

What Does the Bible Teach About the Fallen World?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Defining our terms

1. Most brethren are uncomfortable with the phrase “fallen world,” believing it to be a denominational concept. It is actually based on Bible doctrine supported by multiple texts.

B. What is meant by “fallen”?

1. The word fallen is used in the Bible to describe someone or something spiritually and morally degraded.
 - a. Israel is described as fallen - Amos 5:2
 - b. The king of Babylon has fallen - Isa. 14:12
 - c. The glory of humankind will fall - 1Peter 1:24
2. Each of these has fallen away from the heights of God’s good will for them, fallen into sin, and therefore fallen under the just wrath of God. Those in a fallen state suffer the degrading and deadly spiritual, moral, and social consequences of sinfulness.
3. The scriptures warn against falling from a saved condition into a sinful state, describing it as falling - 1Cor. 10:12; Rev. 2:5
4. Therefore, “fallen” describes a condition where something or someone has lost a former glory and descended to a lesser, damaged state.

C. The “world” encompasses both the planet itself and the conditions of life on it bound by the rules of time, space, matter, and energy.

1. Originally, the world was different than it presently is
 - a. Gen. 1:31 - “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”
 - b. The animals appear to be at peace with Adam, including predatory animals - Gen. 2:19-20
 - c. Adam and Eve are vegetarians in the garden. There appears to be no death in the world until after sin
 - 1) Gen. 2:16-17, 3:19, 21
2. Child-bearing will become sorrowful and painful - Gen. 3:16
3. The ground falls under a curse because they sinned
 - a. Gen. 3:17-19
4. These things, given as punishment for sin, implicitly did not exist before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.
5. Therefore, this is a fallen world. As a result of Adam's sin, the world now must contend with sickness, sorrow, evil, and death. It is not the way the world was created in the beginning; because of sin, the world has fallen from a better, more glorious condition.

I. WHAT IS THE WORST PART OF THIS FALLEN WORLD?

- A. There are many things about life in this fallen world, or as Solomon puts it “life under the sun,” that make living in it difficult.

1. We are bound by the rules of time. We must live as if time was linear, or uni-directional. We can only move forward from the past, through the present, and into the future. The rules of time exist in this world, not in the Divine Realm.
 2. We are bound by the laws of thermodynamics, rules that govern this universe, not the Divine Realm. That is: 1) matter and energy cannot be created from nothing or made to go out of existence, and 2) all systems tend toward disorder and decay.
 3. We are subject to the randomness of events in this world (Ecc. 9:11). Disasters happen, accidents, unplanned and unforeseen circumstances are all part of living in a universe subject to randomness.
- B. However, the worst part of living in this fallen world is the spiritual circumstances of life under the sun.
1. Sometimes called the “human predicament,” it is characterized by two immutable rules:
 - a. All men sin - Rom. 3:23
 - b. All men die - Heb. 9:27
 2. This is a world in which all human beings who reach spiritual maturity (capable of discerning and choosing between right and wrong) will at some point in life choose to commit sin; and, unless the Lord returns in Judgment, every human being born into this world will die.
 3. Furthermore, persons who sin and then die are lost and sentenced to perdition, eternally.
 4. This was not the state of life under the sun before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.
- C. This is now a world where sin and death exist and must be addressed.
1. Gen. 2:16-17, 3:19, 22; Rom. 5:12, 18-19; 1Cor. 15:21-22
 2. “Evil and suffering are real. They aren’t an illusion, nor are they simply an absence of good. We are fallen creatures living in a fallen world that has been twisted and corrupted by sin, and we all share in its brokenness. Most of all, we share in its tragic legacy of disease and death.” (B. Graham)

II. WHAT IS LOST IN THIS FALLEN WORLD?

- A. Friendship with God changed into estrangement and enmity with Him
 1. Israel had to work in order to begin to restore their relationship with God
 - a. Ex. 15:26; Deut. 30:15-20
 2. A relationship with the world precludes a relationship with God
 - a. James 4:4; 1John 2:15
- B. A loss of the full reflection of His likeness into a distorted image of Him
 1. Gen. 6:5; Rom. 1:19-24, 3:9-12
- C. Joyful obedience to God’s rules is transformed into lawless rebellion and constant warfare with Him - James 4:1-3, 8, 10
- D. The beauty, tranquility, and vitality of godly family life into sexual-identity confusion, domestic strife, and social aimlessness
 1. Prov. 19:26, 29:15

- E. Changing dominion as trustees of God's world into a selfish exploitation of the land and the resulting environmental ruin - Ecc. 5:9; Haggai 1:6
- F. Surrendering knowledge of God's enlightening truth to the darkness of ignorance and the confusion of religiously reprobate minds
 - 1. Rom. 1:28; John 3:19-21

