

## Stolen Apples and Turkish Delight

The Chronicles of Christmas – Part II

Selected Scripture

### Introduction

In the early 1600's, a Puritan theologian named John Owen served the church with great wisdom and doctrinal clarity. In one of his works entitled, *Sin and Temptation*, he wrote,

*However strong a castle may be, if a treacherous party resides inside, the castle cannot be kept safe from the enemy. [The truth is] traitors occupy our own hearts, ready to side with every temptation and to surrender to them all.<sup>i</sup>*

John Bunyan, another English preacher who lived in the 1600's, put this truth into an allegory. His character Diabolus battled against the city of Man-Soul, trying to enter one of the gates of the city. Each of the gates related to one of Man's senses – and as long as Man refuses to open one of the city gates, he is kept safe.

It is true that the greatest traitor to our spiritual health and well-being; the one who will sell us out to the tempter; the betrayer who will open the doors of our castle gates and welcome in the enemy is the person who stared back at us this morning when we looked in the mirror. It is the appetites of our flesh, which Paul refers to as the god of the human belly or the god of our appetites (Philippians 3:19), the indulgences and sinful desires of our flesh, the pride of our hearts, the lust of our eyes . . . that are the traitors living within the castle walls of all our hearts.

By the age of twenty-one, the castle of the average American heart has been exposed to and taunted, enticed, and baited by the flirtations, according to one estimate, of 300,000 commercials.

Each one tells us that we need something more, something better, something newer, something different. In fact, as the Las Vegas commercial brazenly offers to its customers, “You can come to sin city and worship the gods of your appetites and never need worry, ‘Whatever you do here, will stay here.’”

What a lie.

The truth is, whatever you do will haunt you; will hurt you; will hound you; will hunt you down. Do not be deceived – your sin will find you out!

I came across a new commercial to encourage those who are intent on pursuing the gods of their bellies. A recent article on msnbc.com advertised a new line of greeting cards for an untapped market of people. If you can believe it, this line of cards is for those who are involved in adulterous relationships. It is called “The Secret Lover Collection” and is, “committed to providing a greeting card collection with empathy and understanding, without judgment, to lovers involved in a secret relationship.”

The founder of this new collection, Cathy Gallagher, said that the greeting cards will be marketed subtly. There will not be a big banner that says, “Infidelity,” but the cards will be displayed under labels like, “Love Expressions,” and “Intimacy”. Card messages will even include romantic lines for Christmas time that read, and I quote, “As we celebrate with our families, I will be thinking of you.”<sup>ii</sup>

What horror is bound up in those sentiments – for everyone involved. The gates of the castle have been

opened to the enemy by the traitor within – and sin will be merciless.

The writer of Hebrews referred to sin as “the passing pleasures of sin.” The pleasure of sin does not just pass away – it passes into something else; something unexpected: sorrow, oppression, despair, guilt, sickness, slavery, death. (Hebrews 11:25)<sup>iii</sup>

## Stolen Apples and Turkish Delight

I do not think any writer ever illustrated the lure of sin and the promise of freedom, delight, and satisfaction that sin would bring better than C. S. Lewis. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis illustrated in living color, the tantalizing power of the evil one and the enticing promises that never come true.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Edmund – one of the four children who find their way through the wardrobe and into the winter-land of Narnia – finds himself unexpectedly alone in Narnia. He hears bells and sees a woman approaching in a sleigh. He is struck by her stunning beauty, as well as the luxurious white fur garments she is robed in.

At first, Edmund is a little alarmed by the coldness in her expression, but then the woman offers him a warm drink and asks him what his favorite thing to eat is. He responds, “Turkish delight!”

Instantly this woman creates a beautiful round box, tied with a green silk ribbon, which Edmund opens to find several pounds of Turkish delight. It is more delicious than any he has ever eaten. He wolfs down the entire box, while telling her all she wishes to know and feeling very proud of himself.

Of course, the woman, who is the wicked Queen of Narnia, just wants Edmund to lure his brother and two sisters back to Narnia with him, so that she can kill them all. Doing so would eliminate the threat to her rule, which, according to legend, could only be overthrown by four human kings and queens from earth.

The Queen entices Edmund with a promise. If he brings his siblings back to Narnia and delivers them to her, he will not only become her prince, and eventually the King of Narnia, but he will have all the Turkish delight he could ever want!

