

Paradise Lost - Paradise Regained

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Paradise Lost

The story of man begins in Eden and culminates in man being redeemed by God. The history of God's working in and through man is an amazing and glorious unfolding of His wisdom, power, goodness, mercy and love. This story could never have been invented by man. It could only have originated in the mind of God. It should be read and studied diligently and seriously. Let us begin in Genesis 1:26. "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

God placed man whom He made in the most honorable position. He not only gave him to rule over all created life, but also created him in the image and likeness of His Maker. He placed a greater value upon him than on all other created things. God, looking upon man, realized it was not good for him to be alone. We read in Genesis 2:18, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

God united the first man and woman as husband and wife. He prepared for them a home. He planted a garden eastward in Eden (Genesis 2:8-17), and in it He caused every tree to grow out of the ground that was pleasant to the sight and good for food. Apparently the tree of life was the most important. Nothing was lacking that was necessary to satisfy their need for food, or to please the sight. They were given the privilege to eat the fruit of every tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Visualize the beautiful picture as the scene closes with the second chapter of Genesis - a world fresh from the hand of an infinite Creator, unstained by sin and unmarred by the consequences of sin and in it a freshly - created home, serene, calm, and peaceful amidst the beautiful surroundings of a fragrant garden, embellished by the gorgeous handiwork of nature's God. (Hailey 24) This is the paradise our God created for man.

Immediately after the creation of Adam and Eve, Satan made his appearance (Genesis 3:1). He entered the garden in the form of a serpent and then came a day of darkness.

The story of the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) follows a well worked-out plan:

1. Man sins (vss.1-6).
2. He strives to evade responsibility for his sin (vss.7-13).
3. God pronounces punitive curses on him (vss.14-19).
4. God puts man in a situation in which he can begin again (vss. 20-24). (Willis 117)

First the woman was enticed by the serpent (the devil) when he asked her, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:2) Eve replied they could eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden with the exception of the tree in the midst of the garden, and that if they either touched or ate of that tree they would die (Genesis 3:2-3). She knew the command of God and that the penalty for disobedience would be death. Satan admitted that God said they would die if they ate of that fruit, but set his word against God's Word (Barnes 148-149). God said "ye shall die" - Satan said "ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). John 8:44 says, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him, When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." When we believe a lie and obey a lie, sorrow and death follow. When we believe the truth and obey the truth, joy and life are the reward. "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). Satan persuaded Eve by partial truth. He said, "your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Eve already knew good because she had experienced it in her life, but she did not know evil until she had experienced evil in disobeying God. To know good is to be godly and live. To know evil brings sorrow and death. Eve 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 the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat (Genesis 3:6). The day Adam and Eve disobeyed God was the darkest day of all time. Sin entered into the world and death by sin.

The sin of Adam and Eve ushered in a law still quite operative today - the law of sin and death. In effect, this law states that if you sin, you must die (Wharton 14). Adam and Eve died spiritually when they sinned in the garden, and they began to die physically (Genesis 2:17). Death is the separation of the soul (the spiritual part of man) from the body (the material part of man). Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Therefore God withdrew His fellowship from them. They were separated from God by spiritual death. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). As a result of their sin, the world has been filled with sickness, sorrow, death, hate, and mistrust (Genesis 3:7-8). "Both Adam and Eve were equally guilty. They ate; they expected marvelous results, but this only resulted in a sense of shame. They now have a knowledge of good and evil" (Coffman Genesis 64).

We are told in Genesis 3:7 that the eyes of them both were opened and they knew they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. Shortly they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and calling out to them.

They were confronted with their sin they had committed against God. God called Adam and Eve to give account of their sin. Adam blamed his wife and also implied that it was God's fault when he said, "And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). Eve blamed the serpent. "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat" (Genesis 3:13). The first effort of Adam and Eve after their sin was to hide with the hope of escaping punishment. When that failed, they tried to justify themselves by excuses. We have followed in their footsteps when we sin and the first effort is to attempt to hide it. We must know our sins will find us out. God said to Adam, "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). God said to Eve, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee: (Genesis 3:16).

