

**Question: "Did we all inherit sin from Adam and Eve?"**

Answer: Yes, all people inherited sin from Adam and Eve, specifically from Adam. Sin is described in the Bible as transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4) and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18). Genesis 3 describes Adam and Eve's rebellion against God and His command. Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, sin has been an "inheritance" for all of their descendants. Romans 5:12 tells us that, through Adam, sin entered the world and so death was passed on to all men because all have sinned. This passed-on sin is known as inherited sin. Just as we inherit physical characteristics from our parents, we inherit our sinful nature from Adam.

Adam and Eve were made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6). However, we are also in the image and likeness of Adam (Genesis 5:3). When Adam fell into sin, the result was every one of his descendants also being "infected" with sin. David lamented this fact in one of his Psalms: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). This does not mean that his mother bore him illegitimately; rather, his mother had inherited a sin nature from her parents, and they from their parents, and so on. David inherited sin from his parents, just as we all do. Even if we live the best life possible, we are still sinners as a result of inherited sin.

Being born sinners results in the fact that we all sin. Notice the progression in Romans 5:12: sin entered the world through Adam, death follows sin, death comes to all people, all people sin because they inherit sin from Adam. Because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), we need a perfect, sinless sacrifice to wash away our sin, something we are powerless to do on our own. Thankfully, Jesus Christ is the Savior from sin! Our sin has been crucified on the cross of Jesus, and now "in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). God, in His infinite wisdom, has provided the remedy for the sin we inherit, and that remedy is available to everyone: "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" (Acts 13:38).

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Question: "How did the knowledge of good and evil make man like God (Genesis 3:22)?"

Answer: Genesis 3:22 notes, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." God is speaking in this verse. The question arises: how, exactly, did knowing good and evil make man like God?

Adam and Eve already knew, *intellectually*, the difference between good and evil because of God's command to not eat of the tree's fruit. They knew it was right to eat of *those* trees and wrong to eat of *that* tree. However, when they chose to disobey, they knew evil *experientially* because they themselves had sinned against God. At that point, they fully understood both right and wrong. God, who knows everything, already understood the nature of evil. When Adam and Eve lost their innocence, they, too, understood the nature of evil because of its very real presence within them. They became "like God" in that they now realized what evil was truly like.

The serpent's deception in the Garden had included a grain of truth. Satan told Eve, "God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). What the serpent did *not* say was that knowing evil would damage Adam and Eve's relationship with God. Half-truths can be as deceptive as full-blown lies.

It was enough for humans to understand and experience the good, and much good had been given to them (Genesis 1:31). But Adam and Eve wanted more knowledge and more experience, to their own detriment. The entry of sin into the world was a curse leading to a loss of fellowship with God and other judgments upon Adam and Eve. Those judgments have affected all humanity (Genesis 3:16–19). Only in the end, when God creates new heavens and a new earth, will this curse be broken. Revelation 21:3–4 promises, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 22:3 adds, "No longer will there be any curse."

Knowing good and evil was not a positive thing for Adam and Eve; rather, it served as the entry of sin into humanity. Now, all people sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and we all live under the twin curse of sin and death (Romans 6:23). "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24–25; cf. John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–9).

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Original Sin

AN ESSAY BY

Richard Phillips

DEFINITION

Original Sin is a term that defines the nature of mankind's sinful condition because of Adam's fall. It teaches that all people are corrupted by Adam's sin through natural generation, by which—together with Adam's imputed condemnation—we all enter the world guilty before God. Original Sin shows that we sin because we are sinners, entering this world with a corrupt nature and without hope apart from the saving grace of God in the gospel.

SUMMARY

Original Sin teaches that all mankind is joined to Adam in both the guilt and the corruption of his first sin. All men and women are joined to Adam both by natural generation and by his covenantal headship. As a people who from our birth are corrupted by sin, we share in Adam's guilt before God, a guilt imputed to us under the covenant of works. Moreover, men and women are so corrupted morally and spiritually by our natural union with Adam that we are totally depraved. All our human faculties are corrupted by sin so that we have an inborn tendency to commit sin. Moreover, our total depravity renders us spiritual unable love God or believe his gospel and be saved until we are first regenerated by his sovereign grace. Original Sin provides us with a biblical understanding of ourselves and casts sinners in utter reliance on God's saving grace in the gospel, with no confidence in the flesh and with all the glory for our salvation belonging to the Lord.

