

# THE BIG JOURNEY

## *from Creation to New Creation*



'Expulsion from the Garden of Eden' by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA).

## four ► The Fall

### The origin of sin

Adam and Eve's walk with God in paradise didn't last. There came a day when they rebelled against Him. The terrifying consequences of that rebellion confront us daily in a thousand ways.

Things are not the way they ought to be. All of us know that. Sandra Richter asks us to reflect with her "on a question I am frequently asked: 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' By this question people usually mean why do babies die, why are young parents struck with cancer, why are good citizens killed by drunk drivers? Sometimes people who ask this question are thinking more globally: 'Why do tyrannous governments thrive? ... Why are tens of thousands of children on this

planet orphans?' " Dr Richter comments: "... all of the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve somehow know ... that there is something profoundly wrong with the world as it is."

Nor is Nature spared. It suffers alongside us. Natural disasters, and pain and disease and untimely death throw a dark shadow over this beautiful world. In C.S. Lewis's words, "Nature has all the air of a good thing spoiled."

What exactly *is* sin and evil? How did it come into being? How did it enter our world, and why did God allow it to do so? What has sin done to us and our world? And how can God put everything right again?

We'll take time now to try to answer these questions. We need to do this in order to understand the rest of the Bible. That's because *the whole of the rest of the Bible* tells the story of what sin has done to us and our world and how God put everything right. Don Carson comments: "... the entire drama of the Bible's storyline turns on understanding how abominable sin is and what must be done to end it."



Image by Richard Peter (CC BY-SA 3.0 DE)

A graphic image of the consequences of mankind's fall. A statue on Dresden's city hall stands sentinel over the bombed out city in early 1945 – as if grieving over this once beautiful city now laid waste.

## What is evil?

Evil exists because of sin. Sin isn't an impersonal 'force'. Sin is a *relational, personal* thing. At root, sin is the rebellion of a *personal being against the personal God*.

So only *personal* beings – humans and angels - are capable of sinning. Animals may appear to do 'evil' things; Tennyson famously wrote of "*nature, red in tooth and claw*". But animals do not sin when they eat other animals. It's part of the present created order. It is not evil.

Nature, too, appears to do 'evil' things. Earthquakes, tsunamis, and hurricanes destroy lives, livelihoods and property. But nature is merely *affected* by evil (see Romans 8.19-22). Nature has not itself *become* evil.

## Satan' fall

Genesis 3.6 tells us how Adam and Eve rebelled against God. But they weren't the first rebels. They were tempted by a wily serpent. John calls Satan "*that ancient serpent*" (Revelation 12.9, 20.2), thus pointing us to the serpent in the Garden. That serpent was at least a mouthpiece for Satan. It may perhaps have been Satan himself in disguise.

Satan was already God's enemy before he tempted mankind. Satan was the first sinner.

Was Satan always evil? No. Our holy God can't create evil creatures. Satan was originally a perfect, sinless being. So there must have come a time when Satan rebelled against God.

Two other passages - Isaiah 14.12-15 and Ezekiel 28.11-19 may fill in more detail for us. The first is part of a passage that prophesies the King of Babylon's downfall - the king here probably refers to the Babylonian monarchy or empire rather than a specific man. The other passage laments the fall of the King of Tyre.

These proud king and empires mirrored Satan's own megalomania. Many Christians, in fact, think that these passages actually have a double reference – that they refer both to these kings and to Satan.

### Lucifer

The king of Babylon is called "*Day Star, son of Dawn*" (Isaiah 14.12). The NKJV translation of "*Day Star*" is "*Lucifer*". The name Lucifer was first used in a 4<sup>th</sup> century Latin Bible translation called the Vulgate. It's a name often applied to Satan. This doesn't prove that there's a reference to Satan here, but it's interesting nonetheless.

If these passages do also refer to Satan, what do they tell us about him?

### Wise and beautiful

Satan is described as "*full of wisdom and perfect in beauty*". He was a glorious and beautiful being before he fell.

### In God's presence

Satan was "*in Eden, the garden of God*". This reminds us of the Garden of Eden, which was God's home.

He was also on the "*holy mountain of God*". We meet other holy mountains in the Bible. One is Mount Sinai, where God Himself descended and presented Himself (see especially Exodus 19.18, 24.9-11). Another is Mount Zion, where the Temple was built (see, for example, Isaiah 8.18). This Temple was God's home. So the "*holy mountain of God*" is a Biblical way of referring to God's home.

So far, then, this suggests that Satan once lived in God's home, and thus very close to Him.

### God's anointed cherub

What was Satan doing in God's home? Ezekiel gives us a clue. He calls the King of Tyre a "*cherub*" (Ezekiel 28.14) – the plural is "*cherubim*". A cherub isn't a plump celestial infant that we see in old paintings! From other passages of Scripture, we deduce that cherubim are angelic beings who look after God's home.

- **Cherubim in the Garden of Eden** God appointed cherubim to protect His first home, the Garden of Eden, and to guard the way to its Tree of Life (Genesis 3.24).
- **Cherubim in the Tabernacle and the Temple** God lived among His people in the Tabernacle and, later,

in the Temple. They were both decorated with cherubim (Exodus 26.1,31,1 Kings 6.29,31-35, 2 Chronicles 3.7,14). There were also statues of cherubim in their innermost room, called the Most Holy Place (Exodus 25.17-22, 37.6-9, 1 Kings 6.23-28, 8.6-7). This was God's throne-chamber. In it was a special box called the ark of the covenant; on top of the ark was the golden mercy seat (Exodus 25.10-22). The mercy seat was God's footstool (see 1 Chronicles 28.2); God enthroned Himself above it. The cherubim were so positioned that they seemed to be guarding God's throne. We'll look at the Tabernacle and Temple in later sessions.

As a cherub, then, Satan appears to have had a privileged position. He was looking after God's heavenly home, and guarding His throne. But the King of Tyre is no 'ordinary' cherub. He was "*an anointed guardian cherub*". Daniel Block explains: "The king was not simply one cherub among many; he was *the* cherub par excellence."

If this description of the King of Tyre has a double reference to Satan, it seems he was the *chief* cherub. He had unique status and authority. He was the chief guardian of God's heavenly sanctuary.

### God's chief priest

In the last session, we saw that Adam's task was to look after and guard God's earthly home, the Garden of Eden. Looking after and protecting God's home is a *priestly* role.

As guardian of God's heavenly sanctuary, then, Satan exercised a *priestly* role. And as the *pre-eminent* cherub, it seems that he acted as a kind of high priest. Interestingly, Satan is described as adorned with "*every precious stone*" and gold. The list of jewels in Ezekiel 28.13 reminds us of those on the Israelite High Priest's breastplate (Exodus 28.17-20, 39.10-13).

From these passages, then, it's clear that Satan was very close to God and privileged with great power and status.

### Why did Satan fall?

But it seems that Satan began to admire his own beauty (see Ezekiel 28.17). He questioned why such a splendid being as himself should continue to serve God. Swelled with pride (see 1 Timothy 3.6 NKJV), he aspired to be like God Himself (see Isaiah 14.13-14).

This was high treason. God threw him out (see Isaiah 14.12,15 and Ezekiel 28.16). It seems that other angels joined his rebellion (whether then or later we're not told). They, too, were cast out of heaven. But many angels – doubtless most of them, in fact – remained loyal to God.

We can't be certain that Isaiah 14.12-15 and Ezekiel 28.11-19 have a double reference to Satan. But they may well do. Certainly, these two prophecies are consistent with what other Bible passages reveal about him.

### When did Satan fall?

In Genesis 1.1 we read that God created "*the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1.1). This phrase probably includes our universe and the invisible heavenly realms where the angels live, too. If so, the angels' home – and presumably the angels themselves – existed before the six creation days during which Earth was formed and filled.