"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Genesis 3:14-15).

God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden to till the ground from which they were taken (Genesis 3:23). God expelled them from the most beautiful and pleasant place earth has ever known. They would no longer have access to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22). God placed at the east of the garden Cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). Because of their sin, Adam and Eve lost Paradise. Homer Hailey says, "There can be no better explanation given for the presence of sin and its consequences in the world than the simple narrative found in Genesis 3. All that is good for man is from God. All that is evil and bad is the consequence of rebellion against God" (Hailey 28). If man's hope had come to an end at the expulsion from the garden of Eden, all men would be most miserable. But that is not the end to the marvelous plan of God.

Paradise Regained

In the shadow of Eden, and immediately following the introduction of sin, God manifested His loving mercy as He planned and purposed His marvelous scheme of redemption. Suffice it to say that every part of this plan is related to the Lord, Jesus Christ and His death on Calvary. Christ would prepare Himself to represent man's cause, to go between God and man and effect a reconciliation. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). The Old Testament abounds in prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, beginning from the time of the announcement in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here we have a twofold pronouncement of the natural enmity that should exist between God and Satan. This is a prophetic reference to the spiritual warfare which has been waged from that day until now between the old devil and the seed of the woman, Christ. The woman under consideration is Eve, not the virgin, Mary. Catholics have made a translation that is both unfortunate and incorrect, stating, "She shall bruise thy

head,” contributing to a false emphasis on the person of Mary. There would be enmity between “thee and the woman,” that is, between Eve and the serpent, but also between, “thy seed” and “her seed.” The enmity would include the evil posterity of Satan and the redeemed posterity of the woman. There will always be enmity between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil. Isaiah said, “Woe into them that call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). We are in constant warfare with evil (Ephesians 6:10-18). In this spiritual conflict, the old serpent’s seed will strike or bruise the Messiah’s heel signifying a mean, vicious, unsuccessful warfare (John 8:44; Matthew 23:33-34), whereas the seed of the woman shall ultimately crush the old serpent’s head, signifying the ultimate complete victory of Christ over all evil (Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). It is significant that Satan would bruise the head of Christ but Christ would crush the head of Satan. One injury was painful, but not fatal. It occurred when Jesus was led to Golgotha and suffered death upon the cross. His heel was bruised in that He suffered the pain, sorrow and humiliation of the cross. The other injury, however, was fatal. Jesus crushed the head of Satan, when He was resurrected from the dead by the power of God. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). He washed us from our sins in His own blood (Revelation 1:5), so that we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). The power of Satan has been broken by Christ “...for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings” (Revelation 17:14). The blood of Christ was required for man to regain Paradise. “...and without the shedding of blood is no remission” (of sin) (Hebrews 9:2). And again, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead had His part in the scheme of redemption also. After our Lord’s death on the cross of Calvary, Jesus said, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you” (John 14:26). It began on the day of Pentecost, after Christ’s resurrection (Acts 2), when the Holy Spirit “came as a sound from heaven as a mighty rushing wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as fire and it sat upon each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost...” (Acts 2:2-4). Hence, the apostles had their part also in God’s divine plan to redeem man, as they were the vessels and bearers of the message of salvation. The Bible, God’s Holy Word, which Jesus promised to us, has been delivered to us in its entirety through the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:21).

Finally, faith in our hearts is required for us to regain Paradise. That faith is obtained by hearing and believing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). All has been provided for man to be in Paradise, if he will but hear what God has to say unto him, repent of his sins (Luke 13:3), confess that Jesus is his Lord and Savior (Romans 10:10) and be baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). If he is obedient for the rest of his life (Revelation 2:10), he will be able to experience that same blessed Paradise in which Adam lived.

Yes, Paradise was lost, but our gracious, loving Heavenly Father made a way for us to regain that Paradise. “For as in Adam all die, even so, in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

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