The Nature of Mankind's Connection to Adam

Original Sin is the Christian teaching of mankind's sinfulness because of Adam's fall. It does not refer to the originating sin committed by Adam—eating the forbidden fruit in violation of God's command ([Gen 3:6](#))—but rather to mankind's moral and spiritual condition because of that sin. Defining Original Sin requires the answer to two questions, the first of which is whether the moral and spiritual condition of humanity is connected to Adam in his sin.

During the Fourth Century AD, the heretic Pelagius (condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 431) asserted that Adam's fall into sin had no direct effect on his offspring other than to set a bad example. With respect to the character of man and his relationship with God, Pelagius asserted that Adam's sin affected no one other than himself.

The biblical reasons for rejecting Pelagius provide the basis for the doctrine of Original Sin. Primary among them is [Romans 5:12](#), where Paul says that “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Paul’s point was not that all men have sinned after the example of Adam and therefore suffer the curse of death, but rather that all men share in the consequences of Adam’s sin. When he states, “because all sinned,” Paul is referring to our union with Adam in his transgression of God’s command. Herman Bavinck summarizes: “Adam sinned; consequently, sin and death entered the world and held sway over all.”¹

Moreover, Paul describes Adam as “a type of the one who was to come” ([Rom 5:14](#)), namely, Christ. Both Adam and Christ stood before God’s covenant as a representative for their people. Adam, as a type of Christ, undertook the test of the covenant of works ([Gen 2:16–17](#)) on behalf of all his natural offspring (his failure affecting them all), just as Christ fulfilled the covenant of works on behalf of all his spiritual offspring (his victorious obedience gaining them salvation). This principle of covenant headship is vital not only to Original Sin but also to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness in the gospel. Paul makes this connection clear: “For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many” ([Rom 5:15](#)).

Original Sin provides answers to important questions about sin. For instance, why is sin universal among men and women? Geerhardus Vos writes: “The Pelagian theory leaves the universality of sin entirely unexplained,”² since if Adam’s sin did not make all mankind sinners, we would expect some at least not to sin. Yet, as Solomon prayed, “There is no one who does not sin” ([1Kgs 8:46](#); see also [Rom 3:23](#)).

Another question asks: Is sin merely a passive defect, having no corrupting power in man? The Bible answers, to the contrary, that sin is a deadly power that holds the sinner in bondage. Jesus said, “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” ([John 8:34](#)). To once have sinned is to come under the power of sin. Therefore, far from defining sin only as a transgression of God’s law, the Bible describes sin as “lawlessness” itself ([1Jn 3:4](#)). More than this, David states that from the moment of his conception in his mother’s womb the power of sin was upon him: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” ([Ps 51:5](#)). David was not charging his mother with sinful behavior in his conception but, rather, confessing the sinfulness he inherited at the moment his life came into being. [Psalm 58:3](#) concurs: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth.”

Mankind’s Original Guilt in Sin

Having shown all mankind’s union with sinful Adam both by natural generation and covenant headship, we must then ask another question: what is the condition of mankind as a result of this connection to Adam’s fall? Original Sin first considers our connection with Adam in the universal guilt of mankind. When Adam sinned, the entire human race was “in him,” so that his guilt accrued to us all. Consider [Hebrews 7:9–10](#), which states that Levi was “in the loins of his ancestor” Abraham when he tithed to Melchizedek, establishing the superiority of Melchizedek’s priesthood to that of Levi. Likewise, the entire human race was “in Adam” when he sinned. Levi was, of course, not present when his ancestor tithed to this priest, yet by virtue of Levi’s natural descent from Abraham, the Levitical priests related to Melchizedek on account of Abraham’s actions. Likewise, while Adam’s descendants did not personally commit Adam’s transgression, their natural union with Adam as his offspring establishes their condemnation in sin before God.

Because Adam's nature was corrupted by the fall—as evidenced in his alienation to God in its aftermath ([Gen 3:7–12](#))—he could never produce morally superior offspring. John Murray explains: “Human nature became corrupt in Adam and . . . this human nature which became corrupt in Adam is transmitted to posterity by natural generation.”³ Since we all come into life as sinners, all mankind must necessarily be repugnant to God's perfectly holy nature and be subject to his condemnation. We therefore find Paul describing all of mankind as “by nature children of wrath” ([Eph 2:3](#)).

