

# The Day of Judgment

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

<sup>11</sup> He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Genesis 3:7-13 ESV

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## Smurf Theology

I was thinking of a way I could convey the bad theology and mistaken thinking that many people, Christians and non-Christians, have regarding the coming of God in the Garden of Eden after our parents ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. Given the subject matter, I thought, I should think of something a little light-hearted and yet pointed that would get across some of the silliness and insanity of our thinking.

Then I thought, perhaps retelling the story using a modern cartoon might do the trick. When you have children in your house, you watch animated movies. My girls were recently introduced through a movie and its sequel to a cartoon we grew up on: [The Smurfs](#) (and right now, you are saying “Oh no”).

For those of you not familiar with them, let me tell you about the Smurfs from a perspective that will help you understand story. This in no way means I’m telling people they shouldn’t watch the Smurfs, though you should watch everything with a discerning eye. Smurfs are tiny little blue creatures. They are basically happy little medieval [gnomes](#).<sup>1</sup> All Smurfs are boys, except for Smurfette, who was the creation of the evil wizard Gargamel in an attempt to cause jealousy and stir trouble among the Smurfs. Gargamel is the giant enemy of the Smurfs,<sup>2</sup> and his cat Azrael—which means “[Angel of Death](#),” wants only to eat them.

Smurfette was created ugly. But the leader of the Smurfs, Papa Smurf, took pity, did a little magic and plastic smurfery on her, and she became beautiful and was adopted into the Smurf village. You could probably call Papa Smurf “Santa Smurf” for he wears a red hat, has a beard, performs magic, and is usually quite jolly. All Smurfs wear Phrygian caps,

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<sup>1</sup> Gnomes are earth-dwelling elemental spirits, in line with a more pagan view of demons that were neither good nor bad nor indifferent, but could be good or bad, do good or bad things.

<sup>2</sup> According to the wiki (take it for what that’s worth), his name actually comes from Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where Gargamelle is the mother of Gargantua and a giant.

which represented **freedom** in Roman times. Smurfs live in “*Le Pays Maudit*,” French for “**the Cursed Land**,” and their houses are made from **mushrooms**. All Smurfs are named after some adjective like “Happy Smurf” or “Brainy Smurf.” Here then is a retelling of our story according to bad Smurf theology.

Smurfette and Manly Smurf were out one day, just skipping and hopping and singing, which is what Smurfs do, when suddenly they came across the evil Gargamel, who tricked them into eating a magical smurfberry that Papa Smurf had warned them not to eat. As soon as they ate it, both of their smurfy hats disappeared, and all Smurfs must have their smurfy hats. Well, they had to do something, so they did what any Smurf would do. They snuck into Gargamel’s castle and stole his evil plans for an origami smurf hat filled with mushrooms. Then they went to a nearby tree, took a leaf, and folded it into the shape of a hat. Surely, no one would notice when they went back to Smurf Village.

Suddenly, Papa Smurf came strolling along singing that Smurf song that sticks in head of every Smurf, “**Fa-la-la-la-la-la, sing a happy song.**” When they heard how happy Papa Smurf was, they were more ashamed because they had listened to Gargamel. So, they found the nearest Mushroom and dug their way inside, eating a little along the way, of course, because it was a yummy mushroom.

Suddenly, Papa Smurf called out, “Smurfette! Manly Smurf! Where are you?” He didn’t know where they were. How could he? He was just a Smurf after all. He was out looking for them. They had been gone too long.

At that moment, a pang of conscience struck Manly Smurf, who came out from the mushroom and said, “I heard you singing the happy song, and I was embarrassed, because I lost my Smurf hat, and so did Smurfette, so we hid.”

Well, Papa Smurf could see that they did have a hat on. “What is that on your head?” he inquired. Apparently, the origami didn’t fool him after all. “Did you eat that smurfberry I told you not to eat?”

“It wasn’t my fault,” moaned Manly Smurf, sounding more like Whinny Smurf. “I was with Smurfette, and she gave it to me, so I ate it. What else could a Smurf do? She is Smurfette after all! She holds magical power over all us Smurfs.”

“Smurfette,” Papa said in a soothing, fatherly voice, “What did you do?”

“Oh Papa Smurf. You know that the evil Gargamel created me. He put a magic spell on me that only works on me, because he made me. I couldn’t help myself. So I ate it.”

