

Topic: Why are people good and bad? The Fall.

I need to know:

- How Christian beliefs about the relationship of God and humanity are revealed in Genesis 1 and 2.
- Explain the nature of the texts in Genesis 1, 2 and 3, giving at least two examples of how they have been interpreted by Christians and why.
- Examples for the impact of believing that people are made in the image of God and how being made in the image of God has influenced how people live and behave, whether Christian or not.
- Explain how the idea of the 'Fall' and how this is a significant part of the 'salvation narrative'.
- Explain the impact of Genesis 3 including how belief in the Fall has affected the treatment of women.
- Evaluate personally and impersonally how far this helps to make sense of the world.

Key Words and Definitions

- **Genesis:** Origins/ beginning. The first book in the Bible.
- **The Fall:** The transition of the first man and woman from a state of innocent obedience to God to a state of guilty disobedience.
- **Original sin:** The first sin when humanity disobeyed God's instruction.
- **Fallen:** Sinful humanity.
- **Transcendent:** God is outside of the world and beyond all things. He is not limited by the rules of nature.
- **Omnipotent:** All-powerful.
- **YHWH (Yahweh):** The name for the personal God of the Hebrew people.
- **Imago Dei:** Image of God.
- **Fundamentalist Christian:** A Christian who believes that the Bible contains the direct words of God and describes actual events that have occurred.
- **Liberal Christian** – A Christian who believes in God and the moral teachings of Christianity, but believe the Bible contains the words of people about God and therefore should not be taken literally.
- **Salvation:** To be saved. The idea that Jesus paid the ransom for human sin, which released humans from captivity and allowed them to be saved.



Imago Dei (Image of God)

Many Christians believe we are made in the image of God. In Genesis 1:26-30, God creates humans that are made 'in our image', the image of God. Christians interpret this idea of being made 'in the image of God' differently...

- Image and likeness are distinct ideas
- Refers to mental and spiritual faculties that humans share with their creator.
- Physical resemblance.
- Makes humans God's representatives on earth.
- Human capacity to relate to God.

The relationship between God and humanity

In Genesis 2, it focuses more on the relationship between God's relationship with humanity and the natural world. God puts limits on their authority over nature: for example, they are forbidden to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.



The Fall

The book of Genesis – the first book in the Bible – opens with God's creation and gift of a perfect world to humans. These two humans – Adam and Eve disobey and betray God's trust. As a consequence, they must leave God's perfect garden into a world where they are no longer protected from suffering. Read the story from Genesis 3 on the next page.

The Salvation Narrative

Genesis chapter 3 offers an account of how sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. For many Christians this means humanity is fallen and sinful. The fallen state gives an opportunity for forgiveness, salvation and redemption. Most Christians believe that through Jesus' crucifixion they can be saved. Jesus was a sacrifice that paid for human sin. This was a ransom for sin which released humans from captivity and allowed them to be saved.

Other scholars

Augustine: He believed that as a result of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, all humans are born sinful. The corruption and guilt of Adam and Eve are transmitted through the generations.

St Paul: In Romans 5:12-14, talks about sin entering the world through one man which many believe would be Adam. Some Christians may argue that this is mythological rather than historical view.

The French writer and philosopher **Blaise Pascal** (sixteenth century) wrote the 'glory and wretchedness of humanity'.

The Christian Feminist Theology

This is a movement that argues that God does not discriminate on the basis of gender. It stands up for the rights of women, aims to have equal rights in the home and looks for a less male version of God. Christian feminists may argue that women's voices need to be heard to gain a complete understanding of what it means to be human and a Christian.

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Genesis 1:26-31

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so ³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 2:5-25

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^[a] and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶but streams^[b] came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man^[c] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The 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 life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^[d] and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^[e] ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." ¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam^[f] no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs^[g] and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^[h] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and felt no shame.

Genesis 3 — The Fall

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[a] and hers; he will crush^[b] your head, and you will strike his heel. ¹⁶To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

¹⁷To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²²And the LORD God said, "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." ²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side^[a] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.