sentenced to death - to return to the dust of the ground (**Genesis 3:19**).
- 2 Sin brought death: *“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”* (**Romans 5:12**)
- 3 The state of the dead is described as a state of unconsciousness to everything; man cannot praise God nor remember Him (**Psalms 115:17; 6:5; Isaiah 38:18-19; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**)
- 4 Man is mortal and the only hope for him is a resurrection from the dead at the return of Jesus Christ: *“In Adam all die...In Christ shall all be made alive...at his (Christ’s) coming”* (**1 Corinthians 15:22-23**). For those who have believed and obeyed God, death is spoken of as a “sleep” (**1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**).
- 5 Our mortality must be changed to immortality if we are to live with Christ in the future: *“When this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory”* (**1 Corinthians 15:54**)
- 6 Sin is transgression of the law of God, or lawlessness (**1 John 3:4**). We sin through the influence of those desires within us which tempt us to do our own will instead of the will of God (**James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:15-17; Ephesians 4:22; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 7:15-20**). The root of our sin is that strong inclination in our own nature, leading us to sin. Therefore as the wages of sin is death, (**Romans 6:23**), we deserve to die (**Romans 5:12**).
- 7 Jesus Christ is the “seed” promised to the woman (**Genesis 3:15**). Through her he was a sharer of that mortal nature with all its weakness, yet he did not sin (**Hebrews 2:14; 4:15**). He was also the Son of God, begotten through the power of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4**). We can share in his victory over sin and death by baptism into him (**Romans 6:3-8**).



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Lesson 4 - Questions

1. What was the law that God placed upon Adam in the Garden of Eden?
2. What was the penalty for disobeying that law?
3. What is sin?
4. What was the lie that the serpent told Eve?
5. What are the three unlawful lusts that John mentions in 1 John 2:15-17?
6. Who is the “seed” of the woman in Genesis 3:15?
7. List some Bible quotations that tell us we have a nature that tempts us to sin.
8. What does the Bible tell us about the state of the dead?
9. How does a person “*put on*” Christ?
10. Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-23. Here we are told that all men are mortal and will die. What is the only hope of deliverance from death?