“Ho, Ho, Ho,” Papa Smurf said in a jolly low rumble. “Papa Smurf can always figure out if you’ve been naughty or nice. But never you fear, my little Smurfs. The life of a Smurf is to be happy. Have you learned a lesson?”

“Oh, yes Papa Smurf,” they replied in unison.

“Then here are two new shiny hats.” They came from nowhere, for Papa Smurf was a worker of magic. “No hard feelings. Now, let’s go back to Smurf Village.” And together, arm in arm, they all skipped back home singing the happy song.

Now let’s get serious. Too many people think of our story just like they think of the Smurfs—a silly little cartoon not to be taken seriously. Others have bad theology that they bring to the story: God is like Santa, happiness is the most important virtue, he was oblivious to what was going on with the two Smurfs, it was just a little transgression, it really wasn’t their fault, the repercussions were only for the two Smurfs rather than the whole village, God doesn’t actually punish anyone. Then, because of translations that are engrained in our consciousness, other strange ideas creep into our minds. God is just out for a happy little stroll on a warm summery evening. And one thing my story doesn’t get at is how many people have this idea of a kind of disembodied voice that is talking to Adam and Eve.

There is a lot going on in these few verses that we will look at today. This story forms the foundation of sin and judgment for the rest of the Bible. There is nothing happy about it. My goal today is to impress upon your mind the seriousness of our sin, its consequences, how it seemed like such a little thing to our parents, until they heard God

coming, at which point even then they thought they could still get themselves off the hook for what they had done.

## Consequences of Sin: Shame and Loss of Innocence (vs. 7)

*Shame (opening of eyes)*

Our passage is **Genesis 3:7-13**. We will begin by looking at **vs. 7** which is a kind of introductory verse to the judgment that follows. It tells us about the **consequences of the first sin**, and in many ways, of all sin. It takes place in three stages. First, there is an **opening of the eyes**. This is followed by a new kind of **knowledge**. This is followed by an inevitable attempt at **self-repair**. So first, the opening of the eyes.

Prior to eating the fruit, the Serpent told the woman, “**Your eyes will be opened**” (**Gen 3:5**). This is affirmed in the first part of **verse 7**. The Tree did its work. Their eyes were opened, just as the Nachash had promised. They see what they had not seen before. They saw something that was always there, but they were oblivious.<sup>3</sup>

*Loss of Innocence (awareness)*

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<sup>3</sup> In the Pentateuch, to have your eyes opened is to see something you could not see before. The Angel of the LORD opens Hagar’s eyes so that she sees a well of water (**Gen 21:19**); the same Angel opens the eyes of Balaam so that he can see the Angel (**Num 22:31**). Balaam also says that his eyes are opened so that he can give a prophecy (**Num 24:3, 15**). In other places, people pray to God that his eyes may be opened towards his people. The figure is that he should care about their plight (**1 Kgs 8:29**; **2 Chr 6:40**; **Neh 1:6**, etc.). Other times, it is used for God opening spiritually dead eyes so they can see the wonders of salvation (**Isa 35:5**) and God’s law (**Ps 119:18**).

What did this opening of the eyes produce? It produces a knowledge, an [awareness](#). To have their eyes opened is “to know.” This is why it is called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What they now know is that they are naked. But what does *this* mean?

Some think it refers to a new awareness of sexuality. This is incorrect, as Adam seems perfectly aware of this as soon as God brings the woman to him. In fact, as we said back there, the two were married at that point.<sup>4</sup> I rather think that this knowledge is what comes as a result of sinning, any sin, be it sexual or anything else. It is an [awareness of vulnerability](#) that comes with [shame](#) and a [feeling of being exposed](#) for what you have done that comes with [guilt](#). It creates a sense of panic, a dose of dread, until it finds a way to alleviate the feelings.

