

MY APOLOGY
for 'In The Beginning'

“You owe your sister an apology,” Mom said as I stood there, caught once again, for doing who remembers what to her for the who knows how many umpteenth time.

“I’m sorry.”

“Say it like you mean it.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“I said, ‘I’m sorry’, Geez, what do you want from me?”

“He said he’s sorry. Now you two go along and play.”

“He didn’t mean it.”

“Go now, Momma’s busy.”

From the title of this chapter one might assume that I regret having put pen to paper and written this fleshing out of ancient family history. One then would be wrong. My point being things are not always as they seem. The title of this chapter was chosen to accentuate this fact.

Although we have come to accept the word ‘apology’ to be synonymous with the phrase, “I’m sorry”, this was far from its original definition. Webster defines the term as follows: ‘1: a formal justification: defense. 2: an expression of regret for a wrong.’ The first definition being a head issue: an unemotional explanation of the logical reasoning for what one may have said, thought, or done and why it was the right thing to do at the time. The second definition is almost the opposite: an emotional expression for saying, thinking or doing the wrong thing at the wrong time (a heart issue). So, how did these two definitions become intertwined into the same word? I presume from countless scenarios similar to the one etched out above. Mom, too tired, too busy and too stressed out to listen to the long winded explanation from her loving but illogical child and more supportive of the heart issues involved in the alleged altercation, accepts the preamble to the requested apology (“I’m sorry ...”) and sent her battling toddlers along. (Tell me I’m wrong.) So, I have used the word ‘apology’ in its original form fully aware of it’s present day impact in order to make my point.

“Ok, so, what is your point?” you ask. And I’m glad you have. My point is centered on

recognizing misconceptions (justified or otherwise) and original intent. I am fully aware that some people (God fearing folk to be sure) will take umbrage with some of the choices I have made in the telling of this story. I don't expect everyone will find something to disagree with but you never know. (This was never intended to be a 'something to upset everyone' project.)

In order to tell this tale a number of choices had to be made. (Whether you agree or disagree with my selective choices I ask you to study the Scriptures for yourself.) You see there are time gaps and unanswered questions that, though they exist in a chronological sense, are not at the heart of the Bible; however, they still do exist. Answering these questions and filling these gaps was necessary in pursuing this project. There are many differing opinions on most (if not all) the choices depicted here. Simplistic questions as to who was created first: Adam or the Angels? (And the answer is: "Angels" - "Is that your final answer?" - "Yes" - DING-DING-DING: You are right!! (PROVERBS, EZEKIAL). And then there are more complicated questions such as where did Cain's wife come from? This particular question has led to many heated discussions and, truth be told, Scripture contains no clear answers to this debate. 'Where did Cain's wife come from?' remains the first of many open ended moments along with 'what does manna taste like?', 'what did Jesus write in the sand?' and 'where is Jimmy Hoffa buried?'

So why would God leave these questions unanswered (Hoffa's whereabouts not included)? Simply put they are not answered because they are not salvation issues. Meaning they have no bearing with matters of responsibility, justice, repentance, mercy, forgiveness, or redemption. It's kind of like asking what Thomas Jefferson was wearing when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. If you're making a film on Thomas Jefferson's life you will need to answer this question, otherwise who cares? Not that I'm suggesting that all answered questions are salvation issues but the ones unanswered are not. The greater risk is that in pursuing them we may find ourselves running through rabbit trails and lose our direction altogether.

So, where was I? Oh, yes: choices ... How did I make these choices? In using our Thomas Jefferson example we could put him naked in bed with one of his slaves (hey, history tells us this wouldn't be entirely inaccurate) but what greater good would this serve? I assure you all my choices were sought through prayer, study and an open minded review of traditional interpretation, non-traditional and fresh interpretation to each moment involved. I also assure you none of my selections were made for their shock value (jolt value maybe; shock value: no).

I knew that each option presented had to be scripturally sound. To accomplish this purpose I began with Martin Luther's litmus test: to 'let Scripture interpret Scripture.

So, why not just settle for traditional choices? Well, my friend (and I call you my friend because you're still with me in reading this far), I have found that 'traditional choices' like 'religion' can become spiritual stumbling blocks to relationship. (Please notice that I wrote the words 'can become' not the word 'are'.) Throughout this project I have tried to remain in constant contact with God, checked and rechecked my options before making my decisions. I asked these questions to each choice:

Is the choice I'm considering Scripturally accurate?

Does the choice contradict any salvation issues?

Does the choice lead the reader closer to God or lead him/her stumbling away?

