
The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XX : GENESIS 3:1-7 – FIFTH PARAGRAPH: ADAM'S SIN

“Evil was not inherent in man nor can it be said that sin was the consequence of divine entrapment. The tempter stands outside the human pair and stands opposed to God’s word. His career is obscure to the author of Genesis 3, who can only speak of the snake’s destiny (3:14-15). As we find elsewhere in Scripture, little is said about the source of evil. Old Testament thought consistently affirms God as the ultimate cause of all things, even the existence of the serpent, but it never attributes evil to God. He is not morally responsible for the sin of the first couple nor is he culpable for the serpent’s deceit.” [Mathews, 1:226f]

“Now begins the description of mankind’s fall into sin. The deception and sin of humanity involve a combination of various factors: first, the temptation of the serpent; secondly, the ignorance and twisting of God’s Word by Adam and his wife; thirdly, the will of man to disobey; and, fourthly, the appeal of the tree to the physical senses which prove overwhelming. Humanity’s descent into sin was not the result of a mere bite into a fruit – but rather it was a complex process of wilful disobedience and action.” [Currid, 1:115]

“In verse 1, ‘the serpent’ is explicitly God’s handwork, subtle as he is, and the chapter speaks not of evil invading, as though it had its own existence, but of creatures rebelling.” [Kidner, 67]

“Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.” (Psalm 36:1 ESV)

Adam’s Sin:

“¹ 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?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ 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.’” ⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ 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. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. (Gen 3:1-7 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 1 – ‘Now the serpent was cunning / beyond any beast of the field that the Lord God / had made.

He said to the woman, / “Did God really say.

‘You shall not eat / of any tree of the garden?’”

v. 2 – And the woman said to the serpent,

“Of the fruit of the trees of the garden / we may eat,

v. 3 – But of the fruit of the tree / which is in the centre of the garden,

*God said, / ‘You shall not eat thereof,
neither shall you touch it, / let you die.’”*

*v. 4 – Then the serpent said to the woman,
“You shall by no means die.*

v. 5 – For God knows / that when you eat of it

*Your eyes will be opened / and you will be like ’Elōhîm [God or Divine Beings], / knowing good
and evil.”*

*v. 6 – So when the woman saw / that the tree was good for food,
and that it was a delight to the eyes / and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,
she took of its fruit / and ate;
and she also gave [some] to her husband with her, / and he ate.*

*v. 7 – Then the eyes of both were opened, / and they knew / that they were naked;
and they sewed fig leaves together / and made themselves aprons.’*

v. 1 – Now the serpent — Moses places the subject before the predicate to place emphasis on the serpent as well to mark the introduction of a new theme relative to it.

THE IDENTITY OF THE SERPENT ACCORDING TO GENESIS — It is important to differentiate between what our text specifically states about this serpent and what is written elsewhere in later rabbinic literature, pseudepigraphical writings and even the New Testament. If we just consider the text in Genesis, without question the serpent is literally a serpent, a snake, one of the creatures created by the Lord on day six:

“According to ancient Talmudic sources, the primeval serpent is just a species of animal, although differing in character from the serpent of today, and resembling man in his upright stature and in his manner of eating.... *At any rate, it is beyond doubt that the Bible refers to an ordinary, natural creature, for it is distinctly stated here: BEYOND ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD that the Lord God had made.*” [Cassuto, 140]

“The consensus of the commentators is that the serpent of the narrative was literally a serpent. They differ regarding what force it represented: the Evil Inclination, Satan, or the Angel of Death. According to the Midrash, before this cunning beast was cursed, it stood erect and was endowed with some faculty of communication.” [Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *The Chumash: The Stone Edition*, or *The Five Books of Moses* in book form (Mehorah Publications LTD, Brooklyn NY) 2011, page 15]

SNAKES IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST — Snakes were significant in the ancient world, both as an object of reverence and of disdain. The serpent brought both death (Num 21:6) and life (Num 21:8, 9) and was later used by our Lord Jesus as symbolic of His death for sinners (John 3:14). Christ used it as an example of shrewdness (Matt 10:16). It is associated with death (Ps 58:3, 4; Rom 3:13) and as a divine opponent (Isa 27:1). The serpent in the Mosaic law was classified among the unclean animals (Lev 11:41-45). *“The documents and pictures of the peoples of the ancient East do not assist us to solve the problem of the serpent in our section. We find there all kinds of snakes: sacred serpents, serpent-gods or serpents that symbolize the deities, serpents that are symbols of life or fertility, serpents that guard the sanctuaries or the boundaries, serpents used for ‘divining’ future events, and so forth; but so far no serpents have*

been found corresponding in character to the one in this section.” [Cassuto, 140] “In the ancient Near East, in varying contexts, serpents are symbols of protection (Egyptian uraeus), of evil (deadly poison [Egyptian apopis]), of fecundity (Canaanite fertility goddess), or of continuing life (renewal of skin) (cf. Job 26:12-13; Isa 27:1). Here the serpent is a symbol of antigod.” [Waltke, 90]

