



What is Wrong?

Is Something Wrong?

1. As you consider our world (both present and past), do you think there is something wrong with the human race? Is there a problem with human beings? What evidence do you see that something is wrong?



? Is there anything wrong with you?



The Problem

| Religion/ Philosophy | The Problem with Human Beings ¹ |
|-------------------------|---|
| Naturalism | Ignorance of scientific truth, and the inclination to depend on religious ideas rather than the potential of humankind to solve our problems. |
| Hinduism | Ignorance of our true divine nature; <i>Maya</i> – delusion of believing I am the perishable body instead of the imperishable soul within, resulting in worldly desires and attachments, and wrong actions. |
| Buddhism | Suffering (<i>dukkha</i>) as a result of our cravings for the temporary, and our desire to “exist apart” – to be unique and permanent; illusion of the existence of the self (soul, ego), resulting in worldly desires and attachments. |
| Islam | Lack of submission to God’s (Allah’s) guidance revealed in the Qur’an. |
| Christianity | Our “sin” against God, resulting in a broken relationship with God who is the Source of spiritual life and every good thing. |

What Caused the Problem?

- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created the living creatures of the earth. God created man (male and female) in his own image. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (*Genesis 1:31*). God did not cause the problem.
- The problem is man’s sin,² traced back to “the Fall of Man” (see next page). Man has caused the problem.
- “The Fall of Man” resulted in a broken relationship with God, meaning spiritual death (separation from God, who is the source of life, blessing, and meaning), and resulting in moral corruption. This “fallen condition” applies to all human beings (*Romans 5:12*).



¹ While there are many kinds of problems with the human race, different worldviews suggest a primary problem, which is at the root of other problems. These descriptions of “the problem” are based on the orthodox, philosophical representations of the religions/philosophies, and may not reflect the understandings of many of their adherents.

² In the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew root for “sin” is *ht*, which generally conveys the idea of missing the mark, or deviating from the goal. The most common New Testament word for “sin” is *ἁμαρτία* (*harmartia*) which has a meaning equivalent to the Hebrew *ht*. Other Hebrew and Greek words are used to specifically denote unfaithfulness, rebellion, deliberate wrongdoing, wickedness, error, violation of God’s law, etc. Thus the biblical concept of sin cannot be limited to the meaning of one of these words. I have defined sin as “any attitude or action that is opposed to the nature and will of God.” In other words, “sin is that condition and activity of human beings that is offensive to God, their Creator” (*The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 946).

Why Did God Allow Man to Sin?

- ❑ God purposed to make human beings morally responsible (consistent with being created “in his image”). God gave humans the freedom to make choices.³ They could make good choices or bad choices. They could choose right or wrong. The first humans chose to do wrong. Human beings have been making wrong choices ever since.

What is “the Fall of Man?”

- ❑ After the creation of man, God “saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (*Gen. 1:31*).
 - 📖 “Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden;⁴ and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life⁵ and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (*Genesis 2:8-9, NIV*).
 - 📖 “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree of the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,⁶ for when you eat of it you will surely die.’” (*Genesis 2:15-17, NIV*)
- ❑ The first humans enjoyed moral innocence and harmony with God. “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (*Genesis 2:25*). However, their moral innocence would be lost, and their relationship with God would be broken. This is called “the Fall of Man.” What went wrong?



The Cause (*Genesis 3:1-6*)

- ❑ Read Genesis 3:1-6. What part does the “serpent” play?
 - The “serpent” tempts the woman. He is “crafty” – skillful at deceiving others.
 - With his question (*3:1*), he exaggerates God’s prohibition to make God sound harsh and unreasonable.
 - He negates God’s warning by saying (literally), “*Not – you will surely die*” (*3:4*). He speaks half-truths.
 - The serpent influences the woman to doubt God’s word and to question her trust in Him. He influences the woman to think she is better off if she disobeys God.



³God purposed to create personal beings who could choose to love him, or not. “Freedom of choice” is viewed in different ways. Christian “libertarians” believe that a person is the absolute originator of his/her own actions. They do not deny the power of influence, but the person has “dual ability” – to do, or not to do. Christian “determinists” do not believe in *absolute* freedom. “Soft determinists” (“compatibilists”) argue that free human action can be compatible with determinism. Free action can be compatible with causal conditions that decisively incline the will, as long as those conditions do not cause one to act contrary to his/her desires. Compatibilists do not accept “dual ability,” given that a person will act according to his/her circumstances and desires, which are determined. These philosophical differences are part of the larger debate concerning the tension between God’s sovereignty (rule, control) and human responsibility. See “Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility” on the ICF website.

⁴The Bible presents the garden in Eden as an actual place (*Genesis 2:10-14*) though its precise location is difficult to determine. The garden is associated with paradise, and represents harmony (unbroken fellowship) with God.

⁵The “tree of life” is not a magical tree, but represents the life of God, which is accessible to those in fellowship with God. “Tree of life” is used metaphorically in Proverbs 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4. In Revelation, it symbolizes the restored harmony between man and God who is the Source of eternal life (*Revelation 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19*).

⁶“tree of the knowledge of good and evil” – Interpretations include: (1) eating of it would bring the experience of good and evil; (2) such knowledge refers to omniscience, which only God possesses; and seeking this is seeking to be equal to God; (3) only God has the authority to decide what is right and wrong, and seeking this is an expression of moral autonomy (independence from God), contrary to submission to God. Interpretation (3) seems best.

