

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1** I WILL
- 2** HAS GOD SAID?
- 3** WHERE ARE YOU?
- 4** DEATH

1 I WILL

Creation ended with God's stamp of approval. He pronounced it *very good*. All was in order. There was no pain, no disease, no struggle for the survival of the fittest, no discord, and above all—no death. Between God and man there was a unique relationship, a fellowship, a friendship. Eden was the perfect place to live. Everything was very good.

But today we have pain and disease and only the fittest survive. At times we wish that verbal discord was our only problem. Instead, at any given time, the tyranny of war dominates in many parts of the globe. Life seems rife with bullies, the big man picking on the little man. Abuse of power, whether in a family or a government, nags society. Everything runs down, breaks down or wears out. From every corner of the animal kingdom to all mankind, life involves perpetual struggle. The world is *not a very good place*. What happened?

LUCIFER

It all goes back to the garden of Eden. The Scripture says of Lucifer ...

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you ...

Ezekiel 28:13

Lucifer, you will remember, was the most powerful spirit God created. His name means *morning star*. He belonged to the angelic order called *cherubim* and was selected by God for special responsibilities that took him into God's presence.

You were anointed as a guardian ... You were on the holy mount of God ...

Ezekiel 28:14

Lucifer was perfect. He is described as having incredible beauty and wisdom.

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created ...

Ezekiel 28:15

You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezekiel 28:12

Although Lucifer was the most powerful angel, there is no direct indication that he ruled the other spirit beings.

PRIDE

When the next event in history occurred is open to debate. It probably took place sometime soon after creation was completed. There may be a difference of opinion over *when*, but *what* happened is very clear. The Bible says Lucifer became proud. His beauty and power *went to his head*, so to speak. With pride came ambition. Five times Lucifer said, “*I will*.” A whole study could be done on these *I will*’s, but, in brief, it’s enough to say that Lucifer wanted to stage a celestial revolt.

*O morning star, son of the dawn ... You said in your heart,
 “I will ascend to heaven;
 I will raise my throne above the stars [or angels] of God;
 I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the
 utmost heights of the sacred mountain.
 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
 I will make myself like the *Most High.”* Isaiah 14:12-14

Not only did Lucifer want to take over heaven, but he was resolved to be like the Most High. Lucifer was determined to lead a coup d’état to replace God with HIMSELF. Then HE would be the leader of all the angels and the universe would be HIS to rule. Lucifer’s heart was bursting with prideful ambition.

*The Most High is one of God’s names.

The only loophole in Lucifer’s plan was that God knew all about it. God is *all-knowing* and Lucifer’s thoughts did not escape him. The Bible says that God hates pride. It’s the first on the list of things he detests.

These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look ... Proverbs 6:16,17 NKJV

Lucifer was deliberately going contrary to God’s plan for him. We must remember that God did not create angels as robots. They were created with a will. Their choice to serve was an expression of willing submission to the sovereign God. But Lucifer became dissatisfied with being an angel. He had something bigger and better in mind. He became proud and chose to rebel. Lucifer despised both his design and his Designer. The dictionary says that to despise means: *to regard with contempt; to look down upon; to dislike intensely; loathe*.

God called Lucifer’s attitude *sin*.

JUDGMENT

Because God is perfect, he could not tolerate Lucifer's sin as if it did not matter. *Perfection, by its very nature, demands the absence of imperfection.* We will see this truth repeatedly as we progress through the Writings of the Prophets.

God who is right (*righteous*), can have no part with wrong.
God's *holiness* leaves no room for sin.

God who is *sinless*, cannot tolerate sin in his presence.

This is a reality as certain as any physical law that governs the universe. God's response to Lucifer's sin was immediate. He expelled him from his position in Heaven.

...you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub... Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth...

Ezekiel 28:16,17

Lucifer did not go without a battle. He still was a very strong being and, on top of that, many other angels followed him. The Scripture gives some precise details of what happened. To help you understand the account, I have tied the context together. As you read, you will see that any confusion about *whom* this may be speaking of, is removed in the latter parts of the text.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red (dragon...) (His tail)swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth...