THE IDENTITY OF THE SERPENT FROM THE REST OF THE SCRIPTURES — “The serpent, therefore, belongs to the category of ‘beasts of the field,’ and is a creature of Yahwe; and an effort seems to be made to maintain this view throughout the narrative (v. 14). *At the same time it is a being possessing supernatural knowledge, with the power of speech, and animated by hostility towards God. It is this last feature which causes some perplexity.... In later Jewish theology the difficulty was solved, as is well known, by the doctrine that the serpent of Eden was the mouthpiece or impersonation of the devil. The idea appears first in Alexandrian Judaism in Wisdom 2:24, ‘by the envy of the devil, death entered into the world.’*” [Skinner, 71ff; note the apocryphal Book of Wisdom is dated mid-first century BC] The New Testament agrees with this assessment, as we see when we compare the judgment upon the serpent with Paul’s comments to the congregation at Rome:

‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’ (Gen 3:15)

‘And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.’ (Rom 16:20)

Jesus’ rebuke of the Jews as the children of their ‘father’ (cf. ‘offspring’, Gen 3:15) alludes to the garden scene, where the Devil is a ‘liar and murderer from the beginning’ –

‘You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.’ (John 8:44)

Paul again refers to the garden with Satan’s subtleties of today:

‘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.... For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.’ (2 Cor 11:3, 13, 14)

John writes in the book of Revelation of the serpent of old, the Devil:

‘So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.... But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.... He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.’ (Rev 12:9, 14, 15; 20:2)

Thus while the serpent is one of the Lord’s created beings, more than the principle of evil must have been intended by the serpent’s presence since 3:15 describes an ongoing war between the serpent and the seed of the woman. It is Satan’s personal presence in the garden. “We may

interpret the role of the serpent in the same vein as Peter's resistance to Jesus' death, where the Lord responded to Peter: *'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men'* (Matt 16:23). Jesus does not mean Peter is possessed with Satan as Judas was when *'Satan entered'* him (Luke 22:3), nor was he threatened with possession (Luke 22:31). But Peter unwittingly was an advocate for Satan's cause. Similarly, the snake is a creature speaking against the *'things of God'* and whose cause is that of Satan." [Mathews, 1:234f]

was cunning — Explicit characterization of actors in the story is rare in Hebrew narrative, so we are to take note when the narrator mentions this characteristic. Since no other quality is ascribed to the serpent, it intends, apparently, to convey that the evil flowing from the serpent emanated from its *cunning*. Perhaps this is a hint that its remarks should be examined very carefully. Perhaps we should not take its words at their face value as the woman did. It may not be saying what it seems to be saying.

The Hebrew word used here is *'ārûm* = *'subtle, shrewd, prudent, crafty, wily, sly, deceptive.'* The word could be used approvingly or negatively. When used negatively:

'He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans.' (Job 5:12)

'For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.' (Job 15:5)

'But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.' (Exod 21:14, a form of our word in Genesis)

'they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended' (Josh 9:4, a form of our word in Genesis)

But it can also be used positively:

'A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.' (Prov 12:16)

'A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.' (Prov 12:23)

'Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly.' (Prov 13:16)

'The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.' (Prov 14:18)

Saul considered David 'very crafty' as he used his wits to escape danger:

'Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, and who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty.' (1 Sam 23:22)

Since it can be used positively or negatively, there is already a sense of ambiguity introduced into the story. But we also note Moses described the serpent as *'ārûm* = *'cunning'* rather than *chākam* = *'wise, to be wise, to act wisely'* of all the animals. ***We are to proceed with caution.*** [Cassuto, 142; Wenham, 1:72; Mathews, 1:232; Hamilton, 1:188] Also, as we noted in lesson 18:

"The verb for 'naked' in Hebrew is *'arūmmîm*, and it is a word-play on Genesis 3:1, in which the serpent is described as *'ārûm* (that is, 'sly / crafty'). An antithesis of the two natures is certainly being accentuated by the play on words." [Currid, 1:112]

beyond any beast of the field that the Lord God had made. — In the previous section this word *made* is used specifically with regard to the *beasts*:

‘And God made [‘āsāh] the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.’ (Gen 1:25)

This information removes any possibility that the serpent is to be viewed as some kind of supernatural, divine force, at least in the immediate context. Whatever situation the serpent finds itself in at the beginning of chapter 3, it was originally among the animals the Lord declares to be ‘good’ (Gen 1:25, 31). But as we see throughout the rest of Scripture, at the very least Satan was using the serpent to his own ends. “[God] would not suffer Satan to tempt them in a way which should surpass their human capacity. The tempted might therefore have resisted the tempter. If, instead of approaching them in the form of a celestial being, in the likeness of God, he came in that of a creature, not only far inferior to God, but far below themselves, they could have no excuse for allowing a mere animal to persuade them to break the commandment of God.” [Keil, 1:93]

