

Foundation 1: Salvation!

God Made Man

In the Beginning, God made man. And when God made man, He breathed into him the “*breath of life*.” When God did this, man became “*a living being*” (Gen. 2:7). In other words, God actually breathed into Adam (the first man and physical father of us all), His Holy Spirit. Adam was made spiritually alive by the breath of God. The animals were spoken into existence by God’s words, but Adam was fashioned by God’s very own hands. He was then infused with the very Life of God as the Creator of the Universe breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Man was made by God to be spiritually alive!

As spiritually alive beings, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect communion (fellowship, relationship) with God. They walked with Him, talked with Him and enjoyed His company, and God empowered His children. He told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:27-28). He even asked them to name the animals (Gen. 2:19). God in essence was co-creating with them. Adam and Eve were trustworthy to God so He empowered their work. They had His Spirit on the inside of them and therefore had a mind to obey Him, walk with Him and carry out His will.

God Gave Man a Free Will

Even though Adam and Eve had the Spirit of God living in them and desired to carry out His will, God did not want to have a forced relationship with them. God is not controlling. And here is how we know that: He has given every human that has ever walked this earth, starting with Adam and Eve, a completely free will--an autonomous ability to decide what we are going to do. Like Adam and Eve, we actually have complete choice in our lives. God is not forcing us to do anything. He will give us suggestions. He will point out pitfalls and encourage courses that will be successful for us, but He never guides us for the purpose of control--only for the purpose of love.

The first choice man was ever given was whether to obey God or not. 1 John 5:3 says if we love God, we will keep His commandments. And while God's commands are not burdensome, but for our benefit, God did share one restriction with Adam and Eve: He told them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He warned them that in the day that they eat of that fruit they shall surely die.

Now, why did God say that Adam and Eve would die when they ate this fruit--because it was poisonous fruit that would attack their digestive tract? Nope. If it had been a physical death God was warning them about, they would have died physically at the point of eating the fruit and none of us would be here now (they had no children yet when they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil). God was not warning Adam and Eve about a physical death, but instead a spiritual one.

God was effectively saying “you do not have to love Me. I love you, but you do not have to love me; you do not have to obey me. It is your choice! I want to protect you and be with you, but you can do your own thing--separate from me--if you would prefer. I will leave that choice up to you.” You may wonder why such a loving God would afford those He loved a choice not to love Him. The answer is simple: Just as no one in their right mind would force someone to marry them, God did not want to force or compel love from man. He wanted man to love Him, if he was going to love Him, out of free will--not out of being controlled or forced.

This is a major mindset shift for a lot of people when they first consider it. God so loved Adam and Eve (and all mankind) that He is willing to pour out all of His love on us, but only if we want it. Now, this is a love that is truly about the other person and not about “self.” God so wants to display His love for us, but He will not force it upon us! He will always honor our free will! Why? Because God was the one that gave our free will to us! Your ability to choose is literally a God-given gift!

There is an Enemy

While God honors our free will and does not pressure obedience, there is someone else that is exactly the opposite in mentality and approach--manipulative, controlling, deceitful, forceful, coercive, etc. That is satan, or the devil.

Now we see in Genesis that satan was in the Garden of Eden as well, and he had a mind to try to encourage Adam and Eve to disobey God. So for the purposes of this storyline, let's take a minute to understand a bit more about the enemy of our souls.

First, the devil is **not even close** to being on the same level with God and that is why his name will not be capitalized in this text (except to denote the beginning of a sentence). Satan was created by God as an angel of light--a worship leader in Heaven. In other words, God could ask satan "who's your daddy?" Satan is no different than an angel like Michael or Gabriel--except that he does not serve God--but himself. Satan does everything to try to draw attention and glory to himself.

Second, satan is real. We may like to think that he is not. We may like to think that Hell is a figment of the imagination of the religious. But, if you do not believe in Hell, you do not believe the teachings of Christ. Jesus talked about Hell on many occasions. He made its existence very clear. Jesus not only confirmed the existence of Hell, but He also clearly described satan. The gospels even recount satan tempting Jesus.

