

Painting Eden

Whom I Have
Believed



They were perfect. Utterly pristine. No deformities, no blemishes, no mental or emotional weaknesses. They were without sin. No dishonesty, no guile, no craftiness or secret motives. They were clean before their Maker, and thus free to enjoy His company. Their life was one of unfettered bliss. No worries. No anxieties. No fear.

The man and woman understood who they were—and what they were not. They understood that the Maker was God—and that they were not. Their relationship with Him was based on trust and honesty: they trusted Him, and He was honest with them. Everything was open and free.

But one day the man and woman chose not to believe God. They chose, instead, to believe a lie put forth by a stranger.

Both the serpent and its master were God's creatures as well, so the test was from Him. Just as Abraham's faith in God had to be tested on Mount Moriah, and just as Jesus had to be tested before fulfilling His call on earth, man's spiritual development required a test of his trust in the Maker. But unlike the steadfast Jesus and the trusting Abraham, the first man failed the test.

In the test God gave them every chance to make the right choice. Satan represented himself as a beast, something over which the man and woman already knew they held dominion; the beast spoke, so they should have known something wasn't right; and Satan, through the serpent, presented an argument at odds with what the man and woman had been told by the Maker. So, though the test was ordained by Him, God gave them every possible advantage. They were without excuse.

And still they failed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6)

the Journey
a scrapbook of life in Christ

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Though their world was perfect, needing nothing to be added or changed, the serpent touched a nerve and tickled their vanity. He held out the honey of their becoming God-like, and the first couple believed the lie. They made a conscious choice to believe a lie, when they already knew the truth.

A Foundation of Deceit

Modern man—more specifically, the modern believer in Christ—is still listening to lies. We are surrounded by them. Indeed, there are days when it seems that all of civilization itself is built upon the foundation of falsehoods and deceit.

Why is it so many people readily accept a lie before the truth? Almost as if they *want* to be fooled. Our media and advertising are replete with falsehoods and misrepresentations that have become bland in their ubiquitousness; our courts are filled with those caught with the gun still smoking in their hand who blithely claim their innocence. In point of fact, the system itself seems to be designed around this deceit, where jurisprudence virtually demands a claim of innocence regardless the crime or guilt-level of the defendant. The impoverished adamantly remain on welfare because more money can be made by not working, and politicians know that honesty and candor will surely result in someone else being elected to take their place.

An Ancient Pattern

The worst liar, of course, is the father of lies.

[Jesus said,] "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

Every day Satan plies us with tempting alternatives to the One Truth; he bends over backward, going to exorbitant lengths to cajole us away from the quiet, steady truth of Jesus. The real mystery in all this may be why so many Christians actually

believe Satan's lies. But then, when we do, we are only following the pattern set by our original father, Adam. He knew everything we know—and more. But he still bought the lie.

We come, O Christ, to Thee,
True Son of God and man,
By Whom all things consist,
In Whom all life began:
In Thee alone we live and move,
And have our being in Thy love.

Thou art the Way to God,
Thy blood our ransom paid;
In Thee we face our Judge
And Maker unafraid.
Before the throne absolved we stand,
Thy love has met Thy law's demand.

Thou art the living Truth!
All wisdom dwells in Thee,
Thou Source of every skill,
Eternal Verity!
Thou great I Am! In Thee we rest,
True answer to our every quest.

Thou only art true Life,
To know Thee is to live
The more abundant life
That earth can never give:
O risen Lord! We live in Thee,
And Thou in us eternally.

We worship Thee, Lord Christ,
Our Saviour and our King,
To Thee our youth and strength
Adoringly we bring:
So fill our hearts, that men may see
Thy life in us, and turn to Thee.
(E. Margaret Clarkson)

Being flesh, we cannot avoid temptation. Satan is good at his trade, and there are days when we forget that we carry within us a superior power. So we give in. We believe the lie that what he has to offer is somehow better than what we already have.

Being flesh, about all we can do—on a human level, beyond the Spirit's power—is keep reminding ourselves of the truth. Scripture holds it all, and in one epochal statement Jesus said all we really need to remember:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6)

I Am

No lie of Satan's can limit who Jesus is. If we could move through time, to travel through the echoes of things that have already taken place, Jesus would be there; to visit the ancients, to shake hands with Khafre and Homer and Anthony, Jesus would be there. If we could, likewise, travel forward through time, through moments and dreams that have yet to transpire, Jesus would be there. So why do we search for Him here, when his stride spans eternity on either side? Where is Jesus? He is always, and forever, now.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

The Way

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

The Truth

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (John 17:14-17)

The Life

No amount of paint will cover the truth of what occurred in Eden. The lie was believed—and man has paid the price ever since. But no lie will ever replace the truth of Christ's life—and the price He paid for our sins. On our journey we will listen to many lies, but none of them can be believed. The life of Jesus is the *only* truth.

"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Revelation 1:17b-18)