He said to the woman, — A question which has no clear Scriptural answer is ‘*how did the serpent speak to the woman?*’ Were the man and woman capable of speaking with some or all the animals prior to the fall? [Mathews, 1:232] Did the speaking emanate not from the serpent but from a superior spirit which was speaking through the serpent to seduce man? [Keil, 1:92] Did the dialogue between the serpent and the woman only take place ‘*in the woman’s mind,*’ between her wiliness and her innocence? [Cassuto, 142f; Waltke, 91] It is very probable that good angels appeared in paradise to our first parents, in one form or another, and conversed with them; could the woman just have thought the serpent was an angel in the form of a serpent? [Gill, 1:23] Would anyone else have heard the dialogue between the serpent and Eve? Just as the witch saw Samuel but could not hear him, and Saul could hear him but did not see him, and probably Saul’s servants heard and saw nothing (1 Sam 28:3-25; see also Paul on the road to Damascus with his servants, Acts 22:9), is it possible that Adam who was probably with Eve (see below) might not have heard anything? [Waltke, 91] ***The fact the woman did not find this alarming only heightens our assumption this was not an uncommon occurrence. But as the creation narrative does not give certain details so that our thoughts would be on the majesty of the Creator rather than our own curious wonderings; even so the lack of details here suggests we should be more concerned with not how the serpent talks but with what it says.***

WAS ADAM PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE TEMPTATION? — It is debated whether Adam was present throughout the temptation. A few I am reading believes the woman was alone throughout the temptation with Adam joining her afterwards. [Calvin, 152; Gill, 1:22] But most I am reading believe Adam was probably with Eve for the following reasons:

- While the serpent speaks ‘*to the woman,*’ the word for ‘*you*’ used throughout the conversation by the serpent is plural (3:1, 4, 5).
- Eve also uses the plural ‘*we*’ when answering the serpent (3:2), although it is possible she was only acting as a spokeswoman on behalf of her husband at that point.
- Then finally in 3:6 after the woman took of the fruit, she gave some to her husband who was ‘*with her*’ and he did eat; although again, he may have just arrived.

None of this however is conclusive. But whether Adam was present or not, the rest of Scripture is clear on the fact that Eve was deceived but Adam was not.

“Did God really say. — The Hebrew is difficult according to those familiar with the language. Victor Hamilton translates this: *‘Indeed! To think that God said you are not to eat of any tree of the garden!’* and comments:

“The translation of Heb. ’ap kî is still open to question. If it functions here simply to introduce a question (cf. AV, RSV, NIV, etc.) – *‘Did God say?’* – then this is the only time in the OT that ’ap kî carries interrogative force. Skinner [Genesis, p. 73] calls the expression *‘a half-interrogative, half-reflective exclamation,’* and he translates *‘Ay, and so God has said!’* Von Rad [Genesis, p. 86 note] quotes Luther on this passage: *‘I cannot translate the Hebrew either in German or in Latin; the serpent uses the word ’ap kî as though to turn up its nose and jeer and scoff at one.’* This interpretation seems too strong; such open contempt in the serpent’s mouth would play against the subtlety that the author is attaching to the serpent’s machinations. ***I prefer to take it as a feigned expression of surprise.***” [Hamilton, 1:186 footnote] Carl Keil also understands this as an *interrogative expressing surprise.* [Keil, 1:94]

Rabbi Cassuto and Kenneth Mathews also speaks on the grammar, but both believe it still to be a question, the Rabbi because the grammar is emphatic [Cassuto, 144] and Mathews because of intonation alone [Mathews, 1:235]. Note every translation I evaluated considers this a question: *‘Yea, has God said ... Did God actually say ... Has God really said ...?’* ***But whatever the exact form of grammar, note the serpent’s tactic is to first cause doubt in the mind of the woman through interrogation and misrepresentation. “The tempter begins with suggestion rather than argument. The incredulous tone – ‘So God has actually said...?’ – is both disturbing and flattering: it smuggles in the assumption that God’s word is subject to our judgment.”*** [Kidner, 67]

God — Important to this narrative is the name of God that is used. As mentioned in previous lessons, the creation story uses **’Elôhîm** throughout all of Gen 1:1-2:3. Why? Because the focus was on the Lord as being the Sovereign Creator, majestic, high and lifted up. But in chapter 2 the focus changes to a detailed account of day 6: the planting of the garden of Eden, the creation of man and woman, the temptation, the fall and the judgment upon mankind (although it is unknown exactly when the temptation and fall occurred). Throughout the Eden narrative of chapters two and three, the name used for God is **YHWH ’Elôhîm**, the covenant-keeping God, the personal God, God in relationship with His people ... ***except for when it deals with the serpent tempting the woman!***

‘Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God [YHWH ’Elôhîm] had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God [’Elôhîm] indeed said” [the woman speaking] but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God [’Elôhîm] has said [the serpent speaking] For God [’Elôhîm] knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God [’Elôhîm], knowing good and evil.’ (Gen 3:1, 3, 5)

This subtle but definitive alteration of the names of God gives a little extra meaning to what is happening throughout the narrative. It suggests not just the serpent’s distance from God but what it is trying to impose upon the thinking of the woman. God is the remote Creator, not Yahweh, the One with Whom you have a relationship.

‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’ — Another tactic used by the serpent was to cause doubt in the mind of the woman by the serpent reworking the wording of God’s command ever so slightly, by (1) adding the negative *‘not’* at the head of the clause, which with *‘any’*

expresses an absolute prohibition; (2) omitting the emphatic *'freely;'* (3) using the plural *'you'* which speaks of both the woman and the man; and (4) placing the clause *'from any tree'* at the end of the sentence rather than at the head as in 2:16, which in Hebrew would remove the nuance of liberality from God's command. [Mathews, 1:235]

v. 2 – *And the woman said to the serpent,* — “The woman's first mistake was her willingness to talk with the serpent and to respond to the creature's cynicism by rehearsing God's prohibition (2:17). However, she compounded her mistake by misrepresenting God's command as the serpent had done, although definitely without the malicious intent of the snake. ***The serpent had succeeded in drawing the woman's attention to another possible interpretation of God's command.***” [Mathews, 1:235]

“Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, (v. 3) But of the fruit of the tree which is in the centre of the garden, — The woman emphasizes the site of the tree since it is the most important place in the garden. “Although there was in the *centre* of the garden also the tree of life, and possibly there were other trees as well, her interest is focused at the moment on the *forbidden tree*, and for her it is *the tree* – with the definite article – in the centre of the garden.” [Cassuto, 145] “[S]he does not give it any name, which perhaps was not as yet given it; or she was not acquainted with it, its name in the preceding chapter being given by anticipation; and most likely it is, it had its name from the event, and as yet was without one.” [Gill, 1:23]

God said, ‘You shall not eat thereof, neither shall you touch it, let you die.’” — The woman makes several seemingly minor changes to what the Lord had commanded:

“**First**, she omits those elements in the command, *'any'* and *'freely,'* which placed the prohibition in a context of liberality. At this point she still is thinking collectively with her husband, from whom, as the narrator implies, she received the command: *'we may eat'* (v. 2).

“**Second**, Eve identifies the tree according to its location rather than its significance; “and **third**, she refers to *'God'* as the serpent had done, rather than *'the LORD'* (v. 3).

“**Fourth**, she also adds the phrase *'you must not touch it'* (v. 3), which may make the prohibition more stringent. Yet to her credit the fear of touching the fruit may have been out of deference of God's command. For Israel *'touch'* was associated with prohibition and death or with consecration to God (e.g., Exod 19:12; Num 16:26; Deut 14:8; cf. 2 Sam 6:1-8; and, e.g., Exod 29:37; 30:29).

“**Finally**, she failed to capture the urgency of certain death, *'You will [surely] die'* (v. 3).” [Mathews, 1:235f]

v. 4 – *Then the serpent said to the woman, “You shall by no means die.* — With the woman lured into dialogue on his terms, the serpent directly disputes God's command. The construction of the Hebrew stresses the boldness of this denial; literally, *'not – you shall surely die.'* In the normal construction the negative would precede the finite verb, but here it is simply placed in front of the entire construction. [Mathews, 1:236; Ross, 135]

THE FIRST DOCTRINE TO BE DENIED IS JUDGMENT FOR SIN — “***It is the serpent's word against God's, and the first doctrine to be denied is judgment. If modern denials of it are very differently motivated, they are equally at odds with revelation: Jesus fully reaffirmed the doctrine (e.g., Mt 7:13-27).***” [Kidner, 68] “***Here is the lie that has allured the human race from the beginning: there is no punishment for disobedience.***” [Ross, 135]

v. 5 – For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened — “It is very neat, that the snake never directly demands that they should eat – he understands the art of seduction.” [Wenham, 1:74] *‘Eyes opened’* has the sense of *‘your understanding will be opened; you will understand what has been withheld from you; you will receive knowledge, a new-found awareness not previously possessed.’* **The serpent here questions the Lord’s motives; He who knows everything (not without reason is it said here, ‘for God knows...’) does not wish His creatures to possess the same knowledge as Himself. God is not good and gracious; He is selfish, spiteful, mean, obsessively jealous, self-protective and deceptive, preventing you both from achieving the same position as ’Elōhîm.** [Mathews, 236; Hamilton, 1:189]