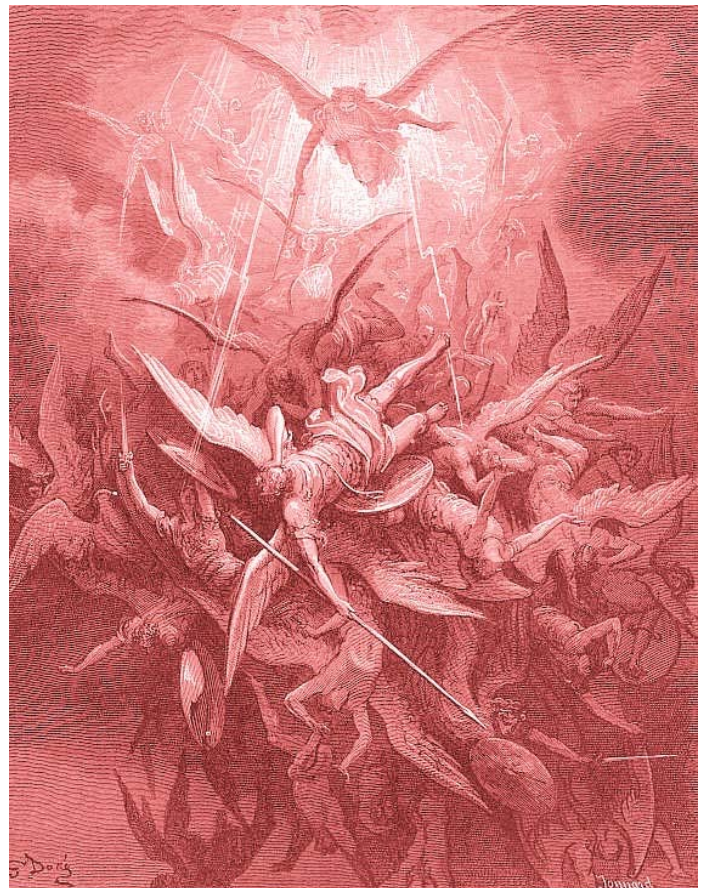
Job 38.4-7 is more explicit. There we read that when God laid the Earth's foundation "*the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*". These 'morning stars' and 'sons of God' are doubtless angelic beings. From this text, it seems clear that the angels were indeed in existence before the six creation days.

And so the angelic fall may well have taken place in this far-off time.

### The dark kingdom

Cast out from God's presence, Satan set up his own dark kingdom in opposition to God and His angels.

Where is that kingdom? It's certainly not in the heavenly realm where God lives with His holy angels. This is a realm so holy that no evil being could ever penetrate it. This may be Paul's "*third heaven*" of 2 Corinthians 12.2 or "*heaven itself*" (Hebrews 9.24).



An illustration (tinted from the original monochrome) by Gustave Doré for 'Paradise Lost' by John Milton (1608–1674). It illustrates Satan's original fall. The relevant passage in 'Paradise Lost' read thus: "Him the Almighty Power / Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie / With hideous ruine and combustion down / To bottomless perdition, there to dwell / In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire" ('Paradise Lost', Book I).

.But it seems clear that there's another heavenly realm closely linked with our visible universe. It's here that Satan has established his 'headquarters'.

Under Satan's control are a host of evil beings (see Revelation 12.9 and Matthew 25.41 and see also 2 Peter 2.4 and Jude 6).

From this heavenly realm, he and his evil forces oppose God and every angel and human loyal to Him. This cosmic conflict is central to the Bible story.



Image © [www.FreeFoto.com](http://www.FreeFoto.com) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

Satan has established his 'headquarters' in an unseen heavenly realm closely linked with our visible universe.

## Satan's fall and the Earth

Satan's fall may have affected the primeval Earth, too. Before the six days of creation, the Earth was a dark and desolate globe. Perhaps this was how God created it before proceeding to organise it and fill it with life.

But some Bible students connect Earth's dark, desolate state with Satan's fall. As we saw in session 2, the text of Genesis 1.2 could suggest the Earth suffered the effects of Divine judgment. Perhaps this was the fallout from judgment meted out to Satan and his angels. But we can't be sure about this.

## Satan's character

### The adversary

The name 'Satan' is a Hebrew word basically meaning 'adversary'. The term *satan* can, in fact, be applied to a human adversary. It's used this way in Numbers 22.22, 1 Kings 11.14. 'Satan' can also be translated 'accuser' (it is in Psalm 109.6). In the New Testament, Satan is often called *ho diabolos* (translated 'the devil'), meaning 'the slanderer' or 'the accuser'.

From the day he fell, Satan has slandered God. He defames God's character, insinuating that He doesn't love, that He isn't righteous or holy, and that He can't be trusted.

He slanders God's people as well. We see him accuse Job (Job 1.9-11, 2.4-5), Joshua the high priest (Zechariah 3.1),

and Christians (Revelation 12.10). He hates anything that belongs to God or that reminds him of God.

### The evil one

Satan is called 'the evil one' (for example, Ephesians 6.16). J.I. Packer writes: "The mentality of Satan is a mystery whose depths we can never fully plumb: not just because Satan is an angel, while we are [human], but also because Satan is purely evil, and we cannot conceive what pure evil is like. No man is so far gone in sin that no vestige of goodness or truth remains in him; no man is wholly motivated by hatred of others; no man has literally no aim in life save to wreck and destroy the creative achievements of another; . . . no man's character is integrated solely by the power of hate towards God. . . . We can never, therefore, form a really adequate idea of what Satan is like. . . . But Scripture clearly means us to believe in a Satan, and a host of Satanic [minions], who are of quite unimaginable badness—more cruel, more malicious, more proud, more scornful, more perverted, more destructive, more disgusting, more filthy, more despicable, than anything our minds can conceive."

### The deceiver

Satan's key weapon is deception. He began his earthly campaign by deceiving Eve (2 Corinthians 11.3). John describes him as "*the deceiver of the whole world*" (Revelation 12.9).

And one of the main ways he deceives is through imitation. He's a master counterfeiter. Indeed, he wants to counterfeit God Himself. He wants to be like the Most High and do the things that God does - compare the depiction of the King of Babylon's megalomania in Isaiah 14.14.

### The limits to Satan's power

We must remember, however, that Satan is only an angel. God is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere at once) and omniscient (knowing everything). Satan is none of these things. He doesn't know everything, he can't be everywhere at once, and his power (though great) is limited.

On our own, we are no match for Satan. But in Christ we do have power over him. We may overcome him by Jesus's blood and by our faithful testimony to Him and His power (see Revelation 12.11).

And Satan is fast running out of time (Revelation 12.12). One day he will be thrown into the flaming abyss of Hell, and God's creation will never be troubled by him again.

## The fallen angels

The New Testament uses more than one term for the evil beings in heavenly places. So there seem to be several

kinds. Ephesians 6.12 refers to *“the rulers, . . . the authorities, . . . the cosmic powers over this present darkness, . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”* The plurality of terms suggests there may be different functions and ranks of evil beings.

The New Testament also mentions demons, also called unclean spirits. Evil spirits are mentioned a few times, too; these also seem to be the same as demons. Demons have a craving to live in a physical body – both human bodies (for example, see Mark 9.17-26 and parallels) and animals (see Luke 8.32-33 and parallels). They may be a kind of fallen angel. Or they may be another type of evil

being. For example, they may have been a creature that once possessed a physical body. If so, this explains why they want to enter a physical body again.

At least some fallen angels are bound already, awaiting final judgment (see 2 Peter 2.4, Jude 6). They may, however, still be able to exercise a malevolent influence over mankind – but only within strict limits set by God. These angels are almost certainly the evil angels who meddled in human affairs before Noah’s Flood (see Genesis 6.1-4). These meddlers may well be *“the spirits in prison”* to which Jesus proclaimed His victory and their defeat (1 Peter 3.19-20).

## The temptation in the garden

### Satan’s strategem

In session 2, we looked at the Garden of Eden. This was God’s earthly home. And Adam and Eve lived with Him there. Here in this paradise, God and mankind walked together. They enjoyed fellowship with each other.

God commanded Adam to *“to work . . . and keep”* (ESV) or *“to work . . . and take care of”* (NIV) the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.15). That included protecting it from unwelcome intruders.

As we saw just now, Satan may well have once been the chief guardian of God’s heavenly home. It seems likely that he now saw his chance to do in God’s earthly home what he’d failed to do in God’s heavenly home – to evict God and rule there in God’s place. But first he had to deal with its guardians, Adam and Eve.

How long Adam and Eve lived in blissful fellowship with God in the garden we’re not told. But there came a day when Satan made his move. He forced his way into the garden.

### The two trees



Image © cucumber images – Fotolia.com

Adam and Eve had now to stand firm and repulse Satan’s assault. That battle – for battle it most certainly was – focused on a tree, the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil”*. This was one of two special trees in the garden

(Genesis 2.9). The other was the tree of life.

These were doubtless ordinary trees with ordinary fruit. But these two trees had *spiritual* significance. Their fruit was a kind of ‘sacrament’ – in Derek Kidner’s words, *“the physical means of a spiritual transaction”*.

### The tree of life

The tree of life was at the centre of the garden. What was the purpose of this tree? Jesus said: *“this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”* (John 17.3). Life – that is, spiritual life, eternal life – is *relationship with God*.

