

The Choice That Began Mortality

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I am amazed at the great love and courage my wonderful companion has shown during the birth of our children. I am in awe that the pain and sickness accompanying their birth was soon forgotten, making way for the joy and happiness of having a baby in our home. I have wondered how much Adam and Eve knew about such things as they made the choice to partake of the forbidden fruit, the choice that began what has been called act 2 in the “grand three-act play”¹ we call the great plan of happiness. God the Father, Jehovah, Adam, Eve, and Lucifer were the players. The Garden of Eden was the scene of this interlude between act 1, the premortal life, and act 2, mortality.

Setting the Stage

Act 1 included a council, or “war in heaven” (see Rev. 12:7–9), when Lucifer promised the impossible, to “redeem all mankind,” and demanded the Father’s “honor” (see Moses 4:1). Jesus Christ was the Father’s “Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” and promised to enact the Father’s plan (see Moses 4:2). We exercised our agency and chose to follow the Savior. Then Lucifer was “cast down, with all who put up their heads for him.”²

God the Father was the mastermind and primary character in this interlude scene. Through His Son, He created the earth and the Garden of Eden.

Adam was the first man, the premortal Michael (see D&C 27:11), “who helped create the earth—a glorious, superb individual. Eve was his equal—a full, powerfully contributing partner.”³ Adam and Eve were placed in a garden, Adam being “formed from the dust of the ground” and Eve being created from his side, and they became husband and wife (see Moses 3:7, 22–24).

The Father commanded them to multiply and replenish the earth and not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but added, “Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Moses 3:17). Thus the stage was set for the exercise of agency and the possibility of mortality.

Choices and Consequences

Lucifer was also in the beginning. He “sought to destroy the agency of man, ... [and being] the father of all lies” (Moses 4:3–4) entered the garden to deceive our first parents. He first talked with Adam, but Adam did not yield. Lucifer then tried “also to beguile Eve” (Moses 4:6). He questioned her: “Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Moses 4:7). Challenging one’s recollection of a past event can often create doubt. But Eve stood firm. Lucifer’s first stratagem failed.

“Ye shall not surely die,” protested Lucifer, directly contradicting the word of the Lord (Moses 4:10; see also D&C 29:41–42). “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Moses 4:11). Lucifer spoke a partial truth mixed with a falsehood. If Eve were to partake of the fruit, her eyes would indeed be opened “as gods” and she would begin to know good and evil; yet the notion that eating the fruit could immediately make Eve as the gods was a clever deception. The purpose of life can be fulfilled only when we have time to prepare to meet God and learn good and evil by our own experience (see Alma 12:22–26; D&C 29:39).

At Lucifer’s suggestion, Eve began to notice that the forbidden fruit was good for food, or delicious, and pleasant to the eyes. Lucifer “knows well how to catch the eye and arouse the desire of the customer.”⁴ Eve then chose to partake of the forbidden fruit. She subsequently encouraged Adam to partake (see Moses 4:12). Adam concluded that God’s command to remain with his wife (see Moses 4:18) was more important than His command to abstain from the fruit. Thus in the face of this enticement, “Adam fell that men might be” (2 Ne. 2:25).

Their choices, like ours, were not without consequences. Lucifer’s power to “bruise [the] heel” of the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, would be fleeting, for the Savior would have power to “bruise [his] head”⁵ (see Moses 4:21). Just as light banishes darkness, the Savior will overcome Lucifer, and by His power we may also overcome. For Eve, the Lord would “greatly multiply [her] sorrow and [her] conception. In sorrow [meaning labor or pain, she would] bring forth children” (Moses 4:22). “By divine design,” she would be a mother and would be “primarily

responsible for the nurture of their children.”⁶ For Adam, the ground would be “cursed ... for [his] sake.” It would bring forth “thorns also, and thistles,” and “by the sweat of [his] face [he would eat] bread” (see Moses 4:23–25). “By divine design, fathers ... are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. ... Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”⁷ Adam and Eve were then banished from this most beautiful of gardens, and mortality, or act 2, began. However, they were taught concerning the plan of God and given commandments. They did not leave without protection and promises, for God provided them with “coats of skins” (Moses 4:27) to cover their nakedness. These coverings represent the protection—both spiritual and physical—that we can enjoy as we follow our Father’s teachings.

When Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and found themselves outside of God’s presence, they were anxious to return. They used their agency to call upon the name of the Lord, to worship the Lord their God by offering sacrifices, and to bless His name (see Moses 5:4–5, 12).

The Fall and the Atonement

Three of the most essential events in the history of mankind are the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. “The enabling essence of the plan [of salvation] is the atonement of Jesus Christ,” said Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “We should try to comprehend the meaning of the Atonement. Before we can comprehend it, though, we must understand the fall of Adam.”⁸ As Latter-day Saints, we believe that Adam and Eve’s choice to partake of the forbidden fruit was ultimately a good thing—an essential act for our growth.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught: “When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they did not have to die. They could have been there to this day. They could have continued on for countless ages. There was no death then. But it would have been a terrific calamity if they had refrained from taking the fruit of that tree, for they would have stayed in the Garden of Eden and we would not be here; nobody would be here except Adam and Eve. So Adam and Eve partook.”⁹

Many questions have been asked: How much did Adam and Eve really understand about consequences of eating the forbidden fruit? Why was the message of Satan so tempting to Eve but not to Adam? Was there no other way? These are perplexing questions because we know so little about Adam and Eve’s thoughts and feelings in the garden. Therefore, we should not worry about what the scriptures and living prophets have chosen not to explain. The important thing is to know that the

Lord's will was accomplished. Adam and Eve kept the first commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. Their bodies were changed, and mortality, parenthood, and eventual death came upon them. Eternal family relationships became possible. The Fall was a "glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life," said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹⁰ As a result, we have been blessed with the opportunity to come to this earth.

Other blessings have come to us through the Fall. Elder Nelson has said: "It activated two closely coupled additional gifts from God, nearly as precious as life itself—agency and accountability. We became 'free to choose liberty and eternal life ... or to choose captivity and death' (2 Ne. 2:27). Freedom of choice cannot be exercised without accountability for choices made (see D&C 101:78; D&C 134:1)."¹¹

We have been placed here by a Heavenly Father who loves and trusts us. He wants us to use our agency to grow and progress in this laboratory we call earth.

The Fall and Joy

As my wife and I have watched our children grow and develop, we have been thrilled with so many of their choices. We have been amazed at the love and courage of our daughters and daughters-in-law as they have given birth to precious little spirits who have come from the presence of our Heavenly Father. With each birth I have been reminded that without the Fall, we would not experience birth, pain, sorrow, sickness, health, joy, love, and death—in other words, we could never find eternal happiness. And without the great atoning sacrifice of our Savior, we would never be able to overcome death or have the privilege of repenting for the remission of our sins. Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to return to the Father and find exaltation with our families. He is our Savior, our friend, our Spiritual Father through the Atonement, our Redeemer from the Fall, our very life and light, and the living Son of our living Father in Heaven.

An understanding of the choice that began mortality is crucial to understanding the Father's glorious plan. We who have chosen to follow the Savior in act 1 will be greatly blessed if we choose to do what is right and wisely use the agency we have been given in act 2.

Let's Talk about It

Most Ensign articles can be used for family home evening discussions. The following questions are for that purpose or for personal reflection:

1. Why was it necessary for Adam and Eve to have a choice? (see 2 Ne. 2:15–16).

2. What difference did their choice to partake of the fruit make for us? (see 2 Ne. 2:22–26).
3. How have some of your recent choices helped lead you toward either liberty or captivity? (see 2 Ne. 2:27–29).

[illustration] Illustrated by Gary Kapp

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Notes

1. See Boyd K. Packer, *The Play and the Plan*, Church Educational System fireside for College-Age Young Adults, 7 May 1995, 2.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 357.
3. Richard G. Scott, "The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 74.
4. James E. Talmage, "A Greeting to Missionaries," *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1913, 173.
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 43.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. "Constancy amid Change," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 33.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 122.
10. "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73.
11. *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 34.

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