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the (dragon), and the (dragon)and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

The great (dragon) was hurled down—that ancient serpent (called the devil, or Satan,) who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.¹

Revelation 12:3-9

DEVIL, SATAN, DEMONS

The text indicates that one-third of the angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion. Lucifer became known as the *Devil* or *Satan*. Just as God's names describe his attributes, so Lucifer's names

reveal his character. Satan means *adversary* or *enemy*; Devil means *false accuser* or *slanderer*. The rebellious angels that followed Satan were now called *demons* or *evil spirits*.

LAKE OF FIRE

When God cast the Devil and his demons from Heaven, it was only the first phase in judging these rebellious spirits. The Scripture says that God has a place of final punishment, an ...

... eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41

This location is commonly referred to as *the Lake of Fire*. Often cartoons are drawn depicting Satan and his demons standing waist-deep in flames conniving and plotting mischief. However, the Word of God tells us that Satan is not yet there. He was cast out of heaven, but not into the Lake of Fire. Later, after many events involving him and his demons, Satan will be forever confined to this place of punishment. Referring to this future time, the Scripture says ...

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire... And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10 NKJV

WAR

Although God had expelled Satan and his demon followers from his presence, they retained their immense power and intellect. Now they were enemies of the God Most High. It would be all-out war. Satan would be against everything good, everything that God planned to do, and everything that God stood for. Satan would fight dirty.

As to the exact events that occurred right after Satan's rebellion, we can only speculate. You can almost see the Devil, consumed with jealousy and hatred, casting his shifty eyes around the universe looking for a weak link in God's armor.

There was absolutely none!

There must be some way to get even with God.

Satan's eyes settled on the earth ... and he saw man.

Slowly—he smirked.

2 HAS GOD SAID?

When God created man, he didn't just place him on earth and walk away. The Holy Scripture says that God visited Adam and Eve in the garden and, in the offhand way it's mentioned, one can assume that this was a regular event. Adam and Eve were on intimate terms with their Creator-Owner, and God took care of their every need.

THE DECEIVER

But then Satan slinked into the garden. He did not arrive with a blast of trumpets, announcing who he was and what he was about. Satan is much too subtle for that. The Scripture tells us that Satan is the great deceiver—the devil. He is incapable of telling uncorrupted truth.

...the devil...was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44

The word *lie* in the original Greek text is *pseudos*—a conscious and intentional falsehood. We use the word ourselves. It implies *imitation*.

Several years ago, I was reading an article on Satan in a popular news magazine. He was illustrated as having a red body with horns on his head, a pointed tail and carrying a pitchfork. The overall rendering was hideous. According to the Bible, that picture is deceptive to the extreme. The Scripture says that...

...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14

He comes in all his eye-catching splendor mimicking God as closely as he can. A better picture of the Devil might have been a shining angel or a smooth-talking man dressed in the finest religious robe. Satan loves religion. He closely imitates the truth, but he cannot be trusted, because by his very nature he is an impostor—a counterfeit, a teller of deliberate falsehoods.

I am sure Satan was quite happy with the *red suit, pitchfork-in-hand* drawing. It's easier to deceive people if they're

looking in the wrong direction for the wrong thing. He would also have been pleased with other statements in the magazine—*“theologians have all but scratched *Old Scratch.”* The implication was that *no one believes in that guy anymore!* What better way to deceive than for the Devil to have theologians telling people that he is a myth!

*This is an idiom used for the Devil with no biblical connections.

DECEPTION

So Satan arrived in the garden of Eden with all the subtlety he could muster. No trumpets, no fanfare. He came in the embodiment of a snake, a reptile that is often identified with the Devil. The Scripture records several incidents of evil spirits living inside both humans and animals, speaking through them or causing them to act abnormally. On this occasion Satan spoke through the reptile. He addressed Eve.

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?’”

Genesis 3:1

The fact that a snake could speak did not seem to disturb Eve. No doubt every day she discovered a new and fascinating part of God’s creation. Perhaps she thought this was just another one of those new creatures. We don’t really know.