To eat the fruit of this tree would be more than just a physical act. If Adam and Eve had eaten from this tree (and if they had also refused the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) it would have been an act of *commitment* to God. It would show that they had decided to love and obey God. And God would have responded by giving them *eternal life*. This wasn’t just unending physical life, but *God’s own uncreated spiritual life*. God Himself would come to live within them. They would enjoy intimate, constant communion with Him; He would be their unceasing source of blessing.

Adam and Eve could freely eat of the tree of life. Whether they did or not, we’re not told. But Genesis 3.22 (discussed below) suggests they didn’t.

### The tree of the knowledge of good and evil

God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2.17). Like the other tree, eating its fruit was more than just a physical act. When Adam and Eve ate from this tree it would have been an act of *commitment* – not commitment to God, but quite the opposite: *to independence from God*.

To eat from this tree was to say to God, in effect: *“I know better than God. From now on I’ll decide for myself what’s good and what’s bad.”* As commentator Victor Hamilton explains: *“What is forbidden to man is the power to decide for himself what is in his best interests and what is not.”*

God said to Adam that he would *“surely die”* if he ate from the forbidden tree. But He gave no further explanation. Why did He plant the tree there in the first place? And how come eating its fruit would kill Adam and Eve? God didn't say.

Adam and Eve simply had to trust that God had their best interests at heart. They just had to obey Him - even though they didn't know exactly *why*. In short, they had to live *“by faith, not by sight”* (2 Corinthians 5.7). Right through the Bible we see God looking for and rewarding faith (see especially Hebrews 11).

It seems most likely that the ban on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was permanent. If Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of life, God would have given them eternal life. They would have walked with God and learned from *Him* what was good and bad for them. Jesus said to His disciples *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth”* (John 16.13). The Spirit is our Teacher. He would have been Adam and Eve's Teacher, too.

### “Choose whom you will serve”



Image © davitydave / David Lytle : Flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Luscious oranges ready for picking. Of course, we don't know what kind of fruit the tree of the knowledge of good and evil bore. But we can be certain they were at least as tempting as these fruit!

By planting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden, God was giving them a choice. Would they love and trust and obey Him? Or would they reject God's authority and decide for themselves how to live? As C.S. Lewis said: *“From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible*

*alternative of choosing God or self for the centre is opened to it.”* Who would be the first love of their lives? Would it be God, or themselves?

God laid that choice before Adam and Eve - as indeed He does to each one of us. He was saying to them, in effect: *“choose this day whom you will serve”* (Joshua 24.15). Of course, God wanted Adam and Eve to love and serve Him. But it had to be their choice. We have to *choose* to love - otherwise our love is a mere programmed, automatic reaction. And that isn't love at all.

### The tempting lie

Satan gatecrashed God's garden. The serpent was at least his mouthpiece. He may, in fact, have been Satan himself in disguise. Ever the deceiver, Satan hid his true identity.

Satan targets Eve, enchanting her by his exquisite beauty and subtle charm (see 2 Corinthians 11.3).

Was Adam with Eve during her conversation with the serpent? Most probably he was. Kenneth Mathews points out that the *“you”* at each place in Genesis 3.1-5 *“is plural and thus suggests [Adam's] presence”*.

Observe how subtly Satan seduces Eve to sin. He says to her *“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”* He invites her to question what God has said. And notice the touch of surprise, even incredulity: *“Did God actually say . . . ?”*

He focuses Eve's mind on God's one restriction, rather than His generosity. God said: *“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat . . .”* (Genesis 2.16 NIV). Satan says *“You shall not eat . . .”* (Genesis 3.1). He misquotes God. He robs God's command of its liberal generosity, and portrays God as a mean oppressor, rather than a generous provider.

And Satan calls God simply *“God”*. The Hebrew word for *“God”* here is *Elohim*, which expresses God's sovereign omnipotence. He avoids God's personal name *“LORD”*, which translates the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. This name reveals God as the personal God Who is present with His people and Who relates to them. But Satan does not wish to portray God like this.

Eve seems caught off-guard. She corrects the serpent, but not accurately. God said: *“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat . . .”*. Eve omits the words *“every”* and *“freely”*: *“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden . . .”* In so doing, she downplays God's generosity. She says that they weren't even to touch the fruit - making God's command stricter than it actually was. And she, like Satan, doesn't use God's personal name *“LORD”*, that is, *Yahweh*. Satan had insinuated that God was a mean oppressor. This insinuation seems to have taken root in Eve's mind.

Then Satan comes straight out with it. We can paraphrase and amplify Genesis 3.4-5 thus: *“You won't really die. God is lying to you. He's lying because He's got something wonderful that He doesn't want you to have!”*

He's got freedom – freedom to do exactly as He pleases. But He doesn't want you to be free. He doesn't want you to enjoy life to the full. No, He wants to keep you in chains. Break with Him and go eat from that tree. You'll be free at last! Choose for yourself what's good for you and what's bad for you. Then you'll have the life that's really worth living!"

It sounds so blasphemous, because it is so blasphemous. Satan slandered God to Eve. Satan pretended to be her friend; he portrayed God as her rival and enemy. He made Adam and Eve think wrongly about God - something he tries to do to all of us. One lie underpins all the Devil's lies - *that God does not love*. Satan wants us to think God doesn't love us and hasn't got our best interests in mind.

Satan's nature is utterly warped and degraded by sin. He is incapable of love. He can't even understand what love is. Satan just wants to use people like slaves, cheap and expendable tools to do his bidding. And he thinks God is

like that, too. He thinks God had some base ulterior motive for creating us. In the 'Screwtape Letters' C.S. Lewis put these words into the mouth of the demon Screwtape: "All His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else - He must have some *real* motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them. . . . What does He stand to make out of them? That is the insoluble question. . . . We know that He cannot really love: nobody can: it doesn't make sense."

God had said to Adam and Eve "... *have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth*" (Genesis 1.28). Here was a living creature moving on the Earth – a creature that was blaspheming their God.

As the garden's guardians, they should have exercised their God-given dominion over it and expelled it from the garden. But they allowed it to stay and poison their minds and seduce them to sin. And so Satan caused *them* to be expelled from the garden.

## The Fall



Image © [www.FreeFoto.com](http://www.FreeFoto.com) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

Eve gazes at the fruit. She senses how luscious it is. She sees how captivatingly lovely it is to look at. We can imagine her contemplating the fulfilment and satisfaction that Satan promised it would bring. John may be echoing these three temptations when he speaks about "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" (1 John 2.16 NKJV).

She takes the fruit and eats, and gives some to Adam. He eats with her. Sin enters our race.

### Overturing God's order

Notice how the Fall reverses God's created order:

- **God was Adam and Eve's Creator Lord** – but mankind disobeys Him, and makes himself his own god.
- **Adam was the leader in his marriage relationship with Eve.** The text of Genesis 2 and 3 suggests this.
- Adam was formed first (a point that Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2.13 with respect to church life).



'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden' by Wenzel Peter (1745-1829). The artist depicts the moment when Eve offers the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Adam. The serpent is coiled around the tree behind them.

● Secondly, Eve was created as his helper. As we saw in the last session, in no way does this imply Eve's inferiority. Nevertheless, it *does* imply that the man is the leader. Eve is Adam's "*helper*"; Adam is not Eve's "*helper*".

● Thirdly, Adam named Eve (Genesis 2.23) - to confer a name on her is to act authoritatively over her.

● Finally, God questions Adam first (Genesis 3.9), showing he holds ultimate responsibility for their actions. Yet Eve, not Adam, is the leader here. She was the initiator in taking the forbidden fruit. Adam simply followed her into sin.

► **God gave Adam and Eve authority over the animals.** Yet the human pair takes advice from an animal - the serpent.

The creational hierarchy was reversed. As Kenneth Mathews comments: "the woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God".

## Believing lies

Adam and Eve fell for Satan's lies. Eve was deceived (Genesis 3.13, 1 Timothy 2.14). But Adam's sin was no error of judgment, or delusion he had fallen for unwittingly (1 Timothy 2.14). It was moral failure.

God's graciousness and generosity was obvious to Adam - all he had to do was look around him at the bountiful garden and his beautiful wife. But Adam chose to believe Satan instead. He was fully aware of what he was doing. And so God held Adam, not Eve, ultimately responsible for that first sin.

Notice that Adam and Eve's rebellion against God was based on *what they believed*. What they believed was profoundly untrue.

► **They believed Satan's lies about God.** Adam and Eve believed Satan's insinuation that God couldn't be trusted to do them good. Nicholas Fogliacco comments: "When the sinner revolts against the Creator of all things and rejects him, it is not the living God of biblical revelation that he or she rejects, but a distorted image of divinity."

