

- What went wrong with God's perfect creation?
- Why do human beings do wrong, suffer and die?

Satan – deception, temptation and sin (Genesis 3:1-6)

DECEPTION – *wrong beliefs about God and reality*

Unexpectedly, in the middle of God's good creation appears a shrewd creature questioning God's words. **The serpent** who tempted the woman was, according to the last book of the Bible (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) Satan, also known as the devil. This enemy of God was, like everything else, created by God as a powerful spiritual being, but he led many angels in rebellion against God and so was thrown out of heaven on to earth (see also 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The conversation between Satan and the woman centres around God's word and character:

1. Satan **questions** what God had said (v1) – this might seem innocent, but his intention is bad.
2. The woman **distorts** what God said (v3) – she misquotes God's words, adding additional restrictions.
3. Satan **denies** what God has said (v4-5) – he says that rather than dying, if she eats the fruit she can become like God. This is not just a contradiction of God's words but an accusation about his character. Instead of a good, loving person, God is portrayed as a selfish spoilsport. The root of Satan's deception is the idea that human beings would be better without God, ruling over themselves.

TEMPTATION – *wrong judgements about actions and their consequences*

Having listened to Satan, the woman not focuses on the forbidden fruit. Verse 6 describes three ways in which the fruit appealed to her, which illustrate three aspects of all temptations to do what God says is wrong:

- a) *Good for food* – although she had plenty of fruits to eat, this one seemed even better than any of the others. A good desire (hunger) was misdirected towards something God did not intend it for. Desires can be directed in right ways, through obedience to God, or wrong ways, selfishly for our own pleasure.
- b) *Nice looking* – God made a beautiful world and He intends us to enjoy its beauty. There is, however, a danger when we find someone or something attractive that we begin to want to have it for ourselves and to possess it. When we find something pleasant we can either thank God for it or begin to worship it.
- c) *Giving wisdom* – we may think we will receive good results if we do something. We convince ourselves that our lives will become fuller, happier, or more complete. This is a lie we tell ourselves.

SIN – *wrong actions forbidden by God*

The woman obeyed the serpent and the man obeyed her. They decided to disobey what God had said, rejecting God's rule over them and claiming the right to decide for themselves. **They believed the lie that they could become their own gods, living life by their own choices and deciding right and wrong for themselves instead of by obedience to God's word and in relationship with Him.** The Bible uses a simple word to describe this rejection of God and rebellion against Him: **sin**. Human beings wanted to have complete control over their own lives, but they lacked the power to do it. Sin arises from deception and temptation and although it seems attractive it is destructive, bringing guilt, shame and death. Every human being has made the same choice our first ancestors made. We do wrong things because we believe wrong ideas about God and about life.

Results of sin (Genesis 3:7-23)

After eating from the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, the man and woman knew evil as well as good. In this sense they had become like God (v22), who already knew what evil is, but unlike God they could not experience evil without being trapped and corrupted by it. Sin makes people slaves, powerless to avoid doing wrong even when they know what is good. Sin had immediate and profound results for the man and woman and for everyone who has lived since them. For this reason, this event is often called 'the Fall':

Harmony with one another broken – *fallen from innocence to shame (v7)*

They clothed themselves, attempting to hide the shame they felt. Honesty and trust in their relationship were broken as the man blamed the woman for giving him the fruit. Verse 16 suggests that conflict between the sexes, centred on a struggle for control, is one of the lasting consequences of sin.

Harmony with God broken – *fallen from trust to fear (v10)*

Shame before others (a major motivator in many cultures, especially outside the West) derives from a deeper problem: guilt before God. When God came to the Garden, the man and woman tried to hide because of fear of His judgement. The, when God confronts them, instead of admitting their wrong actions and accepting their guilt and need of forgiveness, they tried to pass the blame. Sin had destroyed their relationship with God. God acted in judgement and grace, banishing them from the Garden to prevent them making another wrong choice, eating from the tree of life and so living forever in separation from God (v22).

Harmony with the Universe broken – *fallen from blessing to curse (v16-19)*

God cursed the entire creation because of humankind's rebellion against Him, although notice He does not curse the human beings. Life in this world would no longer be free of trouble. There would be pain in ordinary processes of life – for women in childbirth (v16) and for men in work (v17-19). The natural disasters and diseases we now experience are results of this, and the ultimate result is death – our bodies will eventually return to the dust God created us from (v19).

Sin passes to all people (Romans 1:18-32)

Over many generations sin, which has affected every human being descended from Adam (Romans 5:12) affected human cultures in profound ways. Romans 1:18-32 describes this process in two stages:

1. The knowledge of God was replaced (v18-25) – WRONG WORSHIP

Instead of recognising the Creator, people deliberately rejected God so that later generations knew less and less about God. People began to worship the moon, sun and stars, or to make idols that look like animals or human beings. They created gods in their own image instead of worshipping the creator.

2. Society became increasingly sinful (v26-32) – WRONG ACTIONS

God allowed human beings to follow their desires, resulting in sinful actions that hurt themselves and other people. This wrong behaviour results from our rejection of God and cannot be solved without Him.

God's love and a promise!

As well as showing us God's judgement on sin, Genesis 3 provides evidence of God's continued love for humankind. There are two signs in this chapter of how God would bring about our restoration:

- a) **Clothes of animal skin (v21)** – God makes a covering for their shame from skin, presumably by killing one or more animals. This is the beginning of the concept of **sacrifices** covering for sin.
- b) **A promised rescuer (v15)** – God said a descendant of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, although his own heel would be bitten. Satan will not have everything his own way – there will be a fight back. This is both a general promise of hope for human beings, but also a specific promise of one rescuer.

Two ways to live – Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16)

Adam's first sons, Cain and Abel, show us the consequences of sin and the options of two ways to live:

- a) **Cain: *disobedience*** – Cain gave in to sin and made his own choices about how to live. His wrong worship (he did not bring the best of his produce to God), led to wrong judgements (rivalry with his brother), leading to wrong actions (murder). Even though God warned him, Cain chose to ignore what he knew about God, to rule over his own life and to murder Abel. This is ***the way of disobedience*** – rejecting God.
- b) **Abel: *faith*** – Abel worshipped as God expected, bringing the best of his flock to God. Although he also had inherited sin from his parents, he trusted in God to save him. This is ***the way of faith*** – obeying God.

Throughout the Bible we will find people who live each of these ways. Both Cain and Abel, and every one of us, inherited sin, but they made contrasting choices about how to live in response to God.

SUMMARY: God's rule ruined by human sin

- Human beings rejected God's rule. Wrong worship leads to wrong actions. This is called sin.
- Sin alienates us from others and from God, but God had a plan to rescue human beings.