One way to alleviate those feelings is to actually take pride in this kind of knowledge in order to justify the sin. The new feeling of pride suppresses those nastier feelings so they won't bother you anymore. [Have you ever heard](#) someone say that they had to live with each other and have

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<sup>4</sup> The entire story does seem to have an undercurrent of sexuality, and many interpreters throughout the ages have gone in this direction, as if there was a sexual indiscretion that went on in eating the fruit. These range from mild (they became aware of what sex is) to much more serious and severe (Eve had sex with the Nachash, Eve and Lilith [see the *wiki* on Lilith for more], etc.). The danger here is one of being caught up in this undercurrent and carried out to deep waters in the riptide where we then drown in a sea of sexual speculation that just isn't explicit in the passage. We ought to recognize that the current flows here, but we ought to be careful, lest we go beyond what the Scripture says about it.

sex outside of marriage in order to see if they were compatible? Or have you ever heard someone say that you have no right to judge them because you haven't been in their shoes and you don't know what made them do what they did? These are a kind of reveling in the personal knowledge that comes from experiencing a sin. It is a suppressing of the shame and guilt, a taking of pure and good and rubbing it through the dirt and mud.

### *Covering Ourselves*

This is one of two types of reactions people normally have with this kind of knowledge. Thankfully, our parents didn't do this. They listened to their conscience that God had implanted in them. Their conscience pricked them like a needle on a finger. It began to speak like a ghost that haunted them. It seems to me that the voice of the conscience is part of the new knowledge they possessed, for they had no reason to hear it until now.

But what do they do upon hearing their conscience tell them that they are naked and exposed? They seek **to cover themselves** with clothes of their own making. To put it another way, they seek an atonement made by their own hands, and atonement without blood. It is a self-atonement, a self-protecting, a self-covering. As if this could shelter them from God! What covering did they choose? They actually chose two coverings, not one. We will look at the first now.

It is very important to spend a moment thinking about this, because the figure will be used throughout the Scripture in very specific ways. It says that they covered themselves with **fig leaves**. What does this image teach us?

First, the fig is a tree which produces delicious fruit. Here there is a play on the fruit they had just eaten with the leaves of a tree that gives wonderful fruit. For this reason, some have thought that the Tree of Knowledge was a fig tree and that they covered themselves in the very tree they were forbidden. This is speculative.

Second, the fig has the largest leaves in Israel. It provided welcome shade.<sup>5</sup> Later in the Bible it symbolizes “settled life,” “the good life.” People live “**under their own fig tree**” (**1 Kgs 4:25**; **Micah 4:4**), they receive joy, peace, and prosperity. As such, it becomes a symbol of civilization.<sup>6</sup> As we all know, clothing is a vital element of culture. It is a social phenomenon and has been throughout the history of humanity.

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<sup>5</sup> This short study comes from Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 283.

<sup>6</sup> “When people come to know what it means to be masters of their existence, they can then make progress in civilization. When people have learned that it is not right for them to be naked before others and make aprons to protect themselves, this is to be understood against the background of the great social significance which clothing had both in antiquity and in the Old Testament. Clothing is not, as it is with us, an individual phenomenon but a social phenomenon and hence is of great significance in the history of civilization.” Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 251.

We can see this better in the words that are used to sometimes translate these fig leaves. In Isaiah, it refers to an article of **woman's dress** (Isa 3:24). In the Kings, it refers to the **belt of a warrior** (2 Sam 18:11; 1 Kgs 2:5; 2 Kgs 3:21). The Targums also translate it as "**robes**" (Neofiti) or an "**apron**" (Ps.J.). Thus, the word represents various aspects of culture including fashion, cooking, religion, and warfare.

One final point about the symbol is that the fig tree is a **covenantal** symbol. Israel is the fig tree. When God blessed them, they would produce fruit (1 Kgs 4:25). Jesus cursed the fig tree and it became fruitless (Luke 13:6-9). As it points out in Mark, religion of our own making is of no value and worthy of judgment, because it bears no fruit in people's lives (Mark 11:12-21). Thus, later in the chapter, the covering with leaves to atone for themselves in a **covenant of works** is contrasted with the covering God makes for them with animal skins in a preface to the **Covenant of Grace**.

## **Primal Judgment**

Beginning in **vs. 8** we begin to read about God's response to the rebellion of our parents. I will begin by reading the first part of the verse as it appears in the ESV, which is very similar to most other versions in English. Then we will look at Adam's response, and we will return to the beginning of vs. 8 to see what is actually going on. It says, "**And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the**

cool of the day.” It is from this kind of translation of the words that I suggested some people have this idea that God is just out for a jolly stroll, desiring to look at his newly made garden, whistling a happy song as he gayfully saunters along.