❖ *Note:* The “serpent” was one of God’s good creatures. We would not expect a mere serpent to talk and act like this. In the New Testament, “that ancient serpent” is identified as “the devil, or Satan” (*Revelation 12:9*), a created angel who had rebelled against God (*2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6*). Thus it may be concluded that Satan himself is behind the serpent.⁷

2. What motivates the woman to eat? What is evident about her beliefs and values?⁸ Do you think anything is wrong with the man and woman’s attitudes and actions? Explain.⁹

? In what ways are our attitudes and actions similar to those of the first man and woman?



- ❑ The serpent influenced the woman, and the woman influenced the man. What influences *us* to have wrong attitudes or actions?
- In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul lists the world, the devil, and the flesh (*Eph. 2:2-3*).
 - We may be *directly* influenced by evil spirits.
 - More often, we are influenced by “the world” (the ideas of popular culture, the media, academia, or others not in submission to God).
 - In general, we are influenced by the “flesh” (our human nature, now corrupted, with its desires), including our own selfishness and pride (*James 4:1-2*).

The Result (*Genesis 3:7-24*)

- ❑ Read Genesis 3:7-13.

3. What are the consequences of the first humans’ disobedience? How does it affect their attitudes toward themselves, each other, and God (*3:7-13*)?¹⁰



⁷ This raises the question: If God’s original creation was “very good,” where did Satan come from? The Bible does not reveal much about the origin of Satan. However, we can conclude that Satan was created a good angel (*Genesis 1:1, 31; Colossians 1:16; Job 1:6*) but rebelled against God (*2 Peter 2:4*). The name “Satan” is derived from the Hebrew word meaning “adversary” or “opponent.” Satan’s rebellion must have occurred between God’s declaration that everything was very good (*Genesis 1:31*) and the temptation in the garden. Satan is the leader among other fallen angels, called “demons” (*Matthew 12:24; 25:41*). Whether or not *Ezekiel 28:12-19* and *Isaiah 14:12-15* refer to the fall of Satan is disputed. These passages clearly refer to human kings but many scholars say that they also refer to Satan (especially the *Ezekiel* passage). How a “good” angel could choose to rebel against God is a philosophical difficulty that the Bible does not directly explain. In any case, pride was involved (*1 Timothy 3:6*).

⁸ She saw it was “good for food” – appealing to the body (physical senses). She saw it was “pleasing to the eye” – appealing to the eye (emotional senses). She saw it was “desirable for gaining wisdom” – appealing to the pride (intellectual, spiritual senses). The basic attraction is autonomy, independence, self-sufficiency; displacing submission to God. But “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (*Proverbs 9:10*) and “knowledge” (*1:7*).

⁹ She doubts God’s word, and allows her self-interest to control her actions, even though it is against God’s command. She trusts more in herself than she trusts in God

¹⁰ They experience shame and loss of innocence (*3:7*). They become defensive (*3:12-13*). The man blames the woman, and to some extent he blames God (“the woman *you* put here”). The woman blames the serpent. They hide from God, because they are ashamed and afraid (*3:8-10*). The conditions of guilt, shame, and fear come upon mankind; conditions that are still prevalent today. In general, the harmony of relationships is destroyed

- As a consequence of their sin, the man and woman will experience increased pain, trouble, and struggle in life (3:16-19). But what is the worst consequence? Read Genesis 3:22-24.¹¹
 - Expulsion from the garden. Fellowship and enjoyment with God becomes alienation from God. Sin separates man from God and the tree of life (symbolizing everlasting life). This separation is called “death” (it is separation from the Source of life). Though physical life continued for a while, spiritual death was immediate.
 - The cherubim (angels) guard the way to the tree of life on the east side of the garden. Likewise, the only way into the tabernacle and temple would be through the east side. There is only *one way* to the tree of life. That has never changed.



4. How do the consequences of “the Fall of Man” apply to us today?¹²

- 📖 “Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (*Romans 5:12, NIV*).
- 📖 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Romans 3:23*).

Reflection/Application

- This week, think about the example of Eve and Adam. Reflect on these questions: In what ways are my attitudes and actions similar to theirs? Who/what has authority/control over my life? Where do I place my trust? In what ways am I tempted to do the wrong things? How do my wrong attitudes and actions affect the relationships in my life?
- Man’s broken relationship with God has resulted in a lack of true love, peace, joy, purpose, and hope (the blessings of abundant, everlasting life). How would you characterize your relationship with God? The Bible reveals God’s plan to reconcile people to himself, and how to live in relationship with him. How are you responding to the Bible’s teaching?

A Question You Might Have

- Why Can’t God Just Overlook Sin?
 - The Bible teaches that God is good, loving, and all-powerful. If so, why doesn’t He just overlook sin? There are *some* things that God *cannot* do! He cannot do what is contrary to His own nature. Since God is holy, righteous and just, He *cannot* just overlook sin. However, since God is also merciful and gracious, He has provided a way for our sins to be forgiven (through Jesus Christ). Jesus Christ is “the Way” back to the “tree of life” (*John 14:6; Revelation 22:1-2*). That is the “good news!”

¹¹ “us” (3:22) – see the explanation of the plural in Lesson 4.

¹² The separation from God experienced by the first man and woman is experienced by all their descendants, including us. Everyone since has been born “outside the garden.” In general, sin results in spiritual separation from God. This is the condition of everyone who has not been restored to relationship with God through faith in Christ. Of course, God’s children are not sinless (1 John 1:8). The “Fall” resulted in a corrupted human nature, which affects both the nonbeliever and believer. However, the Christian’s relationship with God is based on *Christ’s* righteousness, not his/her own righteousness. While sin in the Christian’s life does not break relationship with God, it harms “fellowship” with God. In a broader sense, all humans live in a “fallen world.” Thus we all face trouble, suffering, sickness, death, etc. These conditions will continue until Christ returns and establishes his kingdom.