Mankind's original guilt stems not only from our inherited nature as sinners. We remember that Adam stood under the covenant of works as the representative of the entire race. On this basis, Paul explains why men and women died between Adam and Moses, death being the penalty for sin ([Gen 2:17](#)). [Romans 5:14](#) considers the case of those who sinned without a law, “whose sinning was not like that transgression of Adam,” in that they had personally received neither the covenant of works nor the Mosaic Law. Why, then, did people die between Adam and Moses, with no law to condemn them, except that Adam “was a type of the one who was to come”? That is, Adam was a covenant head for all his people, his failure condemning them all under God's justice, just as Christ as the covenant head of those who believe attained their justification. Paul states this relationship clearly: “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men” ([Rom 5:18](#); see also [1Cor 15:22](#)). Far from being an oppressive doctrine to the hearts of men and women, Original Sin establishes the very principle of covenant headship by which we receive the righteousness of Christ which we have not deserved. In Paul's own words in [Romans 5:20](#), Original Sin preaches the inspiring news: “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”!

The teaching of mankind's universal guilt as inherited from Adam alone can vindicate God for the miseries of human life. Secular man frequently assails God with the notion that he is culpable for the sufferings of people around the globe. Yet, as Augustine pointed out in his opposition to Pelagius (summarized by Bavinck):

The appalling misery of the human race can only be explained as a punishment upon sin. How can God, who certainly is good and just, subject all humans from their conception on to sin and death if they are completely innocent? An original moral debt must rest upon all; there is no other way to understand the crushing yoke that weighs upon all the children of Adam.⁴

From the moment of Adam's sin, the need of the fallen human race was a Redeemer to deliver them from sin. For this reason, God's first action in response to Adam's sin was to promise this Redeemer ([Gen 3:15](#)) and to depict Christ's atoning death through the sacrifice of animals in the garden ([Gen 3:21](#)). The logic of mankind's inherited guilt through Adam provides an essential logic to the gospel message from its earliest appearance in Scripture.

Mankind's Original Corruption in Sin

The effect of Adam's sin upon his entire race did not end with guilt but extended to their moral and spiritual corruption as his offspring. The fall has polluted human nature with “an inherent positive disposition toward sin.”⁵[v] We see this sin-ward bent in [Romans 3:10–12](#): “None is righteous, no, not one . . . All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” [Isaiah 64:6](#) adds: “We have all become like one who is unclean,” so that even “our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”

The Bible presents man's sinful nature as utterly comprehensive, ruining every human faculty. [Jeremiah 17:9](#) says: "The heart is deceitful above all things." [Romans 3:13–18](#) depicts the mouth, feet, and eyes as debased, concluding: "the way of peace they have not known." Above all, the fallen mind is corrupted: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law" ([Rom 8:7](#)). This fallen condition is known as "total depravity." Robert Reymond summarizes:

His understanding is darkened, his mind is at enmity with God, his will to act is slave to his darkened understanding and rebellious mind, his heart is corrupt, his emotions are perverted, his affections naturally gravitate to that which is evil and ungodly, his conscience is untrustworthy, and his body is subject to mortality.⁶

The teaching of total depravity states not only that every faculty of fallen mankind is corrupted by the power of sin, but it also asserts a spiritual inability to believe God and receive his salvation through faith. Paul states, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him," and then adds, "he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" ([1Cor 2:14](#)). For this reason, Jesus told Nicodemus: "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" ([John 3:3](#)). Paul wrote that apart from God's regenerating work, we are all "dead in the trespasses and sins" ([Eph 2:1](#)). Contrary to those who would describe fallen man merely as sick—with a weakened but nonetheless inherent ability to believe—Paul insists that we are no more able to come to God in faith than a dead man is able to rise from the grave. Whereas Adam was created in a righteousness so that he may be described as having once possessed a free will, Original Sin has placed the will of mankind in slavery to the power of sin. People, of course, retain a faculty of choice, but the bondage of one's will in sin denies them the liberty to choose the way of God. Louis Berkhof concludes: "He cannot change his fundamental preference for sin and self to love for God, nor even make an approach to such a change. In a word, he is unable to do any spiritual good."⁷