But let us also look at the context. First we have vs. 9 where God asks Adam, “Where are you?” Based on a “straightforward” reading of the question, and using principles that some use on other similar passages where God is said not to know the future,<sup>7</sup> one could read this as saying God really has no idea where they are. He is clueless.<sup>8</sup> This last idea is bad theology based in bad principles of interpretation.

The former idea is based on what I believe is a bad translation. Let’s ask a question. If God is just tip toeing through the tulips, what explains Adam and Eve’s reaction? As soon as they hear God it says, “The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God” (Gen 8b). Why? Were they just little kids thinking that God had come to play a game of Hide and Seek with them? Hardly. Vs. 10 says, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” Notice, there

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<sup>7</sup> Such as “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?’” (Num 14:11); or “I have spurned your calf, O Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence?” (Hos 8:5). Cf. Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 58-59.

<sup>8</sup> See the other questions in the story too, “Who told you that you were naked?” “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” “What is this that you have done?”

are two things that caused Adam to be afraid. 1. He was naked. 2. He heard the sound. What kind of sound would there be to be afraid of? What is going on here?

### *The Word and the Spirit*

Theologians use a technical term here called a **theophany**. A theophany is “**A visible manifestation of God, a self-disclosure of the deity.**”<sup>9</sup> Another word for it is an **epiphany**. *Theos* is the word for God. But sometimes they call them “**Christophanies.**” Another word I would like to use is a “**Pneumophany**”: an appearance of the Holy Spirit. In this case, we have here both the Spirit and the Word of God present.

The Spirit is presented as the “cool” or the “breeze” (*ruach*). It is the same word we find in Gen 1:2 where the Spirit of God is hovering. The Word is presented as a voice. All of the targums say that it is the Memra of the Lord: God’s Word. One uses the word for “breeze” that can be translated as a **scorching heat**, the very opposite of a cool breeze. But in Hebrew and Greek, wind and spirit are the same word. To put this another way, we have the preincarnate Jesus visibly coming to Adam and Eve as he is cloaked in the robes of the Holy Spirit. Who else could it be, for Jesus is always the visible manifestation of God to the creation, for no man may see the Father and live.

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<sup>9</sup> T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 859.

## *The Voice/Sound of God*

Now we want to see what They have come to do. We want to look at other places where God comes to people and they are afraid. **Exodus 20:18-19** says, “Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’” The word “thunder” is the same word here for “voice” (*qol*). It is a very common word in the OT.

Another time this voice comes, it is as a warrior as the Angel of the LORD. Curiously, he comes in the trees. “And when you hear the sound (*qol*) of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines” (**2 Sam 5:24**). Another time has the prophet Ezekiel seeing a stormy wind, a great cloud with brightness, a fire flashing forth, and gleaming metal (**Ezek 1:4**). Then he hears the sound (*qol*) of wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a great army. Then a voice (*qol*) came from above the angels and there was a throne and a man with the appearance of gleaming metal, and more fire and brightness everhwehere. And the voice (*qol*) of God

spoke, and he fell on his face (1:24-28).<sup>10</sup> Do any of these sound like a gentle stroll in a cool garden?<sup>11</sup>

### *Walking-Patrolling-Traversing*

Another idea in the verse is that God is “walking.” This fits with the image of God visibly manifesting himself as the Angel of the LORD—as the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word of God. As Meredith Kline points out, “This verb is used to describe the movement of agents of the divine council, which is found within the Glory-cloud, when they are on missions of surveillance and judgment.”<sup>12</sup> One need only think of Satan “walking to and fro” throughout the earth or read Zechariah where the heavenly beings sent by God to patrol and judge by walking.<sup>13</sup> This is no gander or mosey. It is the same God who at creation “He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind” (Ps 104:3 NAS).

This voice and walk signaled that a terror was coming to our parents, driving the guilty pair into hiding from the Face

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<sup>10</sup> For more see the study by Meredith G. Kline, “Primal Parousia,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 40.2 (1977): 245-80. Also J. Niehaus, “In the Wind of the Storm: Another Look at Genesis 3:8,” *VT* 44 (1994): 263-67.