DOUBT

Whatever the case, it is interesting that Satan approached Eve with a question about God. He planted something in her mind that she had never considered—*the creature can question the Creator*. The question came in a slightly condescending tone, “Did God really say...?”

“I mean, *really*—did God *really* say that?”

With his *you’ve got to be kidding* approach, Satan implied that man was rather simple-minded or naive to accept the Lord’s word at face value.

“Perhaps God is holding back something good from you. I mean, how do you know? Maybe the Lord isn’t as good and loving as he makes himself out to be.”

There was a hint that God wasn't being completely honest, not entirely forthright. Satan passed himself off as being concerned for man, looking out for man's best interests. The Devil counterfeited God's goodness. His twisted logic questioned God's Word and in questioning he planted doubt.

In addition, Satan grossly overstated God's prohibition. God had NOT forbidden eating from *every* tree. He had only mentioned *one* tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the overstatement produced the desired reaction.

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but 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.'" Genesis 3:2,3

Eve tried to defend God, even though the Lord does not need to be defended. In her zeal she added to God's command. God had told man that he should not *eat* of the tree, but he had never said they could not *touch* it. When you *add* to God's Word you always *take away* something from it. Eve made God out to be more demanding than he really was, and in the process marred God's character. Getting people to add or subtract their own ideas from the Word of God is the sort of math Satan specializes in. The addition was *oh so little*, but it was all that Satan needed. A crack had appeared in the dike.

DENIAL

*"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil."*

Genesis 3:4,5

Not content with questioning God's word, Satan outright denied it. He blatantly called God a liar. He suggested that the reason the tree was forbidden was because God feared Adam and Eve would learn too much. Cleverly, Satan mixed truth with error. It was true that their eyes would be opened and they would know good and evil, but it was false to imply that they would be like God with all his attributes. It was also erroneous to state that they would not die. Satan was deliberately and knowingly lying. Though he knew by experience the consequence of going against God's word, he cruelly enticed man to partake of his own destruction.

DISOBEDIENCE

When 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. Genesis 3:6

Satan had succeeded. You can almost hear his howl of laughter echoing through the garden. As usual, Satan did not hang around to help pick up the pieces. He never does. The Scripture says...

...the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

The Devil leaves the bones—picked clean. He may come across as a great provider—providing pleasure, fun, a good time—but it's only temporary and often very empty. In reality, Satan never gives. If he imparts anything, it's only gut-wrenching heartache. He's a malicious playmate, a cruel companion.

WHAT ABOUT EVIL SPIRITS, JINN AND BLACK MAGIC?

All around the world, people have devised ways to overcome the powers of evil spirits. Some wear charms or amulets. Many place fetishes in their homes, drink potions or visit their spiritual guides. Others invoke the name of God or use special prayer formulas before entering a house or a car, hoping to be protected from accidents. Still others offer sacrifices to "protector spirits" in an attempt to ward off evil.

All these ideas are from men and not from God. The Scripture teaches us that Satan and his demons can perform certain kinds of miracles, but though *powerful*, evil spirits are not *all-powerful*. We do not need to live in fear of the spirit world if we listen to God, who is infinitely more powerful than all the evil spirits and black magic combined.

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Ephesians 6:10,16

Over the years some have blamed the woman for this outright disobedience against God's command. However throughout Eve's entire conversation with Satan, it seems that her husband was with her. Adam could have prevented his wife from eating the fruit, and certainly did not have to eat the fruit himself. But they *both* ate.

What Adam and Eve did is similar to children playing in the street against their mother's instructions. The disobedient youngsters think they know *better than mom* what is safe and fun. They are showing that they don't entirely trust their mother's knowledge of safety. They are disregarding her authority. In the same way, Adam and Eve sinned when they felt they knew *better than God* what was good for them. Their choice made a statement. They didn't quite trust their Creator—they weren't sure God was telling the truth.

Adam and Eve had all the reasons in the world to tell the Devil that HE was the liar, but they chose to believe Satan instead of God. They disobeyed God's clear instructions, and joined the Devil's rebellious ranks. The Scripture says:

<i>Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.</i> James 4:4	*The world as influenced by Satan.
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That's the natural outcome of choosing sides. Adam and Eve had abandoned their friendship with God and joined Satan. They had rejected a perfect world to experiment with a forbidden one.