Original Sin and the Gospel

Original Sin provides the basis for a true understanding of ourselves as fallen humans. This knowledge is essential for those who would be saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ. James Boice explains: "Without a knowledge of our unfaithfulness and rebellion we will never come to know God as the God of truth and grace."⁸ Original Sin teaches us to despair of all hope in ourselves or any other natural source, relying instead entirely on God's supernatural grace in the gospel. For although dead men are unable of themselves to rise from the grave of their fallen life, God is able by his grace to make us "alive together with Christ" ([Eph 2:5](#)). The truth of Original Sin shows us that our salvation must be by the grace of God alone, so that the glory also belongs only to him. Moreover, knowing that the case of every sinner is hopeless apart from God's saving grace, wise ministers set forth the gospel as proclaimed in God's Word, "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" ([Rom 1:16](#)). To appreciate Original Sin is to base our evangelism and preaching entirely on God's Word, which in the power of the Holy Spirit is able to convey life to the dead. For, in the words of [1 Peter 1:23](#): "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

FOOTNOTES

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 3:85.

² Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. Richard Gaffin (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012), 2:29.

³ John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), 26-7.

⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:93.

⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1941), 246.

⁶ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 450.

⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 247.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 199.

FURTHER READING

- Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959. The classic exegetical study of [Romans 5:12-21](#), making clear man's covenantal union with Adam in the fall and the believer's union in Christ for justification.
- Edwards, Jonathan. "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. 2 vols. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974, 1:143-233. A classic Puritan exposition of the biblical basis for Original Sin, defending against objections from Enlightenment philosophy.
- Challies, Tim. "Original Sin and the Death of Infants," *Challies*, July 19, 2006. A thoughtful application of the Bible's teaching of Original Sin to this emotional subject.
- Piper, John. "The Fatal Disobedience of Adam and the Triumphal Obedience of Christ," *Desiring God*, August 26, 2007. A sermon video and text highlighting the glorious saving connection between the imputation of Adam's sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

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The Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

By Justin Taylor

Some exegetical notes, observations, and tentative conclusions:

1. Among all the trees in the Garden of Eden, God identified two special trees: of life, and of the knowledge of good and evil.

“And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:9)

2. God allowed Adam to eat from all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning him that death would result.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.’” (Genesis 2:16-17)

3. After being tempted by the serpent, Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Adam did the same.

“So when the woman 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 its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6)

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” (Genesis 3:7)

4. After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—in part to become “wise”—Adam now possesses the knowledge of good and evil like God does, as well as knowledge of their nakedness.

“... the woman saw that the tree ... was to be desired to make one wise.” (Genesis 3:6)

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” (Genesis 3:7)

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.’” (Genesis 3:22b-24)

5. After Adam disobeyed God’s command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God forbade Adam to eat from the tree of life lest he live forever in that state; therefore God guards the tree.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘. . . Now, lest [the man] reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:22b-24)

6. What does the Hebrew idiom “knowing/understanding/discerning good and evil” mean?

6.1. It is something God—and probably the angels—possess.

“Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in *knowing good and evil*.” (Genesis 3:22a)

“And your servant thought, ‘The word of my lord the king will set me at rest,’ for my lord the king is like the angel of God to *discern good and evil*. The Lord your God be with you!” (2 Samuel 14:17)

6.2. It is something that young children do not possess.

And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no *knowledge of good or evil*, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.” (Deuteronomy 1:39)

“He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to *refuse the evil and choose the good*.” (Isaiah 7:15)

6.3. It is something that elderly people may no longer possess.

“I [David] am this day eighty years old. Can I *discern what is pleasant and what is not?* . . .” (2 Samuel 19:35)

6.4. It is something that God may grant.

“Give your servant [=Solomon] therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may *discern between good and evil*, for who is able to govern this your great people?” (1 Kings 3:9)

6.5. Perhaps it is best there to regard it at as something like “mature or independent wisdom, insight, discernment,” with the tree representing an improper way to attain it.