<sup>11</sup> We find this also in the “still small voice” heard by Elijah. This can also be translated as “a roaring, thunderous sound,” which is why when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak. See J. Lust, “A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975), 110-115.<sup>11</sup> Wycliffe translated it as “issyng of thinne wynd” (1 Kings 19:12 WYC 1388 translation).

<sup>12</sup> Kline, 250.

<sup>13</sup> Job 1:7; 2:2; Zechariah 1:10f; 6:7.

of the Maker.<sup>14</sup> “The mountains quaked before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel” (Jdg 5:5).

“As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! ... The earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel” (Ps 68:2, 8).

### *The Day of the LORD*

One final piece of Genesis 8a is this idea of the **cool of the day**. As I said, this is the word for “Spirit.” But it also is a play on the evening. It is a unique phrase in the OT. If the Greeks are remembering the story with any degree of truth, then you will remember that they called it the Garden of Hesperides, from Hesperus “the evening star,” or his Roman name Vesper meaning “evening,” “supper,” “evening star,” or “west”). If so, there would be profound irony here, for it is not Lucifer who has come to judge, but the LORD. It is not Lucifer’s Garden, but Yahweh’s. And what has Yahweh come to do?

He has not come to seek relief from a hot afternoon, as if God gets hot or tired. No. He has come to judge. This is where the word “day” comes into it. Given the images we have just seen throughout the OT when God comes, and given the reaction of Adam and Eve to the voice and the

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<sup>14</sup> Kline, 250.

sound and the wind and the walking, are we really supposed to believe that this all started with in idyllic stroll by someone like Papa Smurf? I honestly do not understand the translation of this verse as it is often rendered, because this is not a happy scene. It is a prelude, a foretaste, an intrusion of the Great and Dreadful Day of the LORD.

You simply must get this. “Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?” (Amos 5:18-20). “Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!” (Isa 13:6). Amos and Isaiah are predicting a day that Adam saw but the tiniest taste of.

So the phrase “cool of the day” is yet another wordplay. Here it is a double entendre for the evening judgment and the Spirit of judgment. Judging is a chief role of the Spirit, who as Jesus says is the Advocate for us (1 Jn 2:1) who bears witness on the stand (John 15:26), but to convict and judge others (John 16:8). This happens typologically in the OT through people. For example, the Judge Othniel, “The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel” (Jdg 3:10); or the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah, “I have put my Spirit on him; he shall bring forth judgment to the nations” (Isa 42:1);

or the one to be born in Isa 11, “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge” (Isa 11:2-4). In these verses, the Spirit and Christ come together again.

Isaiah 28:5-8 puts it like this, “**In that day** the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed by wine, they stagger with strong drink, they reel in vision, they stumble in giving judgment. For all tables are full of filthy vomit, with no space left.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, we could give Genesis 3:8a a loose translation like this, “They heard the thunder of Yahweh, his footsteps patrolling the garden in the

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<sup>15</sup> One also thinks of Psalm 139 where David asks, “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” (Ps 139:7). He then confesses that if one were concealed in the darkness of Sheol, the very light of God’s shining Spirit-Presence would make the night like day, exposing the hidden one to plain sight (vs. 12). Kline says this “clearly evokes the guilty pair hiding in the shadows among the trees of the garden of Eden, yet for all their desperate efforts exposed by the coming of the Spirit of the day” (Gen 3:9ff).”

Spirit of the Day Judgment.”<sup>16</sup> Now that puts quite a different spin on it, doesn't it?

## **Hiding Under a Bush, Oh No!**

So what do they do? They do what any robber does when he hears the police siren. They hide. This is the second covering of Adam and Eve. They play hide and seek, except they desperately hope that God won't find them. Where they choose to hide is, in my opinion, fascinating. It says they hid “among the trees of the garden.” The trees, like many things in this story, are real physical entities which also represent something else. In this case, I believe they represent spiritual beings, created *elohim*, just like Satan.

I say this because of other biblical data comparing the trees or taking refuge to the gods. “You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree” (Deut 12:2). Or, “And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree” (2 Kings 16:4). Or, “On every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down” (Jer

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<sup>16</sup> Kline has, “They heard the sound of Yahweh God traversing the garden as the Spirit of the day” (Kline, 254). The Bible Backgrounds Commentary says, “The resulting interpretation is that Adam and Eve heard the (terrifying) sound of God going through the garden with a storm wind. If so, then God is coming in judgment rather than for a daily conversation, which explains Adam and Eve's desire to hide.” John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 35.