Of course, Jesus was not the first man that was tempted by satan; Adam and Eve were as well. From the beginning of man, satan has sought to dissuade men from serving God and obeying their creator. Our enemy has an agenda about who he would like for people to serve instead of God--him of course! This pattern of trying to encourage others

to worship him is not new for satan. Before being cast out of Heaven, satan was first Lucifer--an angel of light and the “worship leader” of all of Heaven. At some point though, Lucifer decided that he was so beautiful that the heavenly host should worship him instead of God. That did not go well for Lucifer. The moment he decided to be as God, he was cast out of Heaven (see Isa 14:12-15). In Luke 10:18, Jesus recounted the same instance: “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*”

There is not doubt that satan, slithering around in the dirt of the earth, was very jealous of God’s new creation--man. Satan had wanted Heaven to worship him as God, and here the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) had actually made man “*in Our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26) and placed all the earth under man’s authority (Gen. 1:29-30).

Think about this... if satan was on the earth and all the earth was placed under the authority of man (by God who made the earth, and could give the authority to whomever He wanted), then satan was under the authority of Adam and Eve! That is exactly why satan sought to deceive Adam and Eve. They had what he wanted--authority. Romans 6:16 says you are a “*slave to whom you obey.*” Satan needed man to disobey God and obey him in order for the authority of earth (currently in Adam and Eve’s hands) to become his.

Man Disobeyed God and Died Spiritually

Now, you probably know what happened from there. God had warned Adam and Eve of the consequences of choosing to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had warned them that they would experience spiritual death if they chose to eat from that tree. And satan was doing his best to tempt their disobedience “*your eyes will be opened... you will be like God.*” Adam and Eve breathed in satan’s poisonous pride (the desire to be like God), and in so doing gave in to the temptation to eat the fruit.

In the very day that they ate the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve died spiritually. They were instantaneously cut off from the very source of spiritual life, God. They had become disconnected from their creator like a beautiful rose cut from a perfect rose bush. They still looked alive on the outside, but were dead on the inside. Similarly, you can put a cut flower in a vase and it will still look alive--for a time--but it is actually dead. The death of the rose (its separation from the bush) will simply show-up over time. And that’s what happened with Adam and Eve. They were still physically alive, but had become spiritually dead. Adam and Eve had rejected God, the only source of spiritual life.

Now All Men are Born Spiritually Dead

Because Adam chose to disobey God and, as a result, suffered spiritual death, now all of mankind is born spiritually dead. Apple trees cannot make oranges and spiritually dead things cannot make things that are spiritually alive.

Being spiritually dead, Adam and Eve actually passed down spiritual death to the entire human race. Not a very good inheritance (Rom. 5:12-19)!

Notice that once Adam and Eve sinned (disobeyed God), they hid from Him. Eventually, one of their sons murdered his brother out of jealousy. Adam's family took a turn for the worse when they died spiritually. Instead of their spirits being filled with light, their spirits were now dark and dead. Now, instead of their hearts being naturally soft and loving, they were cold and hard. Now, instead of obeying God coming naturally to them, they had a propensity towards disobedience. Now, instead of love being the natural way they treated each other, hate, frustration, and pride became common in their lives - and in the lives of all of their descendants.

It is only natural that spiritually dead people sin. This is why the world has such a history of pride, jealousy, hate, war, murder, rape, etc. Spiritual death always produces physical death. Spiritual life produces physical life. Spiritual life builds up. Spiritual death tears down. Spiritually dead people do not act like God. To act like God would be counter to their nature.

Even though we were all born spiritually dead (being of Adam and Eve's lineage), we also all have sinned ourselves--and therefore have personally rejected God. Being spiritually dead is why so many people feel empty inside and why we try to find happiness in so many ways, yet nothing satisfies. It's because we are separated from our Creator, who is the

only Source of true love, true peace and true joy.

Jesus said “You Must be Born Again”

During His time on earth, Jesus was the only spiritually alive person on the planet. While many people sought God, the truth was they were all separated from God because the spiritual separation was passed down from their ancestors. And their own sin did not help bridge that separation at all. The Bible says, “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23).

When Jesus spoke with some religious leaders, it seemed as though they did not realize that they were separated from God. Instead, they claimed to be close to Him--even thinking that some of the religious things they did made them particularly “good” before God. But the Bible says that our own righteousness is as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Even our best efforts to be good are not even close to being good - the Bible calls them filthy. The religious people of Jesus’ day were thinking they were a lot better off with God than they were!