Franz Delitzch:

The tree of knowledge was to lead man to the knowledge of good and evil; and, according to the divine intention, this was to be attained through his not eating of its fruit. This end was to be accomplished, not only by his discerning in the limit imposed by the prohibition the difference between that which accorded with the will of God and that which opposed it, but also by his coming eventually, through obedience to the prohibition, to recognize the fact that all that is opposed to the will of God is an evil to be avoided, and through voluntary resistance to such evil, to the full development of the freedom of choice originally imparted to him into the actual freedom of a deliberate and self-conscious choice of good. By obedience to the divine will, he would have attained to a godlike knowledge of good and evil, i.e. to one in accordance with his own likeness to God. He would have detected the evil in the approaching tempter; but instead of yielding to it, he would have resisted it, and thus have made good his own property acquired with consciousness and of his own free-will, and in this way by proper self-determination would gradually have advanced to the possession of the truest liberty. But as he failed to keep this divine appointed way and ate the forbidden fruit in opposition to the command of God, the power imparted by God to the fruit was manifested in a different way. He learned the difference between good and evil from his own guilty experience, and by receiving the evil into his own soul, fell a victim to the threatened death. Thus, through his own fault the tree, which should have helped him to attain true freedom, brought nothing but a sham liberty of sin, and with it death, and that without any demoniacal power of destruction being conjured into the tree itself, or any fatal poison being hidden in its fruit.

C. John Collins agrees:

God intended that through this tree humans would come to know good and evil: either from above, as masters of temptation, or from below, as slaves to sin.

7. In the book of Proverbs, the tree of life is used as imagery in conjunction with a wisdom and understanding, the fruit of righteousness, fulfilled desire, and a gentle tongue.

“She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.” (Proverbs 3:18)

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.” (Proverbs 11:30)

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” (Proverbs 13:12)

“A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4)

8. Those in the new heavens and the new earth will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life for all of eternity.

“To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”
(Revelation 2:7b)

“On either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2)

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” (Revelation 22:14)

“If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” (Revelation 22:19)

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**Question: "What does it mean to live "east of Eden"?"**

Answer: Eden, of course, is the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve enjoyed creation perfectly as God had created it. A location "east of Eden" is mentioned in Genesis 3.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were expelled from the garden. "So the Lord God banished him [mankind—both Adam and Eve] from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:23–24). Presumably, the only entrance to the garden was on the east side, as this was the only side that God chose to guard. If Adam and Eve left the garden on the eastern side and kept going in that direction, they were living east of Eden.

We are not told, but it is reasonable to assume that Adam and Eve as well as their children knew where the Garden of Eden was and that it may have still existed in some form through their lifetimes. If this were not the case, it would have been unnecessary for God to guard the entrance to it and bar access to the tree of life.

The phrase *east of Eden* also shows up in Genesis 4. After Cain was given his punishment for killing his brother, Abel, he "went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden" (Genesis 4:16). It seems that Nod was even farther away from Eden than his parents had settled. This is the result of the fall intensified.

These are the only two passages where a place "east of Eden" is mentioned. However, in both cases the context is one of denied access to Eden as a result of sin. Living "east of Eden" is contrasted to living "in Eden" and as such is a metaphor for living in a fallen world.

The phrase *east of Eden* has come into popular usage due to the novel of that name by John Steinbeck and the film based on the novel. In the novel, two families compete and experience the full range of fallen human nature. The film is based on the final part of the novel in which rival brothers vie for their father's affection. The environment of sin, disappointment, and hopelessness portrayed in these works is an accurate representation of the human condition "east of Eden."

When the new heavens and new earth are the abode of all who have had their sins forgiven by the sacrifice of Christ, the whole world will be Eden. Access to the tree of life will once again be restored:

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:1–5).

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Question: "What is original sin?"

Answer: The term *original sin* refers to Adam's sin of disobedience in eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and its effects upon the rest of the human race. *Original sin* can be defined as "the moral corruption we possess as a consequence of Adam's sin, resulting in a sinful disposition manifesting itself in habitually sinful behavior." The doctrine of original sin focuses particularly on its effect on our internal nature and our standing before God. There are three main views that deal with that effect:

Pelagianism: This view says that Adam's sin had no effect upon the souls of his descendants other than that he provided a sinful example. Adam's example has influenced those who followed him to also sin. But, according to this view, man has the ability to stop sinning if he simply chooses to. Pelagianism runs contrary to a number of passages that indicate man is hopelessly enslaved by his sins (apart from God's intervention) and that his good works are "dead" or worthless in meriting God's favor (Ephesians 2:1–2; Matthew 15:18–19; Romans 7:23; Hebrews 6:1; 9:14).