► **And they believed Satan's lies about themselves, too.** Adam and Eve had, in W. Ian Thomas's words, "... believed the Devil's lie, ... that man can somehow be man without God, that the Creator is not indispensable to the creature, that we can carve our own destiny, be king in our own kingdom, be our own god. .... Through Satan's lying subtlety, mankind embarked upon the mad experiment of disobedience and human self-sufficiency, ...."





Image © V. Gilbert and Arlisle F. Beers / Visual Bible Alive  
Olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane.

### A tale of two gardens

In the garden, Adam said to God, in effect, “Not Your will, but mine”. Jesus, too, was once in a garden – the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, hours before His death, He yielded Himself to obey God with these words: *“not as I will, but as you will”* (Matthew 26.39).

The first Adam rebelled. Jesus, the Second Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15.45), obeyed. He submitted Himself to die for us, and rescue us from the consequences of the first Adam’s rebellion.

### What is sin?

What exactly *is* sin? It’s not merely thinking or doing evil things. It’s not just breaking God’s rules. Those are just the *symptoms*. Sin goes much, much deeper than that. Michael Reeves explains: “our problem is not so much that we have behaved wrongly, but that we have been drawn to love wrongly”.

As we saw in the last session, we humans are made to love – to love God and to love each other. Love lies at the very heart of what it is to be human. That’s why Jesus said, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”* (Matthew 22.37-39)

So what went wrong? Instead of loving God, they turned away from Him and began to love themselves. As Paul writes to Timothy: *“people will be lovers of self. . .”* (2 Timothy 3.2).

In so doing they dethroned God from His rightful place in their lives. They made a ‘unilateral declaration of independence’ from God. It was an act of mutiny. C.S. Lewis declared: “... fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.”

Sinners may be dishonest, debauched, hateful; or they may be pillars of society. The thing that is common to them all is *self-centredness*. Their god is *themselves*. The one they love and serve above everything else is *themselves*.

We all know how this self-centredness expresses itself. My ‘self’ – my self-centredness - insists on its own way

and sulks if it can’t get it. It resents being overlooked. It demands its rights. It is lightning-quick to spring to its defence when criticised. It is easily offended. It indulges in self-pity. It refuses to forgive.

Alec Vidler commented: “Christianity . . . does not say that . . . we are totally depraved, in the sense that we are incapable of feeling or responding to any good impulses whatever. The truth is much deeper and more subtle than that. It is precisely when you consider the *best* in man that you see there is in each of us a hard core of pride or self-centredness which corrupts our *best* achievements and blights our *best* experiences. It comes out in all sorts of ways - in the jealousy which spoils our friendships, in the vanity we feel when we have done something pretty good, . . . in the meanness which makes us depreciate the efforts of other people, . . . in our fondness for flattery and our resentment of blame, . . .”

It’s this self-centredness that’s at the root of all that has gone wrong with the human race. As Paul said in 2 Timothy 3.2: *“people will be lovers of self. . .”*; he then launches into a terrifying catalogue of vices. All of these vices are simply the outworking of loving and serving one’s self.

### The enigma of evil

What is the origin of evil? God certainly isn’t its author. He can’t cause evil. Neither can He create anything evil. Before they fell, Adam and Eve had no inner urge to sin, like people do now. Their temptation came from ‘outside’. It came from Satan. Satan, too, was originally perfect – perhaps the most magnificent and noble of all the angelic beings. We have to assume he originally didn’t have any compulsion to sin, either.

Nor can God tempt people to do evil. James tells us, *“God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one”* (James 1.13). God didn’t tempt Adam and Eve. Neither did God tempt Satan.

So how did sin come into being? We said earlier that Adam and Eve had a measure of free will. They could *choose* whether to love God or reject Him. Doubtless Satan and the other angels, too, were free to choose whether to serve God or not. Does possessing free will *inevitably* mean that it’s possible to choose wrongly – in other words, to sin?

No. It’s perfectly possible to choose to love and serve God *without* any danger of sinning. That’s exactly how we’ll be in the world to come!

But does a free being at least have to go through an initial ‘probation’ – like Adam and Eve did? But our God is sovereign, omnipotent and infinitely wise. So why didn’t God arrange it that both humans and angels would remain faithful to God *from the moment of their creation* without any possibility of sinning ever?

In the end, we cannot tell. How evil entered God’s creation is, ultimately, a mystery to us. Perhaps God will show us more about this in the world to come.



'De Wallen': the largest and most infamous red light district of Amsterdam. Architectural beauty defiled by sin.

Image © Rungbachduong: Wikipedia (CC BY-SA 3.0)

## "All sinned"

Adam's first sin was different from any other human sin.

Since the Fall, every human - except Jesus - was born with an inner compulsion to sin. People can't help sinning. It's natural to them.

But this wasn't so at the beginning. In the beginning, Adam and Eve had no natural urge to sin. They could be tempted. But they need not have sinned.

But having sinned once, they were no longer innocent. It's as if they lost their virginity in relation to sin. From that moment they were tainted by an inward urge to sin. They were now in bondage to sin and could never return to innocence. That's what made their first sin so unique and terrible.

That one sin defiled the entire human race - only Jesus was exempt from its effects. But how exactly did Adam and Eve's sin defile us all?

Paul tells us: *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—"* (Romans 5.12, NIV). Sin is universal (Psalm 14.1-3, 53.1-3, Isaiah 53.6, and Romans 3.9-19,23); we've all committed sinful acts from infancy. But Paul's phrase *"all sinned"* here in Romans 5.12 isn't referring to this.

So what does Paul mean? Let's go back to something we learnt in session 3. There we saw that we're not a group of unrelated individuals, but a family *"from one man"* (Acts 17.26). We're all connected. And we're therefore all connected to Adam. So when Adam committed the first sin, we were somehow implicated in that sin. How can we explain this?

### 1 The human race is 'in Adam'

Hebrews 7.1-10 can help us here. There we read that Abraham paid tithes to a king called Melchizedek. And Abraham's great-grandson Levi paid tithes to this king,

too (even though he wasn't yet born) because he was *"in the body of his ancestor"* (Hebrews 7.10, NIV).

In a similar way, we were all 'in the body' of our ancestor Adam - even though we were not yet born. We're all *"in Adam"* (1 Corinthians 15.22). When he sinned, we all (in some mysterious way we cannot fully explain) sinned too.

### 2 Adam was our family head

But there's another way that Adam's sin implicates us. In Biblical times families acted as more of a single unit than is typical for people in modern Western culture. For example, when Achan was executed for his sin at Jericho (Joshua 7.10-26), his whole family died with him. In a similar way, Adam is our 'family head' and we share the guilt of his sin.

### A second Adam

All this may seem very puzzling - even offensive. Is it fair for us to be linked to Adam - and so suffer because of his sin?

But God knew what He was doing when He made us as a family with a single man as our 'head'. For one thing, being a family means we're *relational* beings. At the very heart of our beings is the capacity for *love* - and that's a very wonderful thing. God made us humans in His image. God is love (1 John 4.8,16), and love is at the root of our own human nature, too. When we love - selflessly and sacrificially - we reflect God Himself!

But being a family with a single head *also provides the solution to our plight!* Our first head, Adam, sinned. We all suffer the consequences. But God has appointed a new Head of the human race - Jesus Christ. When someone repents and trusts in Him, they are 'joined' to Him and enjoy all the blessings which that union to Him brings.

If we were just unconnected individuals without a family head (like the angels seem to be) this wouldn't be possible. And so we couldn't be saved from our sin.

## The Fallout from the Fall

### “Where are you, Adam?”

After they have eaten the fruit, Adam and Eve’s eyes are “opened” (Genesis 3.7). What they see is not the unfettered liberty that Satan had promised, but their own shame. Adam and Eve were once naked without embarrassment. Now they feel exposed and ashamed (compare Revelation 3.18, 16.15).

Instinctively they cast about for something to wrap around them. But a hasty cover-up with fig leaves offers no real relief. When the holy God approaches, Adam and Eve’s guilt becomes unbearable. In fear and shame they flee. They experience (to borrow Geoffrey Bingham’s words): “. . . pain and shame, burden and heaviness, . . . the sense of pollution, the choking, stifling terror of retribution, the feelings of alienation, rejection, the intense loneliness, . . . the feeling of failure, . . . the utter emptiness of being, . . .” Before, they would have eagerly anticipated God’s presence with them, and run to join Him. Now they avoid Him.