III. THE WORLD SUFFERS FROM THE SINS COMMITTED IN IT

- A. We now live in a fallen world, and all creation "groans" under the consequences of our sin - Jer. 12:4; Rom. 8:19-22; Isa. 24:4-7
- B. This fallen world is reflected in unfairness and inequities that create despair
 - 1. Ecc. 3:16, 4:1-3
- C. The fallen world presses the righteous to long for a better world
 - 1. 2Cor. 5:2, 4; 2Peter 3:13

IV. RELIEF IN THIS FALLEN WORLD

- A. God addressed the problems of His damaged creation
- B. Restored friendship with us in Jesus Christ - John 10:10, 15:15
- C. Restored the reflection of God's likeness in us through Jesus Christ
 - 1. 1Cor. 6:11; 2Cor. 3:18
- D. Restoring to humankind His original intentions for a relationship with them
 - 1. Eph. 1:3-7; 1John 3:1-2
- E. Restored His design for the family - Luke 1:17; Col. 3:18-21
- F. Jesus Christ will return and set everything right forever
 - 1. 1Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 21:1-5
- G. We live in a fallen world, but we have a RISEN Savior.

V. GOD PUT BEAUTY IN THIS FALLEN WORLD TO HELP SUSTAIN US

- A. "If this cursed and fallen world holds such beauty as what I see, Imagine the beauty of paradise that's gladly waiting for me." (Joyce Rachelle)
- B. An article I wrote years ago while living in Pennsylvania after a foot of snow fell overnight:

The Sermon Preached by the Snow

By Paul R. Blake

It dropped seven and a half inches of snow Friday evening and Saturday morning last week. I went out and shoveled the snow from the sidewalks, porch, and driveway. We had the parking lot plowed and the Rhodes family salted it. It started snowing again last Monday afternoon, and by Tuesday morning we got an additional six inches. I heaved a large sigh that morning, put on my boots, coat, and gloves and went out to do it all over again. As I stood there in the fresh fallen snow, I noticed that it was very quiet. I was outside; there was no sound of the furnace fan humming, no sound of a dog snoring, or the dishwasher running, or the cat scratching on her post. Silent. There were no outdoor sounds, either. The birds were silent, no cars were passing by, no animals moving in the woods, no voices from the neighbors yards. I listened more intently, and heard an airplane 30 miles away at the airport backing its engines as it landed. I heard the sound of a snowplow a mile and a half away on Route 168. The sky was overcast and the world around me was a landscape painting in black and white. I stood in awe and thankfulness that I was witness to a rare set of circumstances. It occurred to me that it was a blessing to see and hear a world slumbering beneath a foot thick blanket of snow. It was a

beautiful and blessed experience. I forgot all about the cold temperatures and the work of shoveling snow.

Tuesday's snow spoke volumes about the wisdom of the Divine. From the day Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and this became a fallen world, God has managed to put beauty and blessings in the most difficult of experiences. He punished Adam by cursing the ground and requiring him to labor long and hard to sustain his life and the lives of his family (Gen. 3:17-19). However, it is in working hard and enjoying the product of his labors that a man derives great fulfillment and purpose in life (Ecc. 2:24). In the spring, the garden is covered with weeds and detritus, and the soil appears barren. He plows and plants, and his back is sore, his legs are weary, and his hands ache. In the summer, he pulls weeds and hoes around the plants in the hot sun for hours. It is hard work, it takes a toll on his body, and it demands that he discipline himself to stay on task. And then one day he walks into the garden and sees rows of healthy, verdant plants hanging full of colorful vegetables. Out of toil and sweat and weariness -- beauty, blessings, and abundance.

Eve was chastised with painful childbearing. She must endure great changes to her body and emotional state -- profound changes that cannot be understood by anyone who hasn't experienced it. And the process is not complete until she bears with the pain of giving birth. And yet, at the end of the discomfort of pregnancy and the pain of childbirth, God placed beauty, blessings, and abundance. Jesus said: "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world" (John 16:21).

The apostle Paul bore with a great deal of labor, sorrow, and pain in his work to save souls and start congregations of God's children (2Cor. 11:24-28). But at the end of his labors the Mediterranean was dotted with congregations of heaven bound souls. Beauty, blessings, and abundance.

As the archetype of God's wisdom and grace, Jesus came into this world and bore with great labor, greater pain, and even greater sorrow than has ever been known or experienced by humankind (Isa. 53:1-12). But at the end of His labors, God's eternal plan to save humankind was confirmed, our ransom was paid, the Adversary suffered devastating loss, and Jesus is seated next to God in heaven (Heb. 10:12-17). Beauty, blessings, and abundance. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified" (Isa. 61:1-3).

A foot of snow brought cold and more work, but it also brought beauty and a blessed experience. A job brings labor and weariness, but it also brings fulfillment and abundance. A baby comes with labor, sorrows, and pains, but she also brings beauty, blessings, and joy. Preaching the Gospel is brings sadness, troubles, and fatigue, but it produces saved souls and great joy in heaven and on earth. With labor, sorrow, and pain comes beauty, blessings, and abundance. The snow declares the wisdom of God.

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness" (Psalm 30:11). "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy" (John 16:20).