Arminianism: Arminians believe Adam's original sin has resulted in the rest of mankind inheriting a corrupt, sinful nature, which causes us to sin in the same way that a cat's nature causes it to meow—it comes naturally. According to this view, man cannot stop sinning on his own; God's supernatural, enabling grace, called prevenient grace, in conjunction with the gospel, allows that person to choose to exercise faith in Christ. The teaching of prevenient grace is not explicitly found in Scripture.

Calvinism: The Calvinistic doctrine of original sin states that Adam's sin has resulted not only in our having a sin nature, but also in our incurring guilt before God for which we deserve punishment. Being conceived with original sin upon us (Psalm 51:5) results in our inheriting a sin nature so wicked that Jeremiah 17:9 describes the human heart as "deceitful above all things and beyond cure." Not only was Adam found guilty because he sinned, but his sin was imputed to us, making us guilty and deserving of his punishment (death) as well (Romans 5:12, 19). There are two views as to why Adam's sin should be imputed to us. The first view states that the human race was within Adam in seed form; thus, when Adam sinned, we sinned in him. This is similar to the biblical teaching that Levi (a descendant of Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:4–9), even though Levi was not born until hundreds of years later. The other main view is that Adam served as our representative, and so, when he sinned, we were found guilty as well.

Both the Arminian and Calvinistic views teach original sin and see individuals as unable to overcome sin apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Most all Calvinists also teach imputed sin; some Arminians deny imputation of sin, and others believe that Christ's death has negated the effects of imputation.

The fact of original sin means that we cannot please God on our own. No matter how many "good deeds" we do, we still commit sin, and we still have the problem of a corrupt nature within. We must have Christ; we must be born again (John 3:3). God deals with the effects of original sin in our hearts through the process of sanctification. As John Piper puts it, "The problem of our moral

defilement and habitual sinning is solved by his purifying us by the work of Spirit" ("Adam, Christ, and Justification: Part IV," preached 8/20/2000).

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Question: "What is the protoevangelium?"

Answer: Genesis 3:15 says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This is known as the protoevangelium—the first gospel. The verse introduces two elements previously unknown in the Garden of Eden, elements that are the basis of Christianity—the curse on mankind because of Adam's sin and God's provision for a Savior from sin who would take the curse upon Himself.

Verse 14 makes it clear that God is speaking to the serpent whom He curses to crawl on his belly and "eat dust" all his days. In verse 15, God switches from condemning the serpent to the one who inhabited it, Satan. He curses Satan to be forever at war against mankind, depicted as the seed or offspring of the woman. The woman in question is in a general sense Eve herself, all of whose offspring would forever be harassed by Satan and his minions. Sin enters the human race at this point, and the ravages of sin and its consequences reverberate down to us today. We inherit sin and the sin nature from Adam, and we suffer for it continually. The enmity—the hostility and hatred—of men and demons, between whom the warfare still continues, begins here. Evil angels and also wicked men are called serpents, and even a brood of vipers (Matthew 3:7), and they war against the people of God, the seed of the church, who are hated and persecuted by them, and so it has been ever since this affair in the Garden.

More specifically, the offspring of the woman refers to Jesus Christ, who was born of a woman. The "enmity" or hostility and hatred spoken of here is between Satan and Christ. The seed of the serpent, evil men and demonic forces, struck at the heel of the Savior when Judas, the Pharisees, the rabble, and the Romans, conspired to condemn Jesus to be crucified. But His wound was not the final act. He rose the third day, having paid the price for the sin of all who would ever believe in Him. The ultimate victory was His, and He crushed the head of Satan, removing forever his rule over man. The power of Christ would destroy Satan and all his principalities and powers, confound all his schemes, and ruin all his works. The power of the cross would crush Satan's whole empire, strip him of his authority (particularly his power over death), and his tyranny over the bodies and souls of men. All this was done by the incarnate Christ when He suffered and died for the souls of men (Hebrews 2:14–15). Because of what Jesus did on the cross, he "crushed" the devil's head, defeating him forever. The protoevangelium shows us that God always had the plan of salvation in mind, and informed us of His plan as soon as sin entered the world. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).