Does the choice serve God or is it just an interesting option?

What other choices could be made to this same moment (traditionally or otherwise)?

Are any other choices better supported by Scripture?

Looking forward in the Bible, does this choice support any later developments?

Looking closer (aka 'living in the moment') does this choice support any deeper truths or insights?

Is there any contradiction in Scripture to the choice being considered?

Does the choice itself contradict any other choices made in the story?

All other things being equal, what choice provides the best moral decision?

All other things being equal, what choice provides the best storyline?

Having said this, we are now finished with the rambling section of our offering tonight. What follows are my apologetics for what I have written. Again, as I stated before we began our journey, some of the choices herein are weak at best. In presenting this exercise in apologetics I will attempt to emphasize these moments so as not to mislead anyone along the way. I have tried to stay in chronological order here but, as with all good tapestries, some choices are directly related to other choices in order to create an elaborate mural. So bear with me as we plunge forward as to why I wrote what I wrote when I wrote it ...

(GENESIS 1 - 3)

Eve before Adam?

Who? What? If this is what you have read here I must take responsibility for my poor communication. Eve is brought to Adam by God. Adam was placed in a sleeping state before God began the divine operation. Anyone who has waited for a sleeping loved one in a Hospital recovery room will understand the waiting of Eve that opens our story. That Adam was created first is undisputed. Read on, my friend, read on ...

The Chicken or the Egg? (OR: Who came first? God, Heaven, Angels, Earth, or Man?)

OK, lets get the undebatable out of the way: God created the Heavens and the Earth (GENESIS 1). God created man as the crowning achievement of Earth.. (GENESIS 1). So what is left is to ask who came first God or Angels? God is credited as creator and angels are not. God is, however, clearly insinuated as to being their creator as well. (HEBREWS 2, PSALM104:4) Therefore God came first, then Angels / Heaven, Earth and finally Man. (*Which came first between Heaven and Angels? Duh, I dunno and guess what? I didn't need to address this question in order to tell this story so I'm not going to tackle it now just for the intellectual pursuit.*)

Did the Angels contribute to Creation or simply watch?

The Angels were there at the advent of Creation. (JOB, PROVERBS). The statement (used in the opening of this book) from PROVERBS 8:21-31 reads "I am the craftsman at his side" (during Creation) suggesting the title of a worker rather than a mere observer (JOB) or cheerleader (JOB). In perspective though the issue of Creator is never given over to angels. Just as a manufacturer employs many workers so does God employ the work of His angels.

How old was Adam when God created him?

Adam was a boy. Why not? Tradition informs us that God created man and we merely

assume the form of an adult. Before the birth of Christ it was also assumed that the messiah would first appear on the scene as an adult. But an infant? Note that when Eve gave birth to Cain she stated that she had brought forth a “man” (GENESIS 4:1). Therefore the term “man” is not age bound. So, Adam starting as a baby and progressing through boyhood, rebellious teenager, young adult and on and on ... only makes perfect sense. In fact the logic of his interactions with God fit these maturation levels much more appropriately than ‘pop’: he started out as an adult.

When did Satan fall?

Ok, so maybe these aren't in perfect order but there are those who presume that Satan fell before Creation, some after and some ... well, you get the idea. *That* he fell is generally agreed on. (ISAIAH 14:12-17, EZEKIAL 28:12-19, LUKE 10:18). So, *when* is really the only question. Since popular belief exists that Satan fell before creation, now would be the right time to address the chronology presented in this telling. If we use the references in EZEKIAL 28:12-19 (in here we also find Satan an admirer of his own beauty) then his fall would take place clearly AFTER Eden was created. Traditional belief contends that Satan fell because he (Satan) refused to bow down to man (per God's request) and, on his way out, he made a stop in Eden. So ... now the question becomes did Satan fall before tempting man or after? I am not the first to suggest the chain of events in the order written here was simultaneous. Furthermore I have found no scriptural reference that negates this possibility nor any reference that is subsequently put into question by our accepting this timeline regarding these events.

How is it that a snake talked in Eden? Was the snake the devil after all? Or what exactly was going on there?

Ok, this one falls into the category of ‘hunh?’ So, God creates a talking animal? Dr. Dolittle could do it. So can several cartoon characters. But that's not what we were going for here. Angels are known to be able to disguise themselves into the forms of physical beings (2 CORINTHIANS 11:14-15). We have also employed a little poetic license in Adam's naming chore. Please recall that Satan is known by many names in the Bible. The serpent is clearly one of them. We simply named him early on.

Where did God look to find a suitable helper for Adam?