If you fast forward the story to the moment when Edmund returns to the Queen and tells her where she can find his brother and sisters, you discover the most insightful moment. He naturally asks for more Turkish delight, only to find that she now, refuses. Instead, she gives him a piece of dry bread.

What a picture this is of the devil, who never keeps his bargains; who never delivers on his promises.

David, the Psalmist, wrote that it is at the right hand of God – the presence of God – where there are pleasures evermore. (Psalm 16:11)

Satan, pictured in the Queen, or the wicked witch, is the ruler of Narnia. That is why, in the description of the land of Narnia, we read the classic line from C. S. Lewis, “It is always winter, but never Christmas.”

What could be worse to children than to always have cold winter, but never Christmas, the one good thing about winter?

Narnia is under the curse of the wicked Queen. It is the land of cold wind, barren land, and frozen ponds, with never any appearance of gifts or lights or laughter or joy.

Let me briefly mention one more scene of temptation, which occurs in Lewis’ *The Magician’s Nephew*. Aslan, the great Lion who serves as a picture of Christ, tells Digory to go to the top of a distant hill where he will find an apple tree. Digory is commanded to bring to Aslan one of the silver apples, but not to eat any of them himself. Evidently, the apples not only smell quite sweet to a hungry boy, but are capable of providing immortality and restoration of health forever.

Following Aslan’s instructions, Digory travels to the hill and finds a golden gate with a silver sign. The sign further warns that the apples must never be eaten for oneself – they are intended for others. To eat one for oneself is considered stealing.

However, when Digory stands before the tree, the delicious smell overwhelms him. His mouth begins to water and his hunger intensifies. He longs to taste the fruit and tries to convince himself that it will be all right. He thinks, “What possible harm could there be in eating one for myself?”<sup>iv</sup>

Digory resists the temptation and plucks only one apple. He tucks it into his coat and turns to leave, but comes face to face with the White Witch. Her mouth is stained with dark traces of juice from the apple core she tosses aside. He runs from her.

Let me read from C. S. Lewis’ own script,

“*Why do you run from me? I mean you no harm. If you do not stop and listen to me now, you will miss some knowledge that would have made you happy all your life.*”

“Well, I don’t want to hear it, thanks,” said Digory. But he [really] did!

“I know what errand you have come on,” continued the Witch . . . “You have plucked fruit in the garden yonder. You have it in your pocket now. And you are going to carry it back, untasted, to the Lion; for him to eat, for him to use. You simpleton! Do you know what that fruit is? I will tell you. It is the apple of youth, the apple of life. I know, for I have tasted it; and I feel already such changes in myself that I know I shall never grow old or die. Eat it, Boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever as king and queen of this whole world ...”

Does this sound remotely familiar?! Turn to Genesis, chapter 3, to a garden called Eden – uncursed Narnia to C. S. Lewis.

In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve will face the enticement of the evil one, whose mouth was already stained with the dark traces of rebellion and defiance.

Before we look at this scene, understand that the tree in the garden was not placed there to tempt Adam and Eve to sin, but to testify of their surrender to God. Sin, ultimately, is a statement that we are convinced that:

- what we want is better than what God delivers;
- what we need is more important than what God offers;
- what we feel is superior to what God allows;
- what we decide is more clever than the way God directs.

Sin is ultimately a statement of insurrection. In other words, we know better than God. What we feel and need and want and decide and do is sovereign. What does God know?

Into the innocence of fresh creation the satanically embodied serpent comes. He delivers the first statement of doubt regarding the word of God. Notice Genesis 3:1b,

. . . **“Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”**

The serpent is such a gentleman, so tactful in his deceptive words. He says, “Eve, can you really be sure that God said you can’t eat from any tree? Did He really say all that? How can you be sure? You weren’t there when He said it, right?”

The serpent’s implication was true. Eve was not there – God delivered the truth to Adam in Genesis 2:17 and then, created Eve in Genesis 2:21.

God may have repeated the prohibition to Eve, but we can at least be certain that Adam had delivered the truth to her because she repeated most of it back to Satan in Genesis 3.

This, I believe, is a demonstration of the brilliant strategy of Satan. If he can get Eve to act independently of Adam; if he can get Eve to question the words of Adam, then maybe he can get her to disobey the obvious word of God.

From that day until this day, one of Satan’s most powerful tools is to put a question mark where God has put a period. He says, in other words, “Eve, are you really sure God said all of that?”