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**Question: "Who was Cain's wife? Was Cain's wife his sister?"**

Answer: The Bible does not specifically say who Cain's wife was. The only possible answer was that Cain's wife was his sister or niece or great-niece, etc. The Bible does not say how old Cain was when he killed Abel (Genesis 4:8). Since they were both farmers, they were likely both full-grown adults, possibly with families of their own. Adam and Eve surely had given birth to more children than just Cain and Abel at the time Abel was killed. They definitely had many more children later (Genesis 5:4). The fact that Cain was scared for his own life after he killed Abel (Genesis 4:14) indicates that there were likely many other children and perhaps even grandchildren of Adam and Eve already living at that time. Cain's wife (Genesis 4:17) was a daughter or granddaughter of Adam and Eve.

Since Adam and Eve were the first (and only) human beings, their children would have no other choice than to intermarry. God did not forbid inter-family marriage until much later when there were enough people to make intermarriage unnecessary (Leviticus 18:6-18). The reason that incest today often results in genetic abnormalities is that when two people of similar genetics (i.e., a brother and sister) have children together, there is a high risk of their recessive characteristics becoming dominant. When people from different families have children, it is highly unlikely that both parents will carry the same recessive traits. The human genetic code has become increasingly "polluted" over the centuries as genetic defects are multiplied, amplified, and passed down from generation to generation. Adam and Eve did not have any genetic defects, and that enabled them and the first few generations of their descendants to have a far greater quality of health than we do now. Adam and Eve's children had few, if any, genetic defects. As a result, it was safe for them to intermarry.

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Question: "Why did God accept Abel's offering but reject Cain's offering? Why did Cain then kill Abel?"

Answer: The stories of the first act of worship in human history and the first murder are recorded in Genesis chapter 4. The act of worship—Cain’s and Abel’s offerings—follows the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience to God, and the entrance of sin into the human race. Death, the judgment pronounced upon them by God, soon made its entrance in the first family.

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, “in the course of time” brought offerings to the Lord (Genesis 4:3). Without doubt, they were doing this because God had revealed to them the necessity of a sacrifice. Some wonder how Cain and Abel were supposed to know *what* to sacrifice. The answer is that God must have instructed them concerning the details of acceptable worship, although those instructions are not included in the Genesis narrative.

Abel was a shepherd, and his offering to the Lord was “the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock” (Genesis 4:4, NLT). Cain was a farmer, and his offering was “some of his crops” (Genesis 4:4, NLT). The most evident difference between the two sacrifices is that Abel’s offering was an animal (blood) sacrifice, and Cain’s was a vegetable (bloodless) sacrifice. There may be an additional implication that, while Abel brought “the best portions,” Cain simply brought some of his ordinary crops. Scripture does not give an indication, however, that either of these differences factored into God’s acceptance of Abel and rejection of Cain.

What we know for sure is that “the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (Genesis 4:4–5). We also know that God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). There was something in Cain’s motivation and heart attitude, and possibly something in his performance, that made his offering unacceptable to God. It was obviously something that he was aware of and could remedy, since God tells him after the fact, “You will be accepted if you do what is right” (Genesis 4:7, NLT).

Abel, on the other hand, had the proper motivation, the proper procedure, and the proper relationship with God. That relationship was based on faith: “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did” (Hebrews 11:4). Ever since the beginning, people must come to God in faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), and faith is evidently what Cain lacked.

In Jude 1:11, we read, “They have taken the way of Cain,” a description that refers to lawless men. This may mean that they, like Cain, disobediendly devised their own ways of worship, and they did not come to God by faith. Cain’s offering, while acceptable in his own eyes, was not acceptable to the Lord. In some way, Cain had perverted God’s prescribed form of worship, and his heart was not right. He grew jealous of Abel, and he selfishly nursed his wounded pride. Rather than repent at God’s rebuke, Cain became angry, and later, in the field, he killed Abel and brought judgment upon himself (Genesis 4:8).