THE DEPTHS OF THEIR SIN — **“For never would they have dared to resist God, unless they had first been incredulous of his word. And nothing allured them to covet the fruit but mad ambition. So long as they, firmly believing in God’s word, freely suffered themselves to be governed by Him, they had serene and duly regulated affections. For, indeed, their best restraint was the thought, which entirely occupied their minds, that God is just, that nothing is better than to obey his commands, and that to be loved by him is the consummation of a happy life.”** [Calvin, 154]

CAN WE TRUST THE CHARACTER OF GOD? — “Behind the discussion between Eve and the serpent about the precise wording of the commandment is *the issue of the divine motive in giving the law. A second theological motif to develop would thus be the integrity of God. How can anyone eagerly obey the commandments of God unless it can be demonstrated that his laws are good for the people? An appreciation of God’s goodness is essential to the keeping of the law.*” [Ross, 131] **“Very dangerous is the temptation, when it is suggested to us, that God is not to be obeyed, except so far as the reason of his command is apparent. The true rule of obedience is, that we being content with a bare command, should persuade ourselves that whatever he enjoins is just and right. But whoever desires to be wise beyond measure, him will Satan, seeing he has cast off all reverence for God, immediately precipitate into open rebellion.”** [Calvin, 147f] **“As distrust of God’s command leads to a disregard of it, so the longing for a false independence excites a desire for the seeming good that has been prohibited; and this desire is fostered by the senses, until it brings forth sin. Doubt, unbelief, and pride were the roots of the sin of our first parents, as they have been of all the sins of their posterity.”** [Keil, 1:95f]

and you will be like ’Elōhîm [God or Divine Beings] — Two interpretations are possible: (1) *‘you will be like divine beings;’* i.e., gods or angels; or (2) *‘you will be like the Lord God.’* Although either is possible, it would be hard to suppose that the word ’Elōhîm would be used in two different senses in the same verse (*‘For God [’Elōhîm] knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like ’Elōhîm.*). The vast majority of our English translations understand this as *‘God’* (ASV, RSV, ESV, NASV, NET, NIV, NKJV, Amplified, YLT, et. al.) although a few translates it as *‘gods’* (Geneva, KJV, Wycliffe). “This discussion is complicated by the identity of the plural (*‘us’*) in v. 22, where some contend that an angelic host is inferred. The plural participle *‘knowing’* argues for the plural *‘gods’* since *‘Elohim’* as *‘God’* normally takes the singular. *‘God’* can be retained if the participle is predicative, *‘like God, that is, you shall know good and evil;’* but IBHS § 37.6a indicates that the subject of the predicative use is usually expressed, unlike here. **Ambiguity here may be purposeful since the whole tenor of the serpent’s speech is marked with clever devices.** Since Elohim as *‘God’* occurs earlier in the verse, it is best to retain the singular sense.” [Mathews, 1:236, footnote; IBHS = B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*]

ADAM'S FAILURE CONTRASTED WITH THE SECOND ADAM'S OBEDIENCE — *“To be ‘as God,’ and to achieve it by outwitting Him, is an intoxicating programme. God will henceforth be regarded, consciously or not, as rival and enemy. Against this human arrogance ‘the obedience of the one’ and His taking ‘the form of a servant’ show up in their true colours (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:7). So the tempter pits his bare assertion against the word and works of God, presenting divine love as envy, service as servility, and a suicidal plunge as a leap into life, ‘All these things I give thee...’; the pattern repeats in Christ’s temptations, and in ours.”* [Kidner, 68]

knowing good and evil.” — The serpent placed before the woman the possibility of being more than she is and more than God intended her to be. *“Whenever one makes his own will crucial and God’s revealed will irrelevant, whenever autonomy displaces submission and obedience in a person, that finite individual attempts to rise above the limitations imposed on him by his creator.”* [Hamilton, 1:190]

DID THE SERPENT LIE? — *“When set in the larger context of the story, the serpent’s words are shown to be both true and false. They proved true in that the man and woman did not immediately die physically. Their eyes were indeed opened (v. 7), and they obtained knowledge belonging to God as the serpent had promised (v. 22). However, the serpent’s half-truths concealed falsehood and led the woman to expect a different result altogether. The serpent spoke only about what she would gain and avoided mentioning what she would lose in the process. Though the man and woman did not die immediately upon eating the fruit, the expectation and assignment to death were soon enough. Furthermore, they experienced expulsion from the garden, which was indicative of death. Later Israel experienced excommunication when any of its members were discovered ceremonially unclean; such victims were counted as dead men in mourning (e.g., Lev 13:45). Expulsion from the garden, which represented the presence of God as did the tabernacle in the camp, meant a symbolic ‘death’ for the excommunicated (cf. 1 Sam 15:35-16:1). Although their eyes were opened, they were rewarded only with seeing their nakedness and were burdened with human guilt and embarrassment (v. 7). Although they became like God in this one way, it was at an unexpected cost. They achieved isolation and fear. The couple was cut off as well from the possibility of life, the one feature of divinity for which otherwise they were destined. They obtained ‘wisdom’ in exchange for death.”* [Mathews, 1:237]