A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

But such a choice has ramifications. As we saw before, *a broken law has consequences*. The Scripture teaches us that sin's effects are very costly. Adam and Eve's defiant choice to follow Satan's lies opened a vast gulf in the relationship between God and man. A perfect God could not allow mixed loyalties, half friendships or partial betrayals. Unless there was trust, no relationship could exist. The friendship was over.

Therefore God gave them ... the sinful desires of their hearts ...

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things [Satan] rather than the Creator—who is forever praised.²

Romans 1:24,25

FIG LEAVES

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked...


Genesis 3:7

Adam and Eve immediately sensed that something was wrong. They had feelings they had never experienced before—very uncomfortable ones—called guilt and shame. They were devastated. God’s Word says they were afraid and for the first time they realized they were naked. Casting their eyes around for a solution...

...they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Genesis 3:7

Perhaps they thought that if they fixed up their *outward appearance*, God would never notice that things had changed on the *inside*. They would just gloss things over and pretend that everything was okay. It was man’s first attempt to make things right in a world gone wrong.

There was only one problem with the fig leaf solution: it didn’t work. Having a good outward appearance did not remedy the inner reality. Perfection was gone. Feelings of guilt churned within. The condemnation remained. 

IS GOD PICKY?

Some may say, “But the sin was over such a little thing—just a bite of fruit!” True. God had not put a big stumbling block in man’s path. Indeed, it was no stumbling block at all. There were dozens of trees from which Adam and Eve could have freely eaten. This was the smallest of possible tests, but it defined man as being human—as having a free will.

Suppose a young lady had a fiancée who seemed to be the nicest person on earth. He showed real love for her—going out of his way to do special things for her, comforting her when she hurt, sharing in her humor, telling her he loved her. Then she found out he had no choice—that he was programmed to be *loving*... well, it would be a terrible disappointment. It would all seem so artificial, so meaningless, so empty. And it would be.

Then 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.

Genesis 3:7,8

Only guilty people run and hide—you don't hide from a friend. A barrier, a chasm now existed between God and man. The friendship was over.

3 WHERE ARE YOU?

Satan had deceived Adam and Eve into thinking that they could be equal with God. That was exactly what the Devil had craved for himself. But God hadn't created man to be governed by his own instincts or ideas. The important thing was to do what God said, and HE had said ...

"...you must not eat from the tree ...for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Genesis 2:17

They had eaten, and in an instant everything had changed. It happened just as God said. His word had not altered. It never does.

Man was given a choice, a simple one, which was very easy to keep. But this one choice made a huge difference. Having this choice:

to eat or not to eat
to obey or disobey
to love or not to love

... defined man as human.

Man was not a robot. Man was able to love by his own free choice. Adam and Eve's love for each other was real, not artificial. And their initial obedience and love for God was genuine as well.

Although the test itself may have seemed a small concern, it is a serious thing to disobey the Lord in even the smallest of matters. The Bible says that God is perfect—he is holy and righteous—he cannot tolerate even the least of sins. It states explicitly that to disobey is wrong. It is sin.

Then 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.

Genesis 3:8

It's not recorded what Adam and Eve were thinking as they crouched out of sight in the shrubbery of the garden, listening to the Lord God approaching—but if you have ever done something wrong while your parents were gone, and then you see them arriving home... well, you get the idea. But it wasn't their parents Adam and Eve had offended. Rather, they had disobeyed the word of the Lord of the universe, the Holy Sovereign God. What would their Creator-Owner say? What would an almighty, all-powerful God do?

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:9 NKJV

Adam and Eve poked their heads out, their faces masked with innocence. Ahh, are you looking for us? Adam spoke...

"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Genesis 3:10

He spoke, but he erred. Like a boy playing hooky from school and then writing his own absentee note signed, "my mom," Adam overlooked the fact that he had never felt fear before, and that his nakedness had never bothered him. God said...

"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Genesis 3:11

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS!