What Eve should have done was tell the serpent to hold the phone and then, call for Adam.

That is what my wife does when salesmen call – and they always ask for the wife. My wife is too nice to hang up on them. I do not have any trouble with that.

The problem is that Eve does not hang up! She actually enters into a dialogue and loosely paraphrases the prohibition of God, saying, “Well, we’re not supposed to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, or even touch it, or we’ll die.”

Eve, in fact, exaggerates God’s word, which never prohibited anything other than eating from the tree. She hints at what may have already become a growing frustration, “We can’t even touch it!”

How like Eve we are! We focus, not on what we have, but on what we do not have; not on what we can do, but on what we cannot do; not on what we can enjoy, but on what we cannot enjoy.

Eve says, in other words, “That one tree, we can’t even touch it or we’ll die.”

At that moment, Satan knew he had the upper hand. He immediately moved from doubt to denial. Look at Genesis 3:4.

***The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die!”***

For the first time in this perfect history and perfect environment and beautiful arrangement, someone has uttered the unthinkable – God is telling a lie.

Surely these words must have been shocking to Eve! But there was no word from Eve of, “How dare you!” There was just silence.

Ah, now see a subtle smile grow on the serpent's darkly stained mouth. He quickly moves from spreading doubt and stating denial into speaking delusion.<sup>vi</sup>

Continue to Genesis 3:5.

***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.***

Satan not only calls God a liar, but he goes even further to attribute to God evil and selfish motives. In other words, "Eve, the reason God doesn't want you to eat that fruit is because you'll become God too . . . and He can't take another god in the universe. He's envious of His throne . . . He is at heart, a coward who is afraid of losing ground on His divine turf."

"The Lion only wants the silver apples for himself! Eat it, Eve, and it will pay off, big time!"

Is that not the essence of sin?

The serpent is really saying, "Listen, God doesn't have your best interests at heart. He's really a rather petty God. If God really loved you, He'd never withhold that thing or that person from you; He'd never keep you pinned down. I can't imagine God not allowing me to do what's best for me. I mean, what kind of God is He?"

"Listen to me, Eve, and you will get all the Turkish delight you ever wanted!"

Instead of running, Eve stands before the tree and studies the fruit. She will make up her own mind now. Look at Genesis 3:6.

***When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, . . .***

In other words, "What is so bad about this fruit – it's edible?"

How did she know? Perhaps she watched an animal come up and bite one off. We know of no animals that were commanded to not eat from it. Perhaps the serpent himself took one and bit into it – in Eve's presence – and did not fall down and die. Maybe the fruit simply smelled sweet and she was hungry.

This is the lust of the flesh. In other words, "What could be wrong about something that is good to my body? My body says it is a good thing – so it must be good!"

Look further in Genesis 3:6.

***. . . and that it was a delight to the eyes, . . .***

It was beautiful fruit; it had an appeal to the emotion. This is not only the lust of the flesh, but the lust of the eyes. In other words, "How can something be wrong when it feels so right; when it seems so good? Didn't God create it too?!"

Eve saw further, according to Genesis 3:6,

***. . . that the tree was desirable to make one wise . . .***

This is the pride of life. In other words, "How can it be wrong when I believe it is reasonable and logical and sensible?!"

Eve reached for the silver apple – she dug into the Turkish delight. (Genesis 3:6)

The serpent cheered, for now she belonged to him.

Then, in the last phrase of Genesis 3:6,

***. . . and she gave also to her husband [Adam] with her, and he ate.***

Adam was not deceived, but simply chose companionship with Eve over fellowship with God.

### **Three discoveries about the consequences of sin**

Things began to move quickly for Adam and Eve. As winter began to descend on Eden, they made the following three discoveries:

1. First, Adam and Eve discovered physical shame.

The Bible says, in Genesis 3:7,

***Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked; . . .***

Satan's promise did come true. Their eyes were opened, not to some delightful discovery, but to their shame.

They now knew that they were naked. What was wrong with that – they had been naked all along?!

Let me remind you that God clothes Himself with the garment of light (Psalm 104:2); that Jesus Christ, at His transfiguration, shone with brilliant light (Matthew 17:2); that Moses' face shone so brightly, after having been in the presence of God, that he had to cover his head with a cloth (Exodus 34:35).