“For the knowledge of good and evil, which man obtains by going into evil, is as far removed from the true likeness of God, which he would have obtained by avoiding it, as the imaginary liberty of a sinner, which leads into bondage to sin and ends in death, is from the true liberty of a life of fellowship with God.” [Keil, 1:95] *“We have seen that the garden of Eden narrative is full of symbols suggesting the presence of God and his life-giving power – trees, gold, rivers, and jewels used to adorn the holy of holies. In Israelite worship, true life was experienced when one went to the sanctuary. There God was present. There he gave life. But to be expelled from the camp, as lepers were, was to enter the realm of death. Those unfortunates had to behave like mourners, with their clothes torn and their hair disheveled (Lev 13:45). If to be expelled from the camp of Israel was to ‘die,’ expulsion from the garden was an even more drastic kind of death. In this sense they did die on the day they ate of the tree: they were no longer able to have daily conversation with God, enjoy his bounteous provision, and eat of the tree of life; instead they had to toil for food, suffer, and eventually return to the dust from which they were taken.”* [Wenham, 1:74]

v. 6 – So when the woman saw — ‘Saw’ here means ‘gave heed, perceived,’ not merely ‘to look at.’ *“[T]he woman saw ... – and visual evidence is potent: God allows the forbidden its full*

appeal. The pattern of sin runs right through the act, for Eve listened to a creature instead of the Creator, followed her impressions against her instructions, and made self-fulfillment her goal. This prospect of material, aesthetic and mental enrichment seems to add up to life itself; the world still offers it (1 Jn 2:16). But man's lifeline is spiritual, namely God's word and the response of faith (Dt 8:3; Hab 2:4); to break it is death." [Kidner, 68]

that the tree was good for food, — "Eve saw what was 'good'; the adjective heads the clause accentuating the ironic results of her evaluation. There is a double entendre here: the term for 'good' (tôy) can mean beautiful and also what is moral. In this case what was beautiful proved to be an allurements to disobedience. The term 'good' is reminiscent of the created order God declares as 'good' (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31). **But the verbal echo of God's earlier evaluation suggests that she has usurped God's role in determining what is 'good.'**" [Mathews, 1:237f]

THE THREE AREAS IN WHICH WE ARE TEMPTED — As has been pointed out by many others, the temptations present with the man and woman are the same with which we struggle today. "After God's law had been reasoned away, the woman was drawn to the fruit by three things: **(1) It was good for food (lust of the flesh); (2) It was a delight to the eyes (lust of sight); (3) It was desirable to make one wise (lust of pride).** Cp. 1 John 2:15-17. In Matthew 4:1-11, the devil tempts Jesus with three similar enticements." [Currid, 1:120]

and that it was a delight to the eyes — Not only by virtue of its beauty which charmed her eyes, but more especially because through eating her eyes would be opened.

and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, – TO BE DESIRED — The text reads literally: 'When the woman saw that the tree ... was desirable in order to become wise.' 'Desirable' (chāmad) is the same word used in the prohibition against covetousness, 'thou shalt not covet' (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21). **Here is the essence of covetousness. It is the attitude that says I need something I do not now have in order to be happy.** [Hamilton, 1:190]

TO MAKE ONE WISE — Indulgence here would give to the woman something she did not, in her judgment, presently possess, and that is 'wisdom, discernment, knowledge.' "Eve supposes that the tree's fruit would obtain for her 'wisdom' (has'kîl), which she must have equated with the tempter's promise of obtaining divine knowledge (3:5). The term is broad in meaning, indicating sight, insight, and also success. We have commented that the transgression is the acquisition of wisdom independently of God. Though the narrative does not specify the fault in this, traditionally since Augustine the sin has been related to human pride." [Mathews, 1:238] "Later Paul would say that the world by its wisdom did not know God and that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God (1 Cor 1:26-2:16; 3:18)." [Ross, 137]

she took of its fruit and ate; – ONCE THE DECISION WAS MADE, THE ACTIONS WERE SWIFT — The account now moves with a rapid pace: 'The woman saw,' 'she took,' 'ate,' 'she gave ... and he ate.' According to Hamilton [1:190], **the Bible's first recorded sin is limited to eight words in the Hebrew, and is so written to be 'extremely difficult to pronounce' which 'forces the reader to a merciless concentration on each word.'** "Perception and flight of imagination were followed immediately by decision and action. The extreme brevity of this part of the sentence, in contrast to the length of the first section of the verse, indicates the swiftness of the action." [Cassuto, 147] **"So simple the act, so hard its undoing. God will taste poverty and death before 'take and eat' become verbs of salvation."** [Kidner, 68]

and she also gave [some] to her husband with her, and he ate. — Note no motive is given for

the man taking and eating, as in the case of the woman. “The woman does not try to tempt the man. She simply gives and he takes. He neither challenges nor raises questions. The woman allows her mind and her own judgment to be her guide; the man neither approves nor rebukes. Hers is a sin of initiative. His is a sin of acquiescence.” [Hamilton, 1:191] The eating of the fruit means nothing more than the actual eating thereof; it no way purports to allude to any aspect of sexual relations or the multitude of allegorical interpretations with which a number of commentators have forced on the passage.