God calls to Adam, “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3.9). God knows where he is hiding. But rather than flushing him out of hiding, God draws Adam to Him (compare John 6.44, 12.32). As Victor Hamilton comments: “*He is the good shepherd who seeks the lost sheep*” (compare Matthew 18.12-14).

In his response to God’s questioning, Adam initially fails to confess his sin. He simply says “*I was afraid, because I was naked*”. Adam is not repent; he’s merely aware of the effects of his sin. He doesn’t yet see the seriousness of his sin.

God questions him further. Adam then tries to justify himself - a familiar tactic! He shifts the blame to Eve for giving him the fruit. But, in so doing, Adam seems to imply that it was God’s fault for giving her to him in the first place: “*The woman whom you gave to be with me, . . .*” (Genesis 3.12). Tim Keller comments: “*This is a clear accusation that God is himself to blame for what Adam has done. God gave him the woman who was supposed to help him! Clearly, he gave Adam an inferior, flawed product!*”

Satan, ever the accuser, had sown his own nature into human hearts. Mankind, created to be God’s friend, becomes His accuser.

### The curse on Satan

Our just God investigates the facts of the case and determined the guilt of each party. He curses Satan (Genesis 3.14-15) and pronounces judgment on Eve (Genesis 3.16) and Adam (Genesis 3.17-19).



A winter sunrise. Our journey from Creation to New Creation descends into the darkening shadows of the Fall. But there is hope. Beyond the shadows, we see the sunrise. Peter wrote: “*we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*” (2 Peter 1.19). The day that Peter speaks about is Jesus’s second coming at the end of this age – a day we await with eager anticipation.

God curses Satan. What does this mean? Bernard Bell explains: it means that “no matter how hard Satan tries to thwart God’s purposes he will ultimately be unsuccessful”.

God condemns Satan to eat dust – a symbol of grovelling humiliation (Psalm 44.25, 72.9) and absolute defeat (Isaiah 25.12, Micah 7.17).

And God says that he’ll be defeated by the “*offspring*” of the woman (Genesis 3.15, NKJV) - a member of the very race that Satan had brought to ruin! A Man descended from Eve would one day - although suffering fearfully in the process - crush Satan’s head and destroy him, and release mankind.

### The Serpent Crusher

Incidentally, that’s often why the Bible includes genealogies. These long lists of ancestors seem rather boring and incidental to us. But actually they’re a vital part of the story. A descendant – a “*seed*” (NKJV) or “*offspring*” (ESV) - of Eve will crush Satan’s head. The genealogies lead us down the generations to the descendant of Eve Who will strike the mortal blow. In Vaughan Robert’s words, “The rest of the Bible can be seen as a ‘search for the serpent-crusher”.

Adam and Eve’s act of rebellion had colossal and devastating consequences. The whole of the rest of the Bible tells us how God deals with all the effects of our sin.

## The distorted image

Something very radical happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned. They now possessed a rebellious self-willed disposition – a disposition that Romans 1.18-32 depicts in such graphic detail, and which all their descendants (except One) would share. People – in their essential nature – still bear the image of God (see Genesis 9.6, James 3.9). But that image is now distorted and dysfunctional.



Image © [www.FreeFoto.com](http://www.FreeFoto.com) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

People still bear the image of God (see Genesis 9.6, James 3.9). But that image is now distorted and dysfunctional.

## The image of God

God’s image in mankind was marred, but not erased. A £10 note may be crumpled and torn, but it still bears its original face value. Sin has torn and distorted God’s image - but we are still as valuable to God as ever we were!

## “You shall surely die”

### Alienation from God

God had commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, adding “...*for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Genesis 2.17). The moment Adam and Eve ate that forbidden fruit, they died (see Romans 5.12 and compare Romans 6.23). Their bodies began the ageing process that leads to physical death and decay. But many years would pass before they died. So what did God mean when He said “*in the day... you shall surely die*”?

To answer that question, we need to ask what death really is. What actually happens when someone dies? Their bodies die, of course. But they themselves still exist. What happens is this: they lose all contact with this world and enter a new realm unseen to us. All their earthly relationships – with other people and with this present world – are ended.

And that’s what death really is. *Death is a set of broken relationships*. God meant, first and foremost, that they would die ‘relationally’. When they sinned, Adam and Eve experienced ‘relational’ death. All the relationships that gave meaning and joy to their lives were shattered.

Firstly, and most fundamentally, mankind’s relationship with God was broken. They were alienated from their Creator Lord and friend. We see that immediately. The guilty pair tried to hide from God. And Adam, as we’ve just seen, implied that God was to blame for giving him Eve. He became God’s accuser.

On His part, our holy God could have no fellowship with them in that fallen sinful state. And He had to expel them from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3.23-24). Mankind was now in exile, banished from God’s presence and God’s paradise. The loss of His presence and companionship brought an emptiness and loneliness that *no-one else and nothing else could fill*.

### The battle of the sexes

Sin alienates us from God. And it alienates us from other people, too.

Sin wrecks our most intimate relationship – the love and trust between husband and wife. We see this immediately: Adam blames Eve for giving him the fruit (Genesis 3.12).

God tells Eve: “*Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.*” (Genesis 3.16). The word “*desire*



image © WanderingtheWorld ([www.LostManProject.com](http://www.LostManProject.com)) / Christopher Schoenbohm (CC BY-NC 2.0)

View from the top of the Rockefeller Center looking south, New York City. The great cities of this world have a kind of glory (see Matthew 4.8). But when we look more closely, we find that they're kept going only through corruption and appalling human misery. Human society is dominated by Satan, "the ruler of this world".

suggests she will seek to dominate her husband and refuse to accept his headship. Conversely, he will "rule over" her - he will exercise leadership harshly, rather than in love and self-sacrifice, something she will find hard to bear. Each will strive to control the other. As Sandra Richter explains, "... although Adam and Eve still desperately need and desire each other, . . . they are now locked into a competitive relationship, each vying for control of the other, . . ." As Vaughan Roberts points out: "The battle of the sexes has begun."

### "Man's inhumanity to man"

Sin spoils not only marriage, but every relationship - parent and child, brothers and sisters, neighbours, employee and employer. As Sandra Richter observes, "Self-centredness and competition are now the relational norms. A healthy relationship, at any level, is hard to find."

Sibling rivalry erupted in the very first family: Cain murdered his brother (Genesis 4.3-8). Abel's body lay lifeless on the bloodsoaked ground - the first of countless millions to die at the hand of fellow man. A few verses later, we encounter Lamech's threats of revenge on any opponent. In Noah's day, "the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6.11).

Countless brutal regimes have reduced their subjects' lives to misery. War, persecution, terrorism, violent revolution and 'ethnic cleansing' have slaughtered and

maimed and pillaged their way across the pages of history. A constant background of greed, corruption, backbiting and unkindness blights every social structure.

### Servitude to Satan

Satan made Adam and Eve think they could be autonomous. It was a trick. Satan knew full well that to obey him and reject God's authority would bring them under his power instead.

And so Satan became "the ruler of this world" (so called in John 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) - the "world" here being fallen human society, the civilisations and kingdoms and empires throughout the ages. The whole world "lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5.19). Human society - all the civilisations and kingdoms of the world through all history - came under Satanic control.

But how exactly *did* Satan come to have power over the human race? As we've seen, the name 'Satan' is a Hebrew word meaning 'opponent' or 'adversary'; it can also be translated 'accuser'. In the New Testament, Satan is often called *ho diabolos*, meaning 'the slanderer' or 'the accuser'. Satan is the great accuser, the counsel for the prosecution. From the day Adam and Eve first sinned, Satan has appeared before God and accused every person of unrighteousness. His case was watertight; mankind was indeed guilty - "all have sinned . . ." (Romans 3.23).

And so God executed His righteous justice. Adam and Eve gave their allegiance to Satan. So God condemned them to be Satan's subjects and to share his final doom (see Matthew 25.41, Revelation 20.10,15). The punishment fitted the crime.

It's important to note that mankind didn't become Satan's bondslaves by any inherent authority that Satan himself possessed. Rather, it was the fitting penalty for our sin.

### Released from Satan's power!

God delivered humanity into Satan's power. But He's now made it possible for us to be released from that bondage. On the Cross, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. All who truly believe in Jesus have their penalty paid in full, and His perfect righteousness is credited to their account.

Satan no longer has any legal case against God's people. He can accuse us all he wants, but we're not guilty - *"there is . . . now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8.1). And so Satan's power over us is broken! God has *"delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son"* (Colossians 1.13). We'll explore this further in Sessions 11 and 13.

### Sin's bondage

Jesus said: *"everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin"* (John 8.34). Having committed sin, Adam and Eve now found themselves unable *not* to sin - they were slaves to it (Romans 6.16-19, Titus 3.3 and see Romans 7.14-24).