Why was God asking all these questions? Did not an all-knowing God know *where* Adam and Eve were hiding? And would not God know *why* they were feeling naked? Was the Lord really so limited that he had to ask the culprits whether they had eaten of the forbidden fruit? The truth of the matter was that God knew *exactly* what had occurred—but he was asking questions to help Adam and Eve sort out in *their* minds precisely what had happened. They had disobeyed the Lord! *They had trusted Satan instead of God.*

As we go through the Scripture we will see that God often questions man to help him see things clearly.

GOD’S FAULT

The Lord’s questions also gave Adam and Eve an opportunity to acknowledge their sin on their own.

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” *Genesis 3:12*

Uh-oh! Adam admitted to eating the fruit—sort of—but only because *that woman* God created gave him the fruit. Adam was a victim!

“It was all God’s fault.”

“If God hadn’t created the woman ... then the woman wouldn’t have given me the fruit, and then I wouldn’t have eaten.” Well, you can see it very clearly. It was God’s fault after all!

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” *Genesis 3:13*

Aha! So now the truth was out. Neither of them were to blame. It was the snake’s fault. Eve was a victim too. And, of course, if God hadn’t created snakes ... then she wouldn’t have sinned either. God had messed up!

God never quizzed the snake. Some comic has said the snake had *no leg to stand on* anyway. The truth of the matter was that both Adam and Eve had chosen to sin of their own accord. God had given them an opportunity to own up, and they had blown it—they had refused to admit their guilt.

What they said.	What they should have said.
<p>Adam: <i>The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”</i></p> <p>Eve: <i>The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”</i></p>	<p><i>“God I have failed you miserably. I have disobeyed your clear directions to not eat of the fruit. I have sinned. Please forgive me.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lord God, I too have sinned by disobeying your command. I want to see our relationship restored to what it was. Please tell me how.”</i></p>
Victim mentality Blames others	Responsible for own actions Seeks ways to restoration

Adam and Eve had *done* the wrong thing. Now they had *said* the wrong thing. Yet God did not annihilate them. If we had been the judge, jury and executioner, we would have given the thumbs down, and squished them both. But God shows compassion far beyond anything we can imagine.

A PROMISE

This initial sin of man had severe consequences on the rest of mankind. As we will see, Adam and Eve were acting on behalf of the whole human race. Their sin brought a curse, but God in his love also gave a promise.

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this ... 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."

Genesis 3:14,15

These sentences deserve a closer examination. God was not talking about women and snakes having an aversion for each other. The promise had two facets:

The Devil and his followers	The Woman and her male offspring
<i>So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this ... I will put enmity between you ... between your offspring ... your head, and you will <u>strike</u></i>	<i>and the woman, and... and hers [offspring]; ... he will <u>crush</u>... his heel."</i>

The Lord God was saying that he would some day deliver man from Satan. There would be a male child, born of the woman, who would *crush* Satan's head—a fatal wound. True, Satan would also hurt the child, but only with a *strike* at the heel—a temporary injury that would heal.

This was the first of many promises to come about the future offspring of Eve. This male child would be known as *THE ANOINTED ONE*, because of the special task given to him by God. The task God had in mind for this *chosen one* was to

deliver or *save* mankind from the consequences of sin and the power of Satan. For this reason, he would also be known as *THE PROMISED DELIVERER*. This must have been very good news to Adam and Eve.

This promise of a *DELIVERER* added another name to the list of terms that reveal God's character. He would be known as the *one who saves* or *THE SAVIOR*.

*... there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a **Savior**; There is none except Me. "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other."*

Isaiah 45:21,22 NASB

A CURSE

As we saw before, sin has its consequences. It always does. Just as defying the law of gravity brings broken bones, so violating God's word has ramifications. God could not condone Adam and Eve's sin. He could not say, "*Oh forget it,*" or, "*You couldn't help it. We'll pretend it never happened,*" or, "*It was just ONE little sin.*" No. The damage was done. Adam and Eve were guilty. One sin brought judgment. One sin brought fear and shame. One sin brought more sin. The earth and everything in it suffered from the curse. The animals, the sea, the bird life, even the very ground was affected. No longer was creation perfect. As a result of the curse, the Scripture says...