2:20).<sup>17</sup> Or, “And He will say, ‘Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge?’” (Deut 32:37 NAS).

This is made clearest in Ezekiel 31. Here, the “trees of Eden” are envious (vs. 9). They are, like the Nachash, “cast down” to Sheol in the world below (16-18). God isn’t sending literal trees to hell here. Ezekiel personifies the trees of Eden as the gods, wicked heavenly beings that fell into sin and were punished. If I’m right about this, we have here the beginnings of the breaking of the first and second commandments, for they are worshipping other gods, finding their refuge in them, and beginning to hide themselves in idols and false worship. Ever since this moment, the sad history of our race has been to turn to the gods for help and refuge, rather than turning to the one who created us for forgiveness.

Throughout most of human history, this has been an explicit turning to the heavenly beings, as they have

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<sup>17</sup> Even Jude in the NT has this, “These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted” (Jude 1:12 NAS). Jude is clearly alluding to 1 Enoch and the gods in this verse (see, 1 Enoch 100:11; 101:2; and especially 80:3; cf. vs. 7).

That trees are symbolically or sacramentally linked to the heavenly beings in the ancient mind is clear also at Ugarit when Baal says, “For a message I have, and I will tell you, a word, and I will recount to you. *The word of tree and the whisper of stone*, the converse of Heaven with Hell, of Deeps with Stars. . . Come and I will reveal it. In the midst of my mountain, Divine Sapan, In the holy mount of my heritage, In the beautiful hill of my might.”<sup>17</sup> The trees and stones “speak,” because they are viewed as the embodiment of the gods. That’s precisely why they made their idols out of these substances. Don’t be mistaken. They did not worship the tree, but the entity represented by it.

worshiped Zeus, Thor, Osirus, or Brahma. Our culture has convinced itself that such beings are not real, and so most of us would think that the only gods we worship are “our stomachs” or something natural and physical like that. But isn't it strange how in a culture steeped in secular humanism where nature is all there is or was or ever will be (to paraphrase **Carl Sagan**) that nature worship is returning to our land with a vengeance? Gaia and the Green Man and the things that go along with their worship such as tattooing, piercing, sexual perversion, and a literal belief that the earth is alive and is a god(dess). We are coming full circle, running to the trees to hide ourselves, but kidding ourselves that we aren't doing anything wrong at all. In fact, we don't even think that it is real.

## The Blame Game

Well, as if this isn't bad enough, when God finally calls out to Adam and he answers, “**I was afraid because I was naked,**” God asks, “**Who told you that you were naked?**” (**Gen 3:11**). The idea is that in his innocence, there was nothing to be shameful of, no reason to feel exposed towards God or Eve. But now that they have sinned, they see that they must hide not only from God, but their own bodies from one another.

Speaking of what we just talked about regarding earth worship, isn't it interesting in this respect what our culture is

teaching young girls and women to do with their bodies? To expose them without shame or guilt to any and all. When such things occur in a society outside of the proper context and apart from turning to Christ, it says that we no longer are doing even what our parents did. At least they listened to their own consciences. But we are searing the consciences of both men and women, boys and girls, regarding any shame and guilt we should rightly feel for what we have done. Those words are basically curse words in the arena of psychology. When this occurs, that civilization is doomed.

Yet, for those who know Christ, there is hope and we can teach our young ones modesty in clothing as well as beyond that to rightly feeling shame and guilt and turning to Christ for forgiveness for any and all of their sins. But this is something Adam and Eve did not do. God asks, “**Have you eating of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?**” (11). It is a rhetorical question. Of course they have! So how does Adam respond? He does what almost all of us do almost any time we get caught in a sin. **He does not admit his guilt** and run to his maker who was his friend. Instead, **he blames** the woman.

“**It was her fault. She gave me fruit of the tree** (12). **What could I do? I had to do what she did.**” I was talking with someone this week about an idea he had run across that I had never heard before. It tries to put Adam in a better light by having Adam say, “**I knew that if she ate, she would die and I**

couldn't bear the thought, so I plunged myself into the abyss with her, so that she would not be alone." It is an interesting idea. I'm not convinced it is completely wrong.