They were now sinful children of Satan - children in the sense that they were like him in character (see 1 John 3.10, John 8.44).

### Sin's degradation

The Bible doesn't flinch from depicting sin in its dreadful horror - read Romans 1.18-32, Galatians 5.19-21 and 2 Timothy 3.2-5.

But, to quote Alec Vidler again, *"Christianity . . . does not say that . . . we are totally depraved, in the sense that we are incapable of feeling or responding to any good impulses whatever."* It's simply that our thoughts, motives, actions and relationships are all *marred* by sin. As Richard Underwood and Brian Boley put it: *"If you put a drop of cyanide in a drink, the liquid is not 100% cyanide, but it is 100% poison."*

And individual sin is compounded by the fact we're all connected. Alec Vidler points out: *"Not only are all men guilty but they belong to a guilty race. Collective man is worse than individual men. Individuals can blush and feel ashamed but, as Coleridge said, 'multitudes never blush'. They do horrible things with an easy conscience from which the individuals who compose them would shrink."*



Image © Mikael Marguerie (CC BY 2.0)

An image of social disorder. Police, sheltering behind their riot shields, try to restore order to the streets of Paris during the violence following presidential elections in France, May 2007.

### Guilt

Evil desires war against what the mind knows to be right and decent (compare Romans 7.19-20). People find themselves racked by anxiety and guilt.

### Purposelessness

Humanity was to make the entire Earth productive and beautiful, and create a cultured and godly civilisation - a vocation that would engage every power of mind and body.

But sin has unharnessed humanity from this glorious calling. In frustration, people search vainly for purpose and meaning in life. Life for them becomes, in Shakespeare's words: *"a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."*

### Disease and death

The Fall has impacted our physical bodies, too. In Sandra Richter's words, *"Our gene-pool is flooded with death and disease"*. Genetic degeneration brings inherited diseases and disabilities. Our bodies fall prey to infection. Injuries may never heal properly. And those who survive all this are prey to the inevitable ageing process that ends in death.

### If mankind had never sinned

Immediately they sinned, Adam and Eve's bodies began, slowly but inexorably, to age. One day their bodies would die. In that primeval age people lived for centuries. But death overtook them in the end - as Genesis 5 repeats like a tolling bell: "*and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died . . .*" (Genesis 5.5,8,11 etc.).

But if humanity had never sinned, no-one would have experienced death. Instead, it seems, they would have passed immediately into the heavenly realm - just as Enoch and Elijah did. Their bodies would have been transformed into a glorious physical form perfectly adapted for life in that heavenly realm.

### Pain

Sin brought frustration and suffering to the man's and woman's special roles - to the woman's role as childbearer and man's life-partner, to the man's work as labourer and breadwinner.

Women would now bear children in pain (Genesis 3.16). That doubtless includes more than the physical pain accompanying pregnancy and childbirth. That pain surely includes the emotional pain, anxieties and (so often) heartbreak that rearing children - now naturally disobedient because of sin - will bring. Miscarriage and stillbirth, infant and child mortality add their own sorrows. And there's the pain (and, in Biblical culture, shame) of childlessness - witness Hannah's deep distress and bitter tears (1 Samuel 1.1-18).

Adam, in turn, would endure painful toil in his battle to subdue the Earth (Genesis 3.17-19). Now he would scratch a meagre living from soil that more readily

yielded thorns and thistles (Genesis 3.18) than useful crops. Extracting Earth's mineral wealth and building homes and cities, too, would demand relentless, wearying effort.

God says to Adam: "*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread*". Is this simply the sweat induced by sheer hard labour? Perhaps. But Sandra Richter offers another perspective: "this idiom speaks of anxiety—perspiration-inducing *fear*. . . . . humanity will now live their lives . . . with a constant, gnawing undercurrent of dread that there will not be enough, that their labor will not meet the need. What if the crop fails? The livestock die? A fire, storm or drought?"

### The gift of pain

Why did God inflict pain on Adam and Eve? It is His judgment on us. But with God's judgment there is His mercy. Pain is also God's gracious gift to us. How is that?

The woman's role in bearing and raising children, and her relationship with their husband, are both attended by pain. The man's role as labourer and breadwinner is attended by pain. And therefore neither the man nor the woman can find ultimate satisfaction through their callings. Bernard Bell explains: "God does not want us to find our ultimate fulfillment here on earth. He does not want women to find their ultimate fulfillment bearing and raising children, or in their relationship with their husbands. He does not want men to find their ultimate fulfillment in their work."

C.S. Lewis famously declared pain to be God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world". God wants us to cry out to Him. He wants us to find our fulfilment in relationship to Him.



Image © Joe Dunckley : Flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Stalybridge Church and churchyard, Dorset, England. "*. . . for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*" (Genesis 2.17).

## Subjected to frustration



Image copyright © [think4photos](https://www.think4photos.com/) / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Scrapped cars enveloped by weeds. Humanity is unable to subdue and rule the Earth as God intended.

God's task for mankind was to make this world a paradise. But our race's depravity, coupled with our impaired mental and physical powers, make us unable to do this. The natural world lacks its God-given leadership. And, like any system without proper management, things fall apart.

We can't subdue and rule the Earth as God intended. Derek Kidner comments: "[The nature-miracles of Jesus give some idea of the control which man under God might have exercised . . .](#)" Instead, mankind wages a frustrating and wearisome battle against nature (see Genesis 3.17-19). Greed, incompetence and ignorance threaten this planet with ecological disaster. We ravage and pollute land, sea and air.

The natural world suffers alongside us. As we mentioned in session 2, it's hotly debated whether animal death occurred before the Fall. But we can be sure that disease and pain and injury, unnatural death and 'natural' disasters were not part of God's plan for this world. Nature suffers because of our race's sin.

Furthermore, God has removed His blessing on the land (compare Leviticus 26.18-20, Deuteronomy 11.16-17).

In Paul's words, "*the creation was subjected to frustration*". (Romans 8.20 NIV). Only when mankind is restored and able to rule Earth wisely and well, will creation be "*set free from its bondage to decay*" (Romans 8.21) and transformed into the paradise God always intended.

## Sin's pollution

Some Scriptures (such as Leviticus 18.24-29, Numbers 35.33-34, Isaiah 24.5) suggest that sins pollute the land – morally and spiritually. Illicit sexual relations and murder are specifically mentioned.

That sin pollutes places may seem strange to us at first. But it's reflected in the sense of pollution that people feel in places where particularly horrible crimes have taken place.

## Sin's debt

### To God

Earth, which God planned as His paradise home, is now "*subjected to frustration*" and in "*bondage to decay*" (Romans 8.20,21 NIV). It's the scene of crime and suffering and decay. People, rather than being God's friends, live in rebellion against Him.

Sin has robbed God – just as you and I are robbed when someone else's crime derails our lives, smashes our plans, and deprives us of what is rightfully ours. Sin incurs debt. Justice requires this debt to be repaid.

### To other people

And sin indebts us to other people. Our sin impacts others' lives. We ourselves suffer because of evil that others have done.

A single crime can impact a whole neighbourhood – with consequences that no-one can put right. Even an unkind word can devastate a life (compare James 3.5-10).

Never underestimate sin's potential to harm. Sins are rather like nuclear bombs - one small submolecular collision results in two more, which results in yet more, until you have the destructive power that can destroy the globe. Each sin (however small it seems to us) can set off a chain of repercussions whose impact grows ever wider.

To take but one example - Cain didn't just murder one man when he murdered his brother. He brought Abel's entire family line to an end. All the children and grandchildren and their offspring, and all that they would have collectively contributed to society, was eliminated at a stroke. Cain owed a debt to his family and to God that he could never hope to repay.

All these countless and ever-unfolding consequences need unravelling and putting right. How could God do that?

## The first sacrifice

After the Fall, God makes garments of skins for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.21). Adam and Eve had tried to cover their shameful state of nakedness with leaves (Genesis 3.7). But God chooses animal skins instead. God had to kill an animal to clothe the sinful pair.

This is surely more than an act of tender care. God sacrificed the animal for their sake. Here at the dawn of history, God seems to be pointing out that only a substitutionary death can deal with sin.

## Expelled from the garden

Before they fell, Adam and Eve were able to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Had they done so (and it seems they hadn't) God would have given them eternal life.





Image © Andrea Fitrianto : Flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

A farmer ploughing a rice paddy in Bali: *"cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life"* (Genesis 3.17).