WHY DID ADAM SIN? — *“The long-standing interpretation of why Eve fails is the deception of the crafty beast (2 Cor 11:3), but no explanation occurs for Adam’s decision to eat. If the naming of the animals by Adam shows an awareness of their characteristics (2:19-20) then it is not surprising that the woman is unaware of the serpent’s shrewdness, but there is no excuse for the man. Paul is emphatic that Adam was not misled (1 Tim 2:14). This concurs with early Jewish tradition, which placed the blame on Adam’s shoulders (e.g., 4 Ezra 3:21; 7:118). Adam’s participation is rather understated in the account, given the attention it received from God (3:17-19) and in later Jewish and Christian tradition. He simply followed the example of the woman without hesitation. There is no sense that Adam is lured by logic or sexual provocation. ‘For he would have never dared oppose God’s authority unless he had disbelieved in God’s Word.’ (Calvin, Institutes, 2.1.4)” [Mathews, 1:238] “Led, as the woman had been, instead of leading; a curious way to achieve divinity. The man and the woman have been sold a false idea of evil, as something beyond good; of wisdom, as sophistication; and now of greatness, as greed.” [Kidner, 68f]*

‘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.’ (2 Cor 11:3)

‘And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.’ (1 Tim 2:14)

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ADAM’S TRANSGRESSION — The classic passage relating to the theology behind Adam’s actions is Romans 5:12-19:

Paul begins to make a comparison between Adam and Christ but breaks off his original thought into a digression –

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 —*

Paul digresses to give evidence of the guilt of sin being inherited from Adam –

¹³ *(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness*

will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

continuance of initial comparison between Adam and Christ –

¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.' (Rom 5:12-19)

What is of utmost importance but not readily apparent in our English translations is the use of the aorist tense throughout the passage. That the Bible teaches all mankind sinned 'in Adam' is clearly taught in these verses:

(v. 12) 'through one man sin entered [completed past single event] *the world*'

(v. 12) 'death spread [completed past single event] *to all men, because all sinned*' [completed past single event]

(v. 15) 'by the one man's offense many died' [completed past single event]

(v. 16) 'that which came through the one who sinned' [completed past single event]

(v. 16) 'the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation'

(v. 17) 'by the one man's offense death reigned [completed past single event] *through the one*'

(v. 18) 'through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation'

(v. 19) 'by one man's disobedience many were made [completed past single event] *sinners*'

The aorist describes an event as a complete action rather than one that was ongoing, unfolding, repeated, or habitual. The vast majority of usages of the aorist also describe events or conditions in past time, and traditional grammars introduce it as a past tense.

If I may, allow me to paraphrase Paul's words in Romans and combine that with what we are seeing in our Genesis passage:

Having been deceived by the serpent, the woman gave of the forbidden fruit to the man and he ate. At the moment that the man wilfully and knowingly ate of the forbidden fruit, in rebellion and unbelief, sin entered the world (Rom 5:12) and immediately sin spread to all of mankind, yet unborn and still in the loins of the first man, and all sinned along with and at the same time as our first parent (Rom 5:12, 19). As forewarned by the Lord, the man along with all his posterity suffered the penalty of death and all were immediately separated from the Lord (Rom 5:15, 16). Death became the ruling principle of all the man's posterity and they were all condemned at that moment (Rom 5:17, 18).

This is what the Scriptures mean when it says all mankind is born separated from God and 'in Adam':

'But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.' (1 Cor 15:20-22 NKJV)

'And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the

spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.’ (1 Cor 15:45-49 NKJV)

The only hope for any of Adam’s posterity is to understand our fallen position, recognize our guilt and condemnation before a holy God, acknowledge our pride and sinful, wilful living for ourselves, and fall down before Him in repentance and be willing to henceforth live in obedience to His will, trusting in the perfect merits of His Son the Lord Jesus as payment for our sins. The only hope for any of us is to be taken out of our condemnation of being ‘in Adam’ and placed ‘in Christ,’ the second Adam or second representative for mankind. Only ‘in Christ’ is there hope of everlasting life in the presence of our God.