The apostle John gives us more insight into Cain’s heart: “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the

evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:12). Those who belong to the evil one will have evil actions, and those with evil actions will naturally hate those with righteous actions. The evil in Cain's heart was further revealed when the Lord asked him, "Where is your brother Abel?" to which Cain replied, "I don't know. . . . Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). In this response Cain tells a stone-cold lie and shows an amazing level of insolence.

When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He became the substitutionary atonement for our sins. The blood of Christ "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). Both Abel and Christ were slain by wicked men. But, as the theologian Erasmus commented, "The blood of Abel cried for vengeance; that of Christ for remission."

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Question: "Why did God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden?"

Answer: God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden to give Adam and Eve a choice to obey Him or disobey Him. Adam and Eve were free to do anything they wanted, except eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:16-17, "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" If God had not given Adam and Eve the choice, they would have essentially been robots, simply doing what they were programmed to do. God created Adam and Eve to be "free" beings, able to make decisions, able to choose between good and evil. In order for Adam and Eve to truly be free, they had to have a choice.

There was nothing essentially evil about the tree or the fruit of the tree. It is unlikely that the fruit, in and of itself, gave Adam and Eve any further knowledge. That is, the physical fruit may have contained some vitamin C and some beneficial fiber, but it was not *spiritually* nutritious. However, the act of disobedience was spiritually deleterious. That sin opened Adam's and Eve's eyes to evil. For the first time, they knew what it was to be evil, to feel shame, and to want to hide from God. Their sin of disobeying God brought corruption into their lives and into the world. Eating the fruit, as an act of disobedience against God, was what gave Adam and Eve the knowledge of evil—and the knowledge of their nakedness (Genesis 3:6–7).

God did not want Adam and Eve to sin. God knew ahead of time what the results of sin would be. God knew that Adam and Eve would sin and would thereby bring evil, suffering, and death into the world. Why, then, did God allow Satan to tempt Adam and Eve? God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve to force them to make the choice. Adam and Eve chose, of their own free will, to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit. The results—evil, sin, suffering, sickness, and death—have plagued the world ever since. Adam and Eve's decision results in every person being born with a sin nature, a tendency to sin. Adam and Eve's decision is what ultimately required Jesus Christ to die on the cross and shed His blood on our behalf. Through faith in Christ, we can be free from sin's consequences, and ultimately free from sin itself. May we echo the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:24-25, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

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Question: "Why did the people in Genesis live such long lives?"

Answer: It is somewhat of a mystery why people in early chapters of Genesis lived such long lives. There are many theories put forward by biblical scholars. The genealogy in Genesis 5 records the line of the godly descendants of Seth—the line that would eventually produce the Messiah. God possibly blessed this line with especially long life as a result of their godliness and obedience. While this is a possible explanation, the Bible nowhere specifically limits the long lifespans to the individuals mentioned in Genesis chapter 5. Further, other than Enoch, Genesis 5 does not identify any of the individuals as being especially godly. It is likely that everyone during that time lived several hundred years. Several factors may have contributed to this.

Something happened at the flood to shorten men's lifespans. Compare the lifespans before the flood (Genesis 5:1–32) with those after the flood (Genesis 11:10–32). Immediately after the flood, the ages decreased dramatically and then kept decreasing. A key may be in Genesis 6:3: "The Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.'" Many people see the reference to "a hundred and twenty years" as the new, divinely appointed limit on man's age. By the time of Moses (who lived 120 years), lifespans were much lower. After Moses, only one person is recorded as having lived past 120 (2 Chronicles 24:15).

One theory for why the people of Genesis lived such long lives is based on the idea that a canopy of water used to surround the earth. According to the canopy theory, the water "above the firmament" (Genesis 1:7, KJV) created a greenhouse effect and blocked much of the radiation that now hits the earth, resulting in ideal living conditions. At the time of the flood, the water canopy was poured out on the earth (Genesis 7:11), ending the ideal environment. The canopy theory has been abandoned by most creationists today.

Another consideration is that, in the first few generations after creation, the human genetic code had developed few defects. Adam and Eve were created perfect. They were surely highly resistant to disease and illness. Their descendants would have inherited these advantages, albeit to lesser degrees. Over time, as a result of sin, the human genetic code became increasingly corrupted, and human beings became more and more susceptible to death and disease. This would also have resulted in drastically reduced lifespans.

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