

Original Sin

Original sin came into being, because God gave to angels, and later to men, the power of choice. In the exercise of that choice, Satan (not satisfied with the place God gave him) decided to elevate himself. Apparently a large number of angels joined in his rebellion against God. Later, Satan persuaded Eve and through her, Adam to seek greater portion than God had assigned to them as His creatures. See Genesis 2:17; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12.

Original sin was disobedience to God's command, eating the fruit of a tree which was forbidden by God. Since this was done before Adam and Eve had any children, the entire human race is viewed as having shared in that sin (Rom 5:12). We therefore share in the effects of that sin; we are born with a sinful nature (Eph 2:3) and are subject to the law of sin and death. We cannot be cleansed or delivered from sin by "good works," baptism, etc.

Sin has many aspects. A word commonly used for it in the New Testament is found in Romans 3:23 where we read, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Greek word for "sinned" means to "miss a mark," and Vincent gives two illustrations: a warrior who throws a spear and fails to strike an advisory; or a traveler who misses his way. Anything short of perfection is sin.

Exodus 34:7 uses three words for sin: iniquity, transgressions, and sin. These suggest perversity; a violation of what is right, or the rights of another; and failure to fulfill one's responsibility.

1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is transgression of the law," though a better translation is "sin is lawless." This suggests a spirit of rebellion against the perfect will of God. Romans 5:15-21 shows that just as all human beings inherit the sinful state of Adam, so all believers in Christ share in the fruits of His atonement, including the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. Many texts in the New Testament show it is faith in Christ which brings us into possession of this salvation, e.g., John 1:12, 13; 3:36; 5:24.