v. 7 – *Then the eyes of both were opened,* — The verse recalls the expression of the serpent, v. 5, ‘*your eyes will be opened,*’ as though to say: ‘*in truth their eyes were opened as they had expected, but the outcome was not what they had awaited.*’ This again is presented in the same rapid-fire fashion as the transgression, paralleling the actions of the woman in v. 6: (1) their eyes were opened, (2) they realize their nakedness, (3) they sew fig leaves together, and (4) they made coverings. “These contrasts are deliberately drawn. The woman’s inflated expectations of the wisdom she will acquire are hinted at in v 6. Then the actual consequences, mentioned in a very matter-of-fact way, are so comic as to be hilarious, were it not for the seriousness of the subject.” [Wenham, 1:75]

and they knew that they were naked; — What was formerly understood to be a sign of a healthy relationship between the man and the woman (2:25) has now become something unpleasant and filled with shame. The reference to ‘*nakedness*’ at the end of the paragraph forms a fitting parallel to the close of the preceding paragraph (2:25) and to the conclusion of the next paragraph (3:21). “What they ‘*saw*’ is that they are ‘*naked,*’ what is ‘*pleasing to the eye*’ causes displeasure with their own nakedness and the need to cover it with ‘*fig leaves,*’ and the ‘*wisdom*’ gained only enables the making of ‘*coverings.*’ ... The plural ‘*they*’ shows that the couple simultaneously experiences the results of eating. The verb ‘*realized,*’ when literally rendered ‘*knew,*’ echoes the ‘*tree of knowledge*’ from which they had partaken; the word ‘*naked*’ is reminiscent again of the ‘*crafty*’ serpent who tricked the woman into exchanging her innocence for the embarrassing knowledge that they are naked (3:1; 2:25).” [Mathews, 1:239] “It was here that the consciousness of nakedness first suggested the need of covering, not because the fruit had poisoned the fountain of human life, and through some inherent quality had immediately corrupted the reproductive powers of the body, nor because any physical change ensued in consequence of the fall; but because, with the destruction of the normal connection between soul and body through sin, the body ceased to be the pure abode of a spirit in fellowship with God, and in the purely natural state of the body the consciousness was produced not merely of the distinction of the sexes, but still more of the worthlessness of the flesh; so that the man and woman stood ashamed in each other’s presence, and endeavoured to hide the disgrace of their spiritual nakedness, by covering those parts of the body through which the impurities of nature are removed. That the natural feeling of shame, the origin of which is recorded here, had its root, not in sensuality or any physical corruption, but in the consciousness of guilt or shame before God, and consequently that it was the conscience which was really at work, is evident from the fact that the man and his wife hid themselves from Jehovah God among the trees of the garden, as soon as they heard the sound of His footsteps.” [Keil, 1:96f]

and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.’ — Though ineffective, these actions suggest urgency and desperation; their innocent serenity had been shattered. But who are the couple trying to hide from? From each other or from God? Certainly their behavior before meeting God shows that they had a sense of guilt before He addressed them.

fig leaves — ‘*Fig leaves*’ were probably used because they are the biggest leaves available in Canaan, though their heavy indentations must have made them less than ideal for covering! [Wenham, 1:76]

aprons, loin-cloth, belt — Hebrew, *chagôrāh*; elsewhere used of a belt (1 Kgs 2:5; 2 Kgs 3:21; Isa 3:24). This is different than the usual word for ‘*loincloth*,’ *’ēzôr* ; perhaps the skimpiness of their clothing is being emphasized.

THE UTTER FAILURE OF SELF-EFFORTS FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS — *They attempt to alleviate the problem themselves. Rather than driving them back to God, their guilt leads them into a self-atoning, self-protective procedure: they must cover themselves. They may successfully hide their nakedness from each other but that does exonerate them from their sin of disobedience.* [Hamilton, 1:191] *“The ‘fig leaves’ were pathetic enough, as human expedients tend to be, but the instinct was sound and God confirmed it (21), for sin’s proper fruit is shame. The couple, now ill at ease together, experienced a foretaste of fallen human relations in general. There is no road back, as the nudists and those who make a cult of frankness, the spiritual nudists, suppose. God’s way is forward, for when the body is redeemed (Rom 8:23) and love is perfect we shall be not back in Eden but clothed with glory (2 Cor 5:4).”* [Kidner, 69] “Their efforts to hide their shame are as puny as their efforts to hide from God since their man-made coverings are ineffective (v. 21). ‘*Made*’ and ‘*coverings*’ anticipate v. 21, where God ‘*made*’ durable ‘*garments*’ from animal skins for their needed apparel.” [Mathews, 1:239] “They are ashamed of their nakedness, yet, though convinced, they do not humble themselves before God, nor fear his judgments as they ought; they even do not cease to resort to evasions.... Adam and his wife were yet ignorant of their own vileness, since with a covering so light they attempted to hide themselves from the presence of the God.” [Calvin, 157, 159]