However, look at what else Adam says before this. "The woman whom you gave to be with me..." This is basically a charge that the whole thing is God's fault. You gave her to me. This never would have happened if you hadn't made her and shown her to me and married us. How many times in human history has a person done something wrong, then felt the repercussions of their own stupidity only to blame God by saying that he is really the one at fault, that he is really not good, and so on? This is what is behind [theodicy](#)—the question of the problem of evil. If God hadn't done this or that, evil would never have happened. So he is to blame. And how can anyone worship a God like that? Or, in our story, God just didn't know or wasn't able to stop it, because he is weak and pathetic.

One of the most perplexing questions in all of theology is the question of how a man, created in God's image, created upright, blameless, and holy could have sinned. Most people think that [freewill](#) solves the problem. Adam had a freewill. I'm not convinced that solution even makes very much sense. Apparently, Adam wasn't either. He says nothing about freewill. He just blames God, insinuating that it is God's fault that he ended up eating the fruit too.

It is interesting that God does not correct Adam's **thinking**. In fact, he says nothing more to Adam at all. Is that disturbing to you when you think about it? Adam has just blamed God, blamed his wife, and God is silent. Jesus is silent. I wonder at the wisdom of God not to answer, not to defend himself, but instead, to turn to the woman, even though he knows full well that Adam alone was responsible for what Adam personally did.

Our last verse has the LORD God speaking now to the woman by asking her, “**What is this that you have done?**” (13). It is accusatory. Maybe Adam even thinks he has won the argument. It *is* her fault!

The woman does the same thing that Adam did. “**The serpent deceived me, and I ate**” (13). She doesn't blame Adam, even though it seems to me she could have said, “**He wasn't doing his job. It is his fault.**” But like her husband, she certainly isn't going to take the fall for him. So she blames the Nachash. He deceived me, and I ate.

Curiously, the NT affirms that Eve was in fact deceived (1 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:13). So, she is telling the truth. Yet, this gives us something to think about. For, in telling the truth in response to a question asking about why she disobeyed, she is literally trying to get away with murder—the murder of the entire human race. Using the truth as a weapon against God is not wise. We must be very careful about how we answer God when he comes to us in judgment.

## God as the True Tree

What both of our parents do is the opposite of what the Bible teaches us that we must do when we know we have sinned and are now confronted with that sin. Here, today, in this text, you are being confronted with your sin. For you are Adam. You are Eve. The Bible explains that “in Adam all die” (1Co 15:22). It tells us that “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Also, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Everyone in this room is going to die, because everyone in this room has sinned.

As you think about your past sin, your ongoing sin, your future sin, the question is, what will you do? Will you blame another person for your actions, your thoughts? Will you feign innocence before the very throne of heaven? Will you suppress your guilty conscience in pride and arrogance? Will you flee to the trees, the gods, and an atonement of your own making?

Or will you confess your sins and turn to the Merciful One for forgiveness? Who is this Merciful One? He is called many things in the Bible, but listen to these descriptions. In Hosea he says, “I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me” (Hosea 14:8 NIV). The Wisdom of Christ in Proverbs says, “I am a tree of life to those who lay hold of me” (Prov 3:18). The prediction of the coming Messiah is that he would be the “Righteous Branch” (Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5;

33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12). In the NT, Jesus is the “the vine” (John 15:5), and in as much as he is True Israel, he is the Fig Tree (Luke 21:29) and the Olive Tree (Rom 11:17).

A figure of this is found in Exodus 15:25 when Israel, on their way to Elim—the place of the gods, has bitter water to drink. But Moses throws a “tree” into the waters and it becomes sweet. Jesus alone grants the way to the Tree of Life (Rev 2:7).

There is soon coming the great and dreadful Day of the LORD. This day intruded into our world right there in the Garden of Eden as a foretaste of the judgment to come. It has come again and again to men and nations, as they fall and are judged and handed over by God to whatever punishment he deems best. So confess your sins, admit your guilt, hide under the branches of Creator and the Only Begotten Son, be clothed in the Spirit of Christ. Together they bid you “Come.” Those who come in the day of salvation he will by no means cast out. May you say with the Psalmist, “He will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock” (Ps 27:5). “Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!” (Ps 61:4).