... the whole creation groans and labors ... *Romans 8:22 NKJV*

Man would enter the world through the pain of childbirth and leave it by the agonies of death. While on this planet, life would be full of injustice, sweat and misery. God told Adam...

By 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.

Genesis 3:19

The thorns and thistles of life, whether real or symbolic, would make man's existence one of pain and struggling to survive. Man had set off a chain reaction of sorrow. But the most bitter consequence of man's sin was the very thing that God had warned them about. It was death.

4 DEATH

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."

Genesis 2:16-17

In a very real sense, when Adam and Eve chose to defy God's warning, they tested God to see if he would keep his word. *Did God really mean what he said? Would man die? Or was God just talking, uttering empty threats—bombast without teeth?* The Scripture's reply is quite emphatic:

... it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law [or God's Word] to fail.

Luke 16:17 NASB

We don't like talking about death. It's a taboo subject. I have traveled all over the world visiting some of the most remote people groups on the planet and I have never found a society that enjoyed death. I have stood at many open graves, some in churchyards, some in jungles, but they all shared one common denominator—grief. It is burnt into the human psyche with the branding iron of reality that death means one thing—separation. The loved one has slipped out of our presence never to return. The sense of loss and separation we feel at that time, actually brings us very close to the meaning Scripture gives the word. In the Word of God, death implies some sort of *separation*. It does *not* mean annihilation or non-existence.

It is also helpful to understand that death cannot be disassociated from its origin—it came about because of sin. The Scripture speaks of it as a reward or payment for wrongdoing. Just as a person is paid wages for working, so ...

... the wages of sin is death ...

Romans 6:23

The Scripture speaks about *death* in a number of different ways. We will look at three.

1. Death of the Body (Separation of man's spirit from his body)

Physical death is not hard for us to grasp. We are only too well acquainted with it. But we need to understand something more as it relates to Adam and Eve.

When you cut a leafy branch off a tree, the leaves don't instantly wither and look dead. In the same way, when God told Adam "*for when you eat of it you will surely die*," God did not mean that Adam would drop dead as soon as he ate the fruit. Rather, God meant that Adam would be cut off from his source of life, and then, just like a branch, his body would eventually wear out and stop functioning. The body would ...

... die and return to the dust.

Psalms 104:29

Though the body dies, the spirit goes on living. The Word of God says the spirit is immortal.

2. Death to a Relationship (Separation of man's spirit from God)

We have already seen that Adam and Eve's disobedience ended their close friendship with the Lord. But the consequences went even further. Adam and Eve's children, and their children's children—indeed all mankind to this day—have been born into this world separated from God.

The relationship between God and man is so thoroughly finished, so profound, so complete, that even though we live physically, God views all mankind as being ...

... dead in your transgressions and sins.

Ephesians 2:1

There's a dynamic here that we must not miss. Let me illustrate.

I have spent a significant portion of my life either traveling or living in tropical countries. For a time, my wife and I lived in a house set on low stilts. On one occasion, a very large rat chose to crawl into the narrow space under our house and die. Unfortunately, the vermin expired right under our little bedroom. Initially, we thought we had no option but to let the body decay into oblivion. The carcass rotting in the hot, humid climate sent a stupefying odor into our bedroom, giving new meaning to the word *foul*. The rat smelled so rank that my wife and I found it impossible to sleep. We were forced to retreat to another part of the house. Sleeping in close proximity to that evil-smelling carcass was not normal or natural to us. We fled.

The next morning, my son, Andrew, volunteered to remedy the situation. He located a long stick, and reaching deep into

the crawl space under the house, slowly worked the dead rat towards the opening. As it got close, Andrew pulled back in revulsion, grimaced and said, “Dad! The beast is full of maggots.” Oh gag! Andrew took a plastic bag and sticking it over his hand reached far under the house. Grabbing the miserable creature by its tail, he pulled the worm-infested cadaver out into the open. Holding the offending remains far from his body, he ran towards the jungle that bordered our property and with a mighty swing flung the rat far from his presence.