Jesus understood the spiritual condition of these religious leaders better than they knew it themselves. As a result, He spoke very plainly with one religious leader, Nicodemus, who, although confused, had a heart to hear what Jesus had to say. Jesus told Nicodemus “*unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” In other words, Jesus told him “you must be born again to go to Heaven” (Jn. 3:3).

Nicodemus was probably quite surprised by Jesus' comment. Nicodemus was a religious leader, after all. Surely he would be going to Heaven! But not so, according to Jesus. So often, we are devastated when confronted with new information that contradicts an assumption we had held. The golden moment in any situation like that, however, is how we respond to that disappointment. Do we run from the new knowledge or look it square in the eye and see what we now must do?

To Nicodemus' credit, he did not run away from the message of Christ. Instead, he asked for clarification about how he could possibly be "born again"--stating it would be difficult to go back into his mother's womb. Clearly Nicodemus was very confused, but he at least engaged in the conversation to better understand Jesus' words. Jesus clarified for him: *"that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (Jn. 3:6).

Jesus was talking with Nicodemus about being born again in our spirit. Jesus was addressing the spiritual death that Adam and Eve had chosen to enter into when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil--the spiritual death all of mankind had lived in since Adam and Eve--the spiritual death Nicodemus was living in as he spoke with Jesus - the spiritual death millions of people are standing in today.

How Can We be Born Again?

Jesus continued by plainly telling Nicodemus how he, himself, would be able to be born again: *“the Son of Man (must) be lifted up (crucified) that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (go to Heaven). For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (be born again in their spirit). He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already (was already spiritually dead and is choosing to stay that way)...”* (Jn. 3:14-18, paraphrases in parentheses).

Read this carefully: there is only **one action** that a person can ever take that will determine their eternal destiny. Your good or bad works do not determine whether you go to Heaven or Hell the moment you die. Your decision to accept or reject Christ does.

It is that simple. Jesus was crucified, suffered, and died for you. There is no other way to go to Heaven than through the blood of Jesus. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God planned to make a way for us to come back to His side--to have spiritual communion with Him again. And God's plan was and is His very own Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only Way back to God. There is no other Way (Jn. 14:6).

The Bible refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God that was slain for us. This is because, in ancient times, the Jewish

people sacrificed lambs to temporarily atone for their sins. In sacrificing His Son for us, God has forever atoned for all of our sin (Heb. 8-10).

That said, God's sacrifice will be of no use to you if you do not place your complete faith for salvation in Jesus Christ. Receive the forgiveness He has provided for your sins! The Bible says salvation through Jesus is a free gift - one in which you get a place in Heaven that your actions did not deserve. We have all sinned (these authors included!); Our actions do not meet God's perfect standard (Rom. 3:23 & 6:23).

While we are on earth, we get to decide whose actions we will be judged by when we appear before God. One option is to receive Jesus as our savior and in so doing say, "God, judge my qualification for Heaven based on the perfection of Your Son Jesus who suffered, died, and gave His life for me!" The other option is to reject Jesus as our savior and in so doing say, "God, please judge me based on my own actions, my own righteousness, my own perfection." Jesus' perfection will enter Heaven. Yours will not. It is that simple. Do you want to go to Heaven? If so, please, for your own sake, accept Jesus if you have not already! The Son of God has already paid for the gift of your forgiveness, but you must open that gift by receiving Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

A Helpful Prayer

God in Heaven, I believe that you love me and I know that my sins have separated me from you. I believe based on Your Word, that your Son Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins. I now ask you to forgive me of all my sins. I commit my life to you to serve and obey you. I want to be born again so that I can go to heaven and be with you and Jesus forever! Jesus, please come into my life and wash away my sins and be my Lord and Savior. I now say by faith, based on your Word, that you Jesus are my Lord and I am now born again! Thank you Father!

Scriptures

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7)

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:27-28)

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. (Gen. 2:19)

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you

eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:15-16)

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (Luke 10:18)

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all[a] the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26)

And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so. (Gen. 1:29-30)

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:4-5)

Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:18-19)

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags... (Isa. 64:6a)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... (Rom. 3:23-24)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:3)

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (Jn. 3:14-18)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (Jn 14:6)

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:9-12)