But now Adam and Eve were sinners. Had they eaten from that tree in their sinful state, it would have had the

most appalling consequences. They would live for ever – *but without the gift of God's uncreated eternal life, without fellowship with God.* And that was Hell.

At all costs, God had to stop them eating that tree's fruit. God says: *"Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"* (Genesis 3.22). God never finishes His sentence. Without a moment's delay He drives them out of His garden home and cuts off access to the tree. This was an act of sheer grace as well as judgment

The garden remained out of bounds until it vanished - perhaps in the great flood of Noah's day.

We humans have never forgotten the garden of Eden. Deep in our innermost beings we are homesick. We long to return to paradise.

**The effects of sin are staggeringly huge and wide-ranging. Adam and Eve's act of rebellion unleashed consequences they were utterly powerless to put right. No purgatory, no penance, no good works, no recompense, could ever possibly put things right. We owed a debt we could not possibly begin to pay. What could God do?**

## The clash of the kingdoms

### Satan's plan

God sets cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3.24), and a fiery sword that flashes back and forth. This sword was perhaps - like the fiery pillar that led Israel in the wilderness - a visible sign of God's presence.

God's sanctuary is secured. Satan fails to seize God's earthly home. But Satan *does* now have power over mankind. What would he do with that power?

Earlier, we learned how Satan wanted to be *"like the Most High"* (Isaiah 14.14). We can't be certain that Isaiah is referring to Satan in this particular passage. But we know that he fell because of pride (see 1 Timothy 3.6 NKJV). And we know that he's *"the god of this world"* (2 Corinthians 4.4). There's no doubt that proud Satan wants to act like he was God here on Earth. And that meant taking God's plans for Earth and trying to carry them through himself.

What *were* God's plans for Earth? Earth was to be a paradise where we lived in fellowship with God. God wanted us to build a noble and cultured human civilisation here under His lordship.

Satan set out to do the same – except *he* planned to be lord, not God. Through history, Satan has dreamed of a powerful, worldwide civilisation that served and worshipped him. We'll see how he attempted this later in our journey.

### God is still creation's king

But God did not lose control of the universe. He is still Lord. He made it; it is His (see Psalm 24.1, Psalm 50.10-12). He is still its Lord. Satan exercises his influence in this world only through God's express permission and within His limits.

### God's plan

Our gracious and loving God didn't abandon our race. Immediately, He launched His plan to rescue mankind, restore His creation, and deal with Satan once and for all.

What exactly did God need to do to put everything right? **The answer to this question sets the scene for the rest of the Bible story.**

### Reconciliation with God

As we said earlier, sin isn't merely breaking God's rules. Sin is a state of rebellion against God. Sin is to reject God, and choose to love and serve oneself instead.

Sinners are *traitors*, guilty of high treason against their Creator and King. The penalty is death (see Genesis 2.17, Ezekiel 18.4,20, Romans 6.23, Revelation 21.8). Their only hope is a pardon from our King.

But God can't simply just forgive us without first dealing with our sin. Why? Because sin is an attack upon the honour of our holy, righteous God. And it's a violation of

His creation's moral order. God's holy nature and creation's moral order *demands* that sin be dealt with.

If God failed to deal with sin, He would be acting contrary to own nature, His love, His holiness, His righteousness and His integrity. And that is something He can *never* do (see 2 Timothy 2.13). In John Stott's words, if God "were ever to behave 'uncharacteristically', in a way that is out of character with himself, he would cease to be God, and the world would be thrown into moral confusion." Everything would become meaningless and chaotic and collapse into ruin.

So how can God possibly forgive us and reconcile us to Himself – and, at the same time, remain faithful to His own righteous character (see Romans 3.26)? That was the problem that faced God after the Fall. As Carnegie Simpson put it, forgiveness is for God "the profoundest of problems".

### Can we save ourselves?

Is there anything we can do to earn God's forgiveness? For example, could we 'make up' for our past sin by doing good for the rest of our lives? Could this allow God to forgive us?

No! God requires us be perfectly obedient to Him all the time. That's how we're supposed to live. Even if we obeyed Him perfectly for the rest of our lives, we can never 'make up' for past sins.

## Restoration

But sin needs more than forgiveness. All the countless and ever-unfolding effects of sin must also somehow be unravelled and remedied.

### 1 Repaying sin's debt

As we've seen, sin indebts us to God. And it indebts us to other people. Because He is righteous and just, God must see to it that this debt is paid. The loss we've caused Him must be made good. So, too, must the loss and harm that others have suffered because of us.

### 2 Giving eternal life

As we have seen, something very radical happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned. They now possessed a rebellious self-willed disposition.

People do not merely sin, they *are* sinners. They have a *sinful disposition*, a natural inclination to disobey God. God can't just dust people down and patch them up. Something much more radical is required.

Sinner's are "*dead in . . . trespasses and sins*" (Ephesians 2.1). You can embalm a dead body and dress it up, and preserve it indefinitely - like they have to Lenin's body. But it is still as dead as ever.

People's sinful disposition needs to be removed. And they need to be resurrected into a wonderful new life – a

life of fellowship with God and with other people, a life of inner peace and newfound purpose, a life free from the old bondage to sin, a life free from Satan's domination.

### The Cross as a Tree

Human sin began in connection with two trees – the "*tree of life . . . and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" (Genesis 2.9).

Jesus' Cross is also sometimes called a tree (Acts 5.30, 10.39, 13.29, 1 Peter 2.24). That word 'tree' takes us back to these trees in the Garden of Eden.

Mankind had disobeyed God and eaten from the wrong tree. The fruit of that rebellion was guilt and shame, alienation from God, bondage to sin, and pain and toil and death. Jesus suffered all those consequences for us. He did this by dying on a tree (see Deuteronomy 21.22-23, Galatians 3.13).

And on that tree, Jesus reopened the way to the other tree – the tree of life. After their sin, the "*way to the tree of life*" was closed to mankind (Genesis 3.24). Jesus died to reopen the way to that tree (compare Revelation 22.14).

We may now 'eat from the tree of life'. In other words, we may now enjoy eternal life. Through Jesus's death – and our repentance and faith in Him - God grants us eternal life. He comes to live in us (see John 14.23) and we become His friends.

### 3 Renewing creation

Mankind became subject to pain, disease and death. The natural world, too, suffers alongside us. We were no longer able to exercise proper dominion over the Earth. And God removed His blessing on the land.

Humanity needs new bodies, free from disease and death. Creation needed to be "*set free from its bondage to decay*" (Romans 8.21) and become the paradise that God



Creation waits to be "*set free from its bondage to decay*" (Romans 8.21)

had planned from the beginning. And humanity must be able to fulfil its God-given vocation - to rule this Earth wisely and well.

### Satan's defeat and judgment

Satan himself had to be disarmed and defeated. He must be judged and consigned to Hell.

### God's vindication

Finally, God had been slandered. When Satan tempted Eve, he insinuated that God couldn't be trusted, and that He was keeping back blessing from her. Fallen mankind instinctively shares that same distrustful suspicion of God.

God had to show us - and angels, both good and evil - that He is utterly trustworthy, His word is reliable, and that all He does is in pure love. Satan had to be proved a liar.

### The Serpent Crusher

But how will God do all this? He'll do it through a Man – a Member of the very race that Satan had seduced!

God said to the serpent, Satan: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3.15).

A descendant of Eve would - though suffering fearfully in the process – defeat Satan and release an uncountable multitude of people from his grasp. He would satisfy God's righteous justice, pay sin's debt, and enable us to be forgiven and become God's friends. Through this Man, people would be given eternal life. Through this Man, there would be a new Heaven and Earth.

### ► MESSIAH ◀

The **Man** Who brings us into God's kingdom

Genesis 3.15 tells us that a descendant of Eve would crush Satan. Daniel calls this Man *"Messiah"* (Daniel 9.25-26 NKJV). The Hebrew word here is *māshîach*, meaning 'anointed one' (in fact, the ESV translates this *"an anointed one"*).

In the Old Testament, the name *"Messiah"* is only found here in this passage in Daniel. But the idea of a Messiah begins right back in Genesis 3.15 and grows stronger and clearer as we travel through the Old Testament. We discover that He will save God's people, defeat their enemies, and rule the world in righteousness and justice.

The New Testament reveals Who this Man is. The Greek translation for *māshîach* is Christ (Greek *christos*). The Messiah is Jesus Christ.



Image copyright © [www.FreeFoto.com](http://www.FreeFoto.com) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

God Himself, in Christ, bore the guilt and anguish of the entire world on the Cross. There He provided full recompense for sin's consequences throughout history. We'll explore what happened on the Cross more fully in session 13 of our journey.