If that rat had been alive and able to sense Andrew’s emotions, he would have been aware that Andrew was highly displeased with him—angry. And if that rat could have read Andrew’s thoughts as he was flung far into the woods, he would have heard him say, “Get out of here!” And if the rat could have spoken and said, “For how long?” Andrew would have answered, “Forever!”

The dead rat actually illustrates three different ways God feels about sin. First, he is angry. This is not a wrath full of malice or meanness. God is not a hothead who has lost his temper. Rather, it is a reflection of God’s pure, perfect character. It might best be understood as a type of *righteous indignation*. Just as we were perturbed with the rotten rat, so the Lord is angry about sin. *It grieves him*. God created the world to be a delightful place to live in, but sin has changed much of it into hard work. Every time we do an unpleasant job, it’s a reminder that sin has ravaged God’s creation. Pain and suffering, sorrow and grief, filth and stench, bullies and drunkenness, earthquakes and war—all were not part of God’s original creation. Sin has been like a drop of cyanide on a lavish, scrumptious meal—it didn’t take much but it ruined it all. Sin has been like a bee sting to the face—it’s a small thing, but it affects your whole being. *Sin went beyond breaking the law; it was an affront to God’s entire character*. It’s for this reason that the Scripture says...

... God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 5:6

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God when they ignored the Lord’s clear instructions. Disobedience against God is a hallmark of sin. The Scripture says...

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men ... Romans 1:18

We label sin as fun or evil, harmless or sadistic, big or small. The Scripture does recognize certain differences when it comes to consequences, but with God, all sin is a stench in his holy nostrils. It's cyanide in his feast.

Secondly, just as the rat drove my wife and me to sleep in another room, and just as Andrew flung that revolting carcass out of his presence, so God has removed himself from sinful man. The Scripture says ...

...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you ... Isaiah 59:2

Sometimes I've heard folk say that God seems distant, far away. Well, the Scripture does say that man IS *estranged* from his Creator.

...you were alienated from God ... Colossians 1:21

Holiness demands the absence of sin. If sinful man were to enter into the radiant purity of God's presence, it would be like a host of resurrected, rotten rats traipsing into my mother-in-law's living room, begriming its freshly cleaned, ivory-colored carpet. Nothing they stepped on would be considered pure again. The whole place would be corrupted. In the same way, a perfect God cannot allow sin in his presence, for ...

[His] eyes are too pure to look on evil; [he] cannot tolerate wrong. Habakkuk 1:13

This brings us to the third point that the dead rat illustrates. Just how long does God feel we should be separated from him? The answer is pretty clear. *Forever!* Sin has infinite and eternal ramifications. Just like we would not want to live with the rotten rat next week, or at any time, God will never allow sin to dwell in his presence.

This is difficult news but keep reading. Good news is coming. For now, though, it is important to understand that when the Holy Scriptures speak of man's relationship with God as being finished, it speaks with intensity. It is truly cut off—it's dead.

3. Death to a Future Joy—The Second Death

(Separation of man's spirit from God forever)

When a young couple is engaged, they look forward with delight and anticipation to all the future joys of marriage. They browse house designs, discuss where to live and what they will do together. But if the engagement goes sour and the relationship ends, all their prospective plans die too.

The Scripture tells us that God is preparing a wonderful home for man after death. It's called *Heaven*. Heaven is an incredible place, designed by God for man's future joy. Eternal life is part of the plan. Just being free of sin, suffering and death will be wonderful.

But just as there is eternal life, so there is **eternal death**. When the Bible uses the word *death*, by implication it sometimes refers to the *death of God's original plan* for mankind. This death is also called *the second death*, probably because it occurs after physical death. This *second death* is reserved for those who will not be in Heaven. Instead, the Scripture says they will go to the *Lake of Fire*, an appalling place that God created specifically for punishing Satan and his demons.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged...

The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

The Bible speaks of being ^a*thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur*, and of being ^b*tormented day and night forever and ever*. It will be a place of ^csorrow, devoid of happiness. The Scriptures talk of ^dworms (literally maggots), of an intense ^edarkness, of people weeping and gnashing their teeth in extreme anguish, of being parched with ^fthirst, and of remembering this life and of wishing for no one to join

^a Rev. 19:20
Though the physical body dies, the spirit continues to live.

