

The Fall of Adam & Eve

Written by Eric Shuster

Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Christian Studies



The fall of Adam and Eve is commonly referred to as the original sin in Catholic doctrine, or simply “the fall” in much of Christianity. Ununiversal memories of the narrative describe Adam and Eve being tempted by the devil to eat an apple they shouldn’t have, leading to the destruction of the Garden of Eden. While some may consider the fall as merely a story, all should come to realize that the fall is a complex event of tremendous significance for all mankind, reaching far beyond the concept of original sin.

Linkage to the Premortal Existence

The fall begins with the understanding that Adam and Eve were valiant spirits in the premortal existence and given the assignment to be the first man and woman to live on the earth. It was their mission to bring mortality into the world according to our Heavenly Father’s plan. When they assumed their places in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had physical bodies, but were not yet mortal and therefore unable to have children and exempt from death. Because they were in the presence of God, Adam and Eve had a spiritual life, but were unable to understand the differences between good and evil.

Commandments, Sin, and Consequences

Adam and Eve were given two key commandments by God: (1) to “multiply and replenish the earth,” and (2) to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Just as he does today, Satan entered the Garden of Eden with the intent of tempting Adam and Eve to break the commandments of God, seeking to destroy the plan of our Heavenly Father. When Eve, followed by Adam, were

persuaded by Satan to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they fell into disobedience which led to what we refer to as *the fall*. As a result of the fall, Adam and Eve became subject to the consequences of their disobedience: They were cast out of the Garden of Eden, became mortal beings, and were consigned to live in a world much different from the garden. In this world, Adam and Eve and all their descendants would be subject to suffering and physical death. The trial and training of mortality had begun.

Perhaps more importantly, the fall brought about a spiritual death that created a separation from God. Adam and Eve and their posterity lost the opportunity to have face-to-face communication with God. That separation from God was further aggravated by Satan’s introduction of evil into the world. The fall brought about both physical and spiritual death that would eventually be reconciled through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Commencing the Plan of Salvation

Despite the introduction of physical and spiritual death and its consequences, the fall is seen as the commencement of Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation. This commencement is a great blessing to all of mankind. This blessing includes the obtaining of physical bodies of flesh and bone, the prospect to choose between good and evil, and the opportunity to take full advantage of the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Considering the state of Adam and Eve before the fall in the Garden of Eden, none of these blessings would have been available without the fall.

Fallen State, not a Perpetual Sin

The sin of Adam and Eve belongs solely to Adam and Eve and is not inherited by any of the descendants of Adam. The second Article of Faith states: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (AOF 1:2). The fall of Adam brought forth mortality, but man does not carry Adam’s sin.

The Larger Perspective of the Fall

As one ponders the doctrine of the fall there comes about a realization that there is far more to the doctrine than sin coming into the world as a result of Adam’s decision.

There are five key points of interest that every Christian must consider:

1. Adam and Eve before eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil were not even aware that they were naked. Since they were told by God to "...be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." (Genesis 1:28), one might wonder if the human race could have ever been propagated had they not become aware that they were naked and had the opportunity to procreate.

2. God wants each of his children to know and understand the difference between good and evil. That being the case, one must wonder why the tree that they were commanded to not eat of was named the tree of knowledge of good and evil as opposed to something less meaningful, or at least less desirable.

3. One must question whether God intended Adam and Eve to remain in a sinless state for all eternity. If God intended this, why was Satan allowed in the garden at all? Satan's eternal objective is to have all of God's children break the commandments of the Lord and become Satan's subjects; therefore, God knew that Satan's presence would lead to sin. Through God's omnipotent power in creating the earth, he could have easily kept Satan from entering the garden, thus reducing or even eliminating the threat of sin to his beloved creations. When one truly understands the plan of salvation as Christian doctrine, they will come to realize that eliminating the influence of Satan would have negated the plan of God.

4. Jesus Christ was the chosen Savior before the foundation of the world (1 Pet: 1:20), and therefore God knew that we would need a Savior before Adam and Eve were ever sent into the garden.

5. God is a just God and would never hold a person accountable for the sins of another person. So how could it be possible that the sins of Adam could be attached to his descendants?

When considering these five key points, the doctrine of the fall has much greater spiritual impact and application than the simplistic doctrine of original sin or the mere story of Adam and Eve. Whereas many view the fall as inherently simplistic and negative, the fall must be seen in

a much broader spiritual perspective. Although the sin of Adam and Eve had dire consequences for all of mankind physically and spiritually, the event had far greater reach in launching the Lord's plan of salvation for all mankind.

God in his infinite wisdom set into motion a plan that would establish the principle of moral agency (the freedom to choose—sometimes referred to as free will); introduce the struggle between good and evil as a proving ground for faith; institute a state of mortality among humankind; and lay the foundation for the Atonement and Resurrection of his son Jesus Christ. This plan is in full operation today among the children of God.

Satan Tricks, is Tricked, and Punished

We know that the serpent told Eve that if she ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that she would not die, but that "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good from evil" (Genesis 3:5). Satan was actually correct (although perhaps not truthful) in telling Eve that she would not die an instant physical death, but that her eyes would be opened, and that she would become like the gods. In Genesis 3:22, God says: "...Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil..." Curiously, in tempting Eve as he did, Satan, the great dissembler, was delivering a strong element of truth, and in doing so Satan did exactly what God knew he would do and helped launch the plan of salvation. Satan's punishment for doing so was to be cursed all the days of his life and be conquered by Christ (Genesis 3:14-15).

Conclusion

Knowing these fantastic truths about the fall of Adam and Eve we are able to understand a number of important Christian gospel principles that have an impact on our own lives today. The simplistic story of Adam and Eve that many grow up with is actually a major spiritual milestone in which the plan of our Heavenly Father for all humankind was kicked off and put into play—the same plan that we are a part of today.

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