I agree with John Phillips and others that Adam and Eve, having been in the presence of God from the moment of their creation, shone with a covering a light. When they sinned, the light went out. The death of their spirit caused the adornment of light to be extinguished and their physical bodies to display prominence that immediately revealed to Adam and

Eve their loss and their shame. They were uncovered.

What was the first thing they did? They fashioned another kind of covering to make up for the loss of their original covering, which I believe was light.

2. In the act of fashioning a covering for themselves, Adam and Eve discovered, as it were, the effort of self-made religion.

The latter part of Genesis 3:7 informs us that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to make coverings for themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first religious act of human history. This is the first effort to cover over an awareness of sin. There is the thought, "There is something wrong; there is something amiss, so we must remedy the situation ourselves. Let's cover ourselves with leaves!"

God will come later, and death will occur for the first time in human history as He takes innocent animals and kills them to fashion their skins into coverings for Adam and Eve. In so doing, He is teaching them the very basic principles of atonement for sin – the shedding of an innocent's blood to atone for the sins of the guilty.

This is a picture of the coming Lamb of God who will be slain. He is the innocent One, dying to forever atone for the sins of the world (I John 2:2). He is the Redeemer of mankind, crushing the head of the serpent, yet being wounded by the same (Genesis 3:15).

Ladies and gentlemen, your presence in church this morning may be an attempt to cover over your guilty conscience – it might be nothing more than a fig leaf. Putting money in the offering plate may be another fig leaf! Singing in the choir; attending a Bible class, or maybe even teaching one, may all be fig leaves. These things may be nothing more than self-righteous attempts to salve your conscience and make yourself look and feel better – nothing more than a collection of fig leaves.

Have you trusted in the cross-work of the Savior on your behalf? Have you admitted your sin and your spiritual nakedness before Him? Have you asked Him to forgive you and save you; to clothe you, not with your efforts, but with His righteousness?

Satan said, "Eat the fruit and you will discover who you really are!"

Oh, Adam and Eve are discovering all right. They have discovered shame and futile cover-up.

3. Thirdly, Adam and Eve discovered new emotions of guilt and fear.

Notice Genesis 3:8.

***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.***

This was not the sound of God's voice, but the literal sound of God walking. Evidently, God had taken some form that could be seen and sensed and probably touched by Adam and Eve.

I remember as a child, playing with my brother in the room we shared, when we were supposed to be tucked into bed. Suddenly, we would hear footsteps on the stairs and then, a creak in the floor by our bedroom door. Our vertical leaping ability was amazing – we could literally, leap from a sitting position on the floor, into our beds, and under our covers in one jump. Our hearts would be thumping as the door would creak open and we would pretend to be asleep.

Adam and Eve are crouching behind a tree, trying to keep their fig leaves from rustling, in the hope that God will not find them.

In Genesis 3:9, God spoke,

... ***"Where are you?"***

Can you imagine? This is the very first question recorded in human history!

"Adam, Eve, where are you?"

Does He not know?

Oh, He knows the very tree they are hiding behind. God is simply then and now, inviting sinners to accept His invitation. He is the original and the only true seeker. We, as rebellious sinners, run from God. He seeks us.

Jesus Christ delivered His redemptive purpose,

... ***[I have] come to seek and to save [those who were] lost. (Luke 19:10)***

There we crouch with hands sticky with Turkish delight and faces stained with the juice of stolen apples.

## Conclusion

This is the fullest Christmas story; these are the true Chronicles of Christmas:

- The creation of mankind;
- The corruption of mankind; but with hope, for there is –
- The condescension of a Savior for mankind.

Why must the Lion of Judah come? Because earth is in the grip of winter; of continual winter, without ever the joy of Christmas.

Ah, but Mr. Beaver says to the children who have stumbled into the drama of Narnia, “Aslan is on the move.”

Already there are signs of a coming rescue – there are evidences of springtime, a resurrection, and a new creation.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/18/2005 by Stephen Davey.

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<sup>i</sup> John Owen, Sin and Temptation, <http://www.preachingtoday.com>, 1996, Bethany House.

<sup>ii</sup> Alex Johnson, “When You Care Enough to Risk Everything,” <http://www.msnbc.com>, Aug. 17, 2005.

<sup>iii</sup> Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware, Finding God in the Land of Narnia (Tyndale House, 2005), p. 30.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>v</sup> C. S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia (HaperCollins Publishers, 1955), p. 93.

<sup>vi</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Genesis (Loizeaux Brothers, 1980), p. 57.