^b Rev. 20:10

^c Psalms 116:3

^d Mark 9:48

^e Matthew 8:12;
22:13; 25:30

^f Luke 16:24

them. It's a place of lonely suffering, not some buddy-buddy celebration of debauchery.

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts [or witchcraft], the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:8

Later in the book, we will learn more about man's destiny.

A SIN NATURE

Sin and death now reigned in Adam's bloodline, seemingly passed on through the generations by the father. Like begets like. Apples reproduce apples, cats reproduce cats, sinful man reproduces sinful man.

Therefore, 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

Because of Adam's sin, all his offspring would inherit his sin nature. And because he died, all his offspring would die.³

We often connect a list of crimes with the word sinner, but the Scripture says it is more than that. Man has a *sin nature*, often called *Adam's nature*. This nature is a *condition* or *state of being*. For example, the doctor has told a friend of mine that he has a heart condition. That *condition* reveals itself with *symptoms*. When he climbs the stairs, he huffs and puffs and his face changes color. On occasion, he pops a nitroglycerin tablet under his tongue. In the same sense, we can say that every human has a *condition*, called the sin nature. The *symptoms* of that *condition* are acts of sin.

AN HONEST GOD

If all this talk of sin and death seems morbid, it should be a reminder to us that God doesn't make unpleasant subjects pretty. He tells it like it is. Sin and death are two things all humans have in common, and we need to know what the Scripture says about them. To be told the truth is what one would expect from a perfect God.

ARE WE BORN WITH A PURE NATURE?

It has become popular to believe and teach that children are born into the world as perfect infants, free of all sin. But what do the Scriptures teach? Are we really born with pure natures?

Not according to a prophet called *David*, who wrote significant portions of Scripture ...

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51:5

Not according to a prophet named *Job*, whose book is found in God's Word ...

Who can bring what is pure from the impure? Not one!

Job 14:4

Not according to our own life experiences.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

James 4:1

We have to ask ourselves some tough questions. Did our parents have to teach us to lie and disobey, to be selfish and quarrelsome? No. Our human nature does not need to be taught how to sin. We do such things naturally.

Sin is like a contagious disease. The Scripture says that Adam's sin nature (along with all its symptoms and consequences) has spread to us all.

The Wolof people of Senegal, West Africa have several proverbs that illustrate this basic truth.

- ❖ An epidemic does not confine itself to the one who caused it.
- ❖ The leaping gazelle does not produce burrowing offspring.
- ❖ A rat doesn't beget that which doesn't dig.
- ❖ Even if a log soaks a long time in water, it will never become a crocodile.

Because Adam sinned, all of his children have inherited his sin nature.

WHAT HAVE GENETICISTS FOUND?

"It makes us realize that all human beings, despite differences in external appearances, are really members of a single entity that's had a very recent origin in one place. There is a kind of biological brotherhood that's much more profound than we ever realized." So said Stephen Jay Gould, the Harvard paleontologist and essayist in a NEWSWEEK 1988 cover article entitled, *"The Search for Adam and Eve."*⁴

According to the article, scientists *"...trained in molecular biology ... looked at an international assortment of genes and picked up a trail of DNA that led them to a single woman from whom we all descended."* ... *"There weren't even telltale distinctions between races."*

The Scripture says:

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. Genesis 3:20

Then in 1995, TIME⁵ had a brief article saying there was scientific evidence that *"...there was an ancestral 'Adam,' whose genetic material on the chromosome is common to every man now on earth."*

The Scripture says:

From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth... Acts 17:26

These studies of human DNA conclude that we all have *one man* and *one woman* in our ancestry. Some scientists agree; others disagree. Even those who agree are quick to point out that this may not be the biblical Adam and Eve. They may not have even lived together. Whatever the case, it's interesting to note that the findings are consistent with the Word of God.

This and other discoveries of modern molecular biology confirm what the Scripture has indicated for millennia, that we are all very closely related.