Ah ... we may be stretching things here but Genesis states that God's search took place as the animals were brought to Adam for naming. It is simply a common assumption that God was looking at the animals brought forth rather than the ones helping God by carrying forth the creatures. So whom did God look to? At first on we may think that other people He (God) had previously populated the earth with. This common theory is that God created mankind and then 'man' (Adam) to tend his garden fails to stand up to further scripture (1 CORINTHIANS 15:45-47) which clearly makes note of Adam as the one and only, first man. So, we lose the option of finding him a helper from other people (since they didn't exist yet). The likeliness of God sorting through the beasts of the air, the sea and land is a little ludicrous at best. Which leaves us one option: looking amongst the angels. Although he does not find a suitable helper there is a reasonable population here to choose from. Which brings us to our next question:

Were there (are there) female angels?

This is the big one. Now we *are* stretching things: the existence of female angels. The case against? No angels are referred to in female form, either by name or physical description. (*This could be grounds for why God wouldn't find a suitable helper among them.*) The case ambiguous? We are told in the New Testament that there is no male nor female in heaven. That Angels, being spiritual beings are genderless. (MATTHEW 22:30) Furthermore, being spiritual in nature they (angels) also take on human form to communicate without scaring mankind to death. (*Though the first thing they ever tell anyone is to not be afraid but that's another story for another time.*) in GENESIS 6:2-4 angels are referred to as the sons of God. So, as we see female entities amongst the Host are the biggest stretch of scripture. However, if angels can take on different forms (man, snake etc.) in interacting with mankind then taking on female form is not out of the question. (*Pop-culture aside where female angels are the norm; we are looking at Scripture here.*) So, other than 'why not?'; is there any case for the existence of female in the realm of heaven? Yes: PROVERBS 3 thru 9 gives us Wisdom, her maidservants and her alter ego Folly, all female manifestation. Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, was a serious womanizer, so his paying tribute to the softer gender comes as no surprise. However this is the thin grounds for female angels I have taken.

Enter Eve; where did she come from? How old was she?

Scripture clearly reports that she was made from the rib of a sleeping Adam. Having created her, the Lord then brought her to the man. Therefore our only vague point are the questions how old was she and how long was Adam asleep? (GENESIS 2:21) To be a suitable partner in life it only makes sense that Eve would be approximately the same age as that of Adam. Without compromising any ethical, spiritual or moral issues I must confess having Adam remain in a restful state until Eve is brought up to speed simply propels the story forward smoother than other options.

Discontent in Eden? Say it isn't so.

Who of us when our lives are going smoothly hasn't felt the pangs of 'Is this all there is?' How, without wanting for more, could Eve be coaxed into doing anything the shake up the status quo? The perception that Eden was perfect is not scriptural ... it's hindsight. The heartaches and headaches of childhood are blissful distractions to adult life. To children they are seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Hence the title Paradise Lost. God made everything and saw it as 'good', not perfect. The term *paradise* is only used three times in Scripture (NIV) and each time it is reference to Heaven not Eden. (LUKE 23:43, 2 CORINTHIANS 12:4, REVELATION 2:7) The term *perfect* or *perfection* is used only to describe God and His ways with the one sadly noticeable exception in where God himself (speaking through EZEKIAL 28:12) laments the fall of Tyre (Satan) as being the model of perfection when he walked in Eden.

Secondly we must consider the entrance of sin upon our scene. Sin, by definition, is to miss the mark. Sin is an action. It is not a feeling: therefore *not feeling good* is not sin. To determine whether discontent, wanting something more, loneliness or a myriad of other emotions could be sin I look at the life of Jesus Christ, as the only person to ever be without sin, for clarification. In his earthly life he felt such things as pain, hunger, thirst, anger, tears, compassion, grief, persecution and suffered to learn obedience. (ISAIAH 7:14-16, MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN, ACTS). Many of his emotions were, indeed, in response to a sinful world. However these emotions are not exclusive to being responses to sin, they are part of our natural make-up in the image of God. Therefore displaying these emotions within Eden are more than acceptable, they are fundamental.

Would Eve have been seduced by ‘Snake’?

Here our answer lies in hindsight. Eve is cursed by God to have desire only for her husband. (GENESIS 3:13) Therefore, desire for one other than her husband prefaces the reasoning for the curse.

Is s-e-x sin ... ?