### The mystery of suffering

Why didn't God deal with evil immediately after Adam and Eve sinned? Think of all the violence and pain and death and wanton destruction that have blighted human existence ever since. Think, too, of the troubles, the pain and the sorrows – even down to the minor unkindnesses and misunderstandings - that mar our own lives.

One thing we need to bear in mind is this. God Himself has suffered infinitely more than we have, or more than we can ever even comprehend. Sin broke His heart.

### To reveal evil for what it really is

Firstly, it wasn't enough to say that Satan was a liar, and that rebellion against God was wrong. It wasn't enough simply to destroy Satan and his kingdom. Evil had to be allowed to reveal itself as evil - depraved, corrupt, cruel, malicious, destructive, immoral and unspeakably vile - *and therefore, without any possible shadow of doubt, worthy of destruction*. Only then could God, with unchallengeable legitimacy, deal with Satan and sin.

Geoffrey Bingham explains: *"There can be no doubt that for millenniums the human race has puzzled on the seeming inability of God to effect a quick, sharp, decisive and complete victory over the power of evil. The reason . . . is related to the nature of true morality. A moral being is one who has choice. Simply to destroy creatures which have choice because they make the wrong choice is obviously no true victory. Each creature must be allowed to run its course - however fearful and evil that may be. . . . Against the purity of the Creator it must be shown to be wrong, and in one sense to reveal its own evil."*



Doubtless all of us have asked, at some point in our lives: why does God allow evil in this world? Think of all the violence and pain and death and destruction that have blighted human existence ever since the Fall – in recent times most terribly exemplified by the Holocaust. This photograph is from the Jürgen Stroop Report to Heinrich Himmler of May 1943. It shows Jews, captured by German troops during the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, being forced to leave their shelter and march to the collection point for deportation.

### To set the stage for the Saviour

Secondly, God planned to send a Man to crush Satan and put everything right. For Adam and Eve and all their descendants to have any hope of salvation, this Man had to be born and to perform His saving work. And so God must prepare the world for His coming. And he wouldn't do that until the time was exactly right (see Galatians 4.4). So, from the moment of the Fall, through century after century, God prepared the stage of history for the coming of His Son.

### ► Next Session Cataclysm and Covenant

After the Fall, sin corrupts mankind until all hope seems lost - but not to God. We've seen God's promise of a Seed Who will bruise Satan's head. Through these ancient godless times after the Fall, God preserves this Seed's ancestors and begins unfolding His plan to save mankind. From Abel's murder, to the Flood and the building of Babel's tower, we follow the story to the day when God calls Abraham to follow Him in faith.

**CREDITS** ► Text 2013 © Robert Gordon Betts [rbetts@binternet.com](mailto:rbetts@binternet.com). ► All scripture quotations (unless otherwise indicated) and those marked "ESV" are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, published by HarperCollins Publishers © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ► Scripture quotations marked "NKJV" are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ► Scripture quotations marked "NIV" are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition). Copyright © 1979, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, an Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. "NIV" is a registered trademark of International Bible Society. UK trademark number 1448790. ► Image on page 1 is 'Expulsion from the Garden of Eden' painted by Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and held by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA. Image published at [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cole\\_Thomas\\_Expulsion\\_from\\_the\\_Garden\\_of\\_Eden\\_1828.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cole_Thomas_Expulsion_from_the_Garden_of_Eden_1828.jpg) and considered by the Wikipedia Foundation to be in the public domain. ► Image of bombed city on page 2 by Richard Peter (1895–1977) and described as 'Blick vom Rathausurm'. Image published at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fotothek\\_df\\_ps\\_000010\\_Blick\\_vom\\_Rathausurm.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fotothek_df_ps_000010_Blick_vom_Rathausurm.jpg) and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Germany licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/deed.en>). ► Image on page 3 is an illustration for John Milton's 'Paradise Lost' by Gustave Doré (1832–1883). Image published by WikiPaintings at <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/gustave-dore/him-the-almighty-power-hurled-headlong-flaming-from-the-eternal-sky> and considered to be in the public domain. Image coloured from the monochrome original. ► Image of storm clouds on page 4 copyright © FreeFoto.com. Image published at <http://www.freefoto.com/preview/15-78-2/Storm-Clouds> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). Image cropped. ► Image of trees on page 5 copyright © cucumber images - Fotolia.com ► Image of fruit on page 6 copyright © davitydave / David Lytle (whose profile is at <http://www.flickr.com/people/davitydave/>) and entitled 'Orange'. Image published at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/davitydave/4320226803/> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic licence (viewable at [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en\\_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en_GB)). Image cropped. ► Image of people with shadows on page 7 copyright © FreeFoto.com. Image published at <http://www.freefoto.com/preview/04-26-33/People-on-the-move> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). Image cropped. ► Image on page 8 is 'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden' painted by Wenzel Peter (1745-1829). Image published at <http://www.cogaonlineartmuseum.com/p/peter-2.htm>. ► Image of olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane on page 9 copyright © V. Gilbert and Arlisle F. Beers. Image courtesy of Visual Bible Alive at <http://www.visualbiblealive.com> and published at [http://www.visualbiblealive.com/stock\\_image.php?id=70467](http://www.visualbiblealive.com/stock_image.php?id=70467). ► Image of red light district in Amsterdam on page 10 copyright © Rungbachduong (whose profile is at <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Rungbachduong>) and described as 'De Wallen (red light district), Amsterdam'. Image published at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:De\\_Wallen.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:De_Wallen.JPG) and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>). Image cropped. ► Image of road in winter sunrise on p11 copyright © FreeFoto.com. Image published at <http://www.freefoto.com/preview/15-04-10/Winter-Sunrise> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). Image cropped. ► Image of crowd on page 12 copyright © FreeFoto.com. Image published at <http://www.freefoto.com/preview/04-16-13/People-on-the-move> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). Image cropped. ► Image of cityscape on page 13 copyright © WanderingtheWorld ([www.LostManProject.com](http://www.LostManProject.com)) / Christopher Schoenbohm (whose profile is at <http://www.flickr.com/people/chrischoenbohm/>) and described as 'View From the Top of the Rockefeller Center Looking South, NYC'. Image published at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrischoenbohm/4286399733/> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic licence (viewable at [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/deed.en\\_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/deed.en_GB)). ► Image of riots on page 14 copyright © Mikael Marguerie (whose profile is at <http://www.flickr.com/people/spacelattener/>) and described as 'Demonstrations and riots, Paris, France (place de la Bastille and surroundings), May 6, 2007, following the election of Nicolas Sarkozy to the presidency of the French republic.' Image published at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paris\\_2007-05-06\\_anti\\_Sarkozy\\_487645695\\_abe4befd12\\_o.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paris_2007-05-06_anti_Sarkozy_487645695_abe4befd12_o.jpg) and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>). ► Image of church at dusk on page 15 copyright © Joe Dunckley : Flickr.com (whose profile is at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/steinsky/>) and entitled 'Stalbridge Church'. Image published at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/steinsky/351952915/> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic licence (viewable at [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en\\_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en_GB)). Image cropped. ► Image of abandoned cars on page 16 copyright © think4photop / FreeDigitalPhotos.net (whose portfolio is at [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photo.php?photoid=2294](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photo.php?photoid=2294)). Image published at [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Cars\\_Buses\\_and\\_Truck\\_471-Cars\\_Abandoned\\_With\\_Cover\\_By\\_luv\\_p40236.htm](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Cars_Buses_and_Truck_471-Cars_Abandoned_With_Cover_By_luv_p40236.htm). ► Image of plughman on page 17 copyright © Andrea Filtranto : Flickr.com (whose profile is at <https://www.flickr.com/people/cak2/>) and entitled 'IMG\_1976'. Image published at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/61587064@N00/420922259/> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic licence (viewable at [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/deed.en\\_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/deed.en_GB)). ► Image of winter landscape on page 18 supplied by Serif (Europe) Ltd. Image cropped. ► Image of cross on page 19 copyright © FreeFoto.com. Image published at <http://www.freefoto.com/preview/05-08-10/Cross-at-Sunset> and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported licence (viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). Image cropped. ► Image of soldiers rounding up people on page 20 described as 'Warsaw ghetto uprising - Photo from Jürgen Stroop Report to Heinrich Himmler from May 1943. The original German caption reads: 'Forcibly pulled out of dug-outs'. One of the most famous pictures of World War II.' Image published at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stroop\\_Report\\_-\\_Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_Uprising\\_06b.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_06b.jpg). Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., states that the right to use this work is granted to anyone for any purpose, without any conditions, unless such conditions are required by law. VERSION DATE 2014 March 21