

Paradise Lost: How We Lost Paradise in the Garden of Eden

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I. Introduction

The Bible tells us that the real reason why the world and our lives are in such a mess is because Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit. Is that really why we find ourselves in such misery because someone ate a piece of fruit they weren't supposed to? And why in the world would God tempt Adam and Eve like that knowing they would fail, why would He punish *us* like that?

II. How Did We Lose Paradise in the Garden of Eden?

What was God's command about the Tree of Death and why did He give it? God's command regarding the Tree of Death was actually quite simple. Adam and Eve could eat from any tree, as much as they wanted, including the Tree of Life, Genesis, 2:9, 16. But from the Tree of Death they could not eat. If they ate from this Tree, they would surely die, Genesis 2:17. Now, why did God give them this test? Did you ever wonder to yourself, "Why would He do that?! God knows everything, He knew they would fail the test. So why would He put the Tree of Death right in the middle of the Garden? Why ruin paradise for the rest of us?!" Is God a cruel God who not only likes to see us suffer, but makes the instrument of our suffering so tempting that we can't resist it? First, God doesn't tempt anyone, James 1:13. Second, this was not a cruel test. It was a reminder of what it meant to live in God's presence. God at the core of His being is **selfless** and He made us in His image, to be **like Him**: selfless. Thus, when He invited us into His selfless community—from where we would get acceptance, love, and support, the very things we need to truly live and thrive—He was inviting us to be selfless. This was not designed to cause them to stumble; it was a reminder of what it meant to be human, what it meant to be **like God**. Though Adam and Eve were not applying for CEO (they had already been given that job, Genesis 1:28), we can see a similar concept in the interview process. That is, the owner of a \$500 Billion company will put any CEO candidate through a severe background check to see if they will be "selfless," i.e., to see if they will follow the owner's goals and vision for the company instead of their own?

How did Satan get Eve to bite the apple (Genesis 3:1–3)? Satan's question to Eve was not, "Did God really make such a rule?" Satan's question is not inquisitive; it's a very cunning and dangerous statement about the very character of God. Thus, his question really is, "What kind of God makes a rule like that?" How do we know that this is really Satan's question and that his deception worked? Eve's response tells you that she now sees God differently. God is no longer her Loving Father, He's someone who will kill her if she merely touches the Tree of Death! BUT God NEVER said that He would kill them if they touched the Tree, Genesis 2:17.

What was the temptation (Genesis 3:4–5)? Some think that the reason we're in such a mess is because a long time ago Adam and Eve ate a piece of fruit. Was that the temptation? Are we living in misery because two people ate a piece of fruit?! Look closer at the temptation. What did Satan tell Adam and Eve? First, he contradicted God. He told them that they would NOT die if they ate the fruit. Second, Satan told them that the moment they ate the fruit, they would be **like God** and that God Himself knew this which is why He was trying to keep it from them! The temptation was not eating a piece of fruit. It was believing two treacherous lies about God: (1) that He was a liar, and (2) that He was holding out on them because He knew that the moment they ate, they would be **exactly** like Him . . . the tragedy is that they were already **like God**, Genesis 1:26–28.

Who was in authority in the Garden, Adam and Eve, Satan, or God (Genesis 3:6)? God is obviously the Authority of the universe. He made everything, Genesis 1, controls everything Daniel 4:35, and sustains everything, Colossians 1:16–17. But the question is, who was in authority in the Garden of Eden when Satan offered Adam and Eve an alternative way to live? You might be thinking, “God is the God of the universe, so regardless of what Adam and Eve did, He was in authority that day.” Or perhaps you might think, “Since Satan was pulling the strings, he was actually the one in authority over this whole thing.” If God’s authority was the one in control over the situation, then why didn’t Adam and Eve submit to His authority and not eat? And even though Satan was the catalyst to Adam and Eve’s sin, he did not have the power to nor did he force them to eat. The ones in authority that moment were Adam and Eve. That is, they sat in judgment of what God and Satan said. They weighed those two options as if they were both equally valid and THEY chose Satan’s option over God’s and ate. Thus, they exercised authority over God and rendered their judgment that He was a liar who was keeping something back from them.

What was the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden? Their sin was not disobeying a rule about not eating something. Their sin was the worst sin in human history. Their sin made every other sin possible. They’re the reason why every one of us is born with a sinful nature and why EVERYTHING dies. So what was it? They set themselves above God; they attempted to sit on His throne . . . they actually sat in judgment of the God of the Universe. To better understand what Adam and Eve did, it would be a little like this: ever since you were a kid, your father has shown you nothing but love. He’s clothed you, fed you, taught you everything about life, he’s provided for you in every way. One day he appoints you CEO of his trillion dollar company, but he cautions you not to make any critical decisions concerning the viability of the company without his counsel. Soon after, your father’s arch business rival requests a luncheon with you. He’s a master salesman: he can sell ice to an Eskimo. When you meet with him, he tells you that it was rather cruel for your father to make you CEO and not give you all the power that goes with it. He tells you that the real reason he won’t let you make any big decisions is because you’ll reveal yourself to be a better CEO than him. Instead of consulting your loving father about what his enemy just told you, you believe him and manipulate the Board of Directors to have your father removed as owner of the company. You then make a critical decision that ends up destroying your father’s company. Adam and Eve didn’t just bite an apple. They sided with their Loving Father’s enemy, stabbed their Father in the back, and attempted to sit on His throne . . . it wasn’t enough to be CEO of the world, Genesis 1:28, no, they wanted to be **exactly like God** and own the company.

How did Adam and Eve lose paradise for the rest of us in the Garden of Eden? They believed a lie about God . . . which led them to believe a lie about themselves . . . which led them to believe a lie about their lives. Once they believed Satan that they could live independent of God, it wasn’t a big leap to believe that they could be the masters of their own universe and from there that they could live life and have dominion over the earth however they wanted. But what they failed to see is that God was their oxygen, without Him life isn’t really life anymore. It’s like a dolphin saying, “I’m sick of living in the ocean; I’m gonna live on the land.” A dolphin cannot survive without being surrounded by the ocean’s water. Likewise, we cannot survive without being surrounded by God’s life and love. Without God cradling our life, there’s nothing but death and destruction: Donald Miller’s book *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: How I Learned to Live a Better Story*. Mr. Miller tells of how God showed his friend Kathy this harsh reality, pp. 116–118.

III. Conclusion

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "....but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"