There are many forms of sexual sin and immorality to be sure. Some are detestable in the eyes of God. But sex itself as sin? God told man to be fruitful and to fill the earth (GENESIS 1:28). This, as we know, is the by product of sexual relations. It follows then that sex, if by no other means but the concept of it, existed before man’s fall. Again, age ranges being appropriately in the teens supports the absence of sex before the fall of man. Sex itself is not sin. Sin was brought into this world not by following God’s decree to be fruitful but by man’s disobedience to eat of the tree he was told not to. Am I advocating then sex as being sin free? By no means. The perverting of God’s great gift for man and woman has been indeed just one of Satan’s greatest weapons. But again, we ramble. Let’s move on, shall we?

Darkness falls upon the earth (Where did all these shadows come from?)

This is pure poetic license. The purpose of which is to bring forth the unexpected for the reader as well as for Adam and Eve. I think this works quite nicely without tainting any of God’s original piece. (Let me repeat: there is no scriptural evidence to support the absence of shadows in Eden.)

Consequences of the fall

A footnote to this scene is here to emphasize the listen to the conversation etched in Genesis without jumping ahead. Slow down and hang on every word. As much is said in silence as in dialogue.

So, when *did* Adam name Eve?

Well, if we follow along chronologically in Genesis, there is no mention of Adam naming Eve until after the fall. Although he does give her the title ‘woman’ upon her arrival. To support this late naming of his dearly beloved we need only look at the blame shifting game after the fall

in where Adam refers to Eve as “*the woman you (God) gave me*”.

God as voice

This is the beginning of God’s movement from walking on the earth with man to being a deity that is worshipped unseen. One that is heard by the select few. Taken at face value we see God walking the earth alongside man and then after Cain is sent away God decides to go as well. This is just too clearly not the case. His (God’s) transition from physical being to inert thought has to be gradual. I tried at best to capture this progression within the story as brought on by Man’s movement away from God as opposed to God’s receding in apathy.

Downsizing heaven?

Again, time lines (as explained earlier) between the fall of man and the fall of Satan (‘Snake’) were chosen to coincide accordingly. Satan and his followers were thrown from Heaven and this would constitute restructuring Heaven with the remainder of the Host. Now, in order for Satan to live out God’s curse he is thrown to earth (to hell) and must be capable of escaping Hell although with limited access to man (under God’s discretion) The Bible supports this hypothesis and yet without going through a long theological thesis we’ll just move ahead.

But we thought Adam & Eve were thrown out of Eden right away ...

Oh but how long are the spaces known as the white on the page. We read one line of text and being aware of the enormity of the text ahead of us, we sail right onto the next line without pause or ponder. Between the punishment and the banishment there are two distinct scenes. The first involving God clothing His guilty children (some scholars theorize that it was God killing an animal to make clothing for Adam and Eve, thus His making the first sacrifice of a blood offering to pay for the consequences of our sins rather than our presentation of His picking up the pieces of our carnage and employing them to our needs). The second scene involves God discussing our current state of affairs with ... Well, this is a question, isn’t it? God is talking to someone other than man (GENESIS 3:22-23). The two more popular thoughts on this are that God is talking to a:) himself, in form of the trinity, or b:) God is speaking with the Host of Heaven. In either scenario angels qualify as being present and privy to this conversation.

Where is the Tree of Life, anyway?

(and why does it seem like ‘the burning bush’ of Moses?)

Ok, sorry, I couldn't resist. This is another moment of poetic license. And again, no animals were hurt in the making of this movie ... no, that's not it ... no spiritual principles were affected by this literary liberty.

IN THE FIELDS
(GENESIS 4:1-16)

The formation of Hell

While we have no information regarding the creation of hell, (the conception of heaven's waste seems just so apropos), I was careful to fill this abyss with those items called out in Scripture: Darkness (1 SMUEL 2:9), fire (MARK 9:47-48, REVELATION 20"14), smell (2 CORINTHIANS 2:16) worms (MARK 9:47-48), as well as moaning, wailing and gnashing of teeth (MATTHEW 13:42).

Disfigurement of 'Snake'

God is not one who sets out to destroy. He is the final judge. (Now, don't get me wrong here, He can destroy anything He sets his mind to and has but) As far as Stan is concerned the only references we find are that he was enamored of his own beauty (EZEKIAL 28:17). So, what happened? How did he become this grotesque monster, ugly and deformed as he is so often depicted? Well, truth be told, Satan's disfigurement took place in the warning tones of parents trying their best to scare their ill behaving children to make 'prettier' choices. Ah, life, look what we parent's do to get a child to mind. So, the disfigurement of 'Snake' explained here is purely a condition made to conform to popular belief. What a parent won't do, hunh? (*I have three of my own*)