

# Beginnings

## BOOKS

■ GENESIS

## DATES

FROM:  
**Undated**  
TO:  
**2100 BC**

## THEMES

- Creation
- Sin
- Redemption

**E**VERY STORY has a beginning. The Bible begins with God. At the very beginning of this story, God created the universe and put everything in order, forming all of the planets, stars, and galaxies and setting them in motion. On earth, he created abundant varieties of living creatures. And he made the crown of his creation in his own image, his vice-regents: humans.

Creation isn't the only beginning recorded in the Bible, though. There is also the more tragic story of the beginning of sin and death. Adam and Eve, the humans whom God placed over his creation, chose to disobey him and shattered its perfection. This tragedy soon led to others, such as Cain murdering his brother Abel in a jealous rage. And ultimately, sin became so rampant and pervasive that God decided to

begin once again. He chose Noah, the only righteous man left on earth, to be the patriarch of a fresh beginning for humanity. But even Noah was vulnerable to sin, and his descendants showed that the sin problem was still very real and in need of a solution.

How would God continue his rescue plan for humanity? Would he need to begin again after the tower of Babel?

## PEOPLE & CULTURE

■ **Adam and Eve.** God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden to rule on his behalf. They worked hard at cultivating the ground and managing the affairs of the Garden, and they enjoyed communion with God there. But they chose to disobey God's one command, and through them sin entered the world. They were banished from the Garden, and their fellowship with God was broken. But God immediately set into motion his plan to bring humanity back into fellowship with him—this is the story of the entire Bible.

■ **Noah.** By the time of Noah, sin and wickedness were so rampant that God was actually sorry he had ever created humans (Gen 6:7). But Noah was a righteous man, and God chose to save him from the destruction that was planned for the rest of humanity. Noah and his family became a new beginning for humanity.

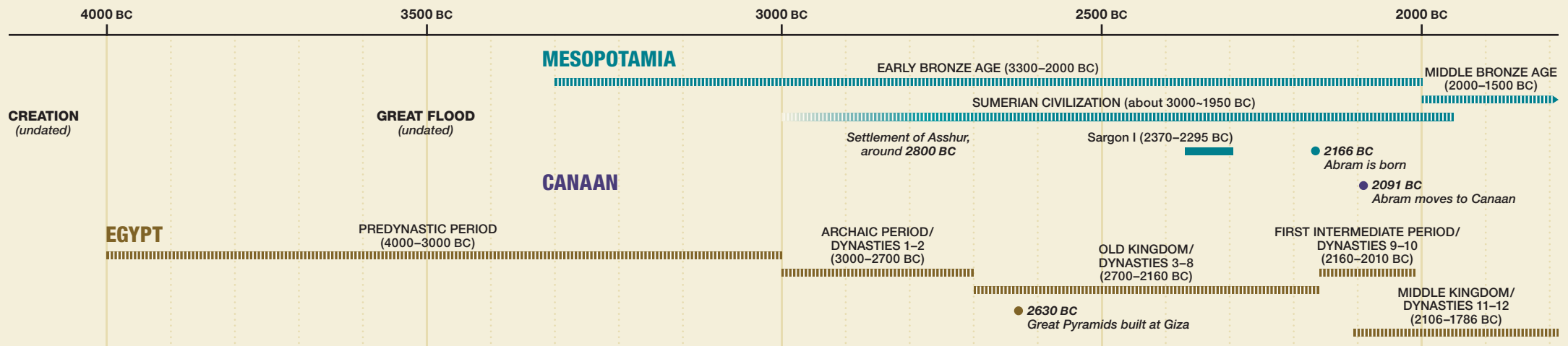
■ **Language and Culture.** After Noah's sons populated the earth again, there was a unified language and culture throughout the world. But this unity led to pride and a sense that humans didn't need God. As a result, God caused them to be divided by different languages and to be scattered around the world. Different cultures began to emerge from the different language groups and regions.



Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, by Wenzel Peter



## TIMELINE



## MAP

**1 Garden of Eden** God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when he made them in his image. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly where Eden was located, except for a few clues that are difficult to decipher in Genesis 2:10-14.

**2 Mountains of Ararat** Noah's boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, in modern-day Turkey (Gen

8:4). From here his sons and their descendants spread out to build new nations.

**3 Babel** The tower of Babel was built in the fertile area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in modern-day Iraq.



## MEGATHEMES

■ **Beginnings.** Here we find the beginnings of the universe, the earth, humanity, sin, and God's plan of salvation. Genesis teaches us that the earth is well-made and good; people are special to God and unique; God creates and sustains all life; and God deals with sin swiftly and with justice.

■ **Sin.** When people choose to disobey God's plan for living, they are choosing to sin. And sin ruins people's lives. Genesis shows that living God's way can be rewarding and makes life fulfilling.

■ **Promises.** God has promised to help and protect his people. He made a covenant with Noah that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood and gave a wonderful sign for us to remember his promise: the rainbow. God always keeps his promises.

## BOOKS IN THIS SECTION



### GENESIS

**AUTHOR:** Moses

**AUDIENCE:** The people of Israel

**PURPOSE:** To record God's creation of the world and his desire to have people worship him

**DATE WRITTEN:** Approximately 1450–1410 B.C.

**WHERE WRITTEN:** In the wilderness during Israel's wanderings, somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula

*And God saw that the light was good.  
Then he separated the light from the darkness.*  
Genesis 1:4

## A. The Beginning of Creation

We sometimes wonder how our world came to be. But here we find the answer. God created the earth and everything in it, and made humans like himself. Although we may not understand the complexity of just how he did it, it is clear that God did create all life. This shows not only God's authority over humanity, but his deep love for all creation.

### The Account of Creation

GENESIS 1:1–2:4a

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.\*<sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. Then

**Gen 1:1** Or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .*

**Gen 1:1** The simple statement "God created the heavens and the earth" is one of the most challenging concepts confronting the modern mind. The vast galaxy we live in is spinning at the incredible speed of 490,000 miles per hour. But even at this breakneck speed, our galaxy still needs 200 million years to make one rotation. And there are over one billion other galaxies just like ours in the universe.

Some scientists say that the number of stars in creation is equal to all the grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. Yet this complex sea of spinning stars functions with remarkable order and efficiency. To say that the universe "just happened" or "evolved" requires more faith than to believe that God is behind these amazing statistics. God truly did create a wonderful universe.

God did not *need* to create the universe; he *chose* to create it. Why? God is love, and love is best expressed toward something or someone else—so God created the world and people as an expression of his love. We should avoid reducing God's creation to merely scientific terms. Remember that God created the universe because of love.

**Gen 1:1ff** The creation story teaches us much about God and ourselves. First, we learn about God: (1) He is creative; (2) as the Creator, he is distinct from his creation; (3) he is eternal and in control of the world. We also learn about ourselves: (1) Since God chose to create us, we are valuable in his eyes; (2) we are more important than the animals. (See Gen 1:28 for more on our role in the created order.)

**Gen 1:1ff** Just how did God create the earth? This is still a subject of great debate. Some say that with a sudden explosion, the universe appeared. Others say God started the process and then the universe evolved over billions of years. Almost every ancient religion has its own story to explain how the earth came to be. And almost every scientist has an opinion on the origin of the universe. But only the Bible shows one supreme God creating the earth out of his great love and giving all people a special place in it. We may never know exactly how God created

he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

<sup>6</sup>Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." <sup>7</sup>And that is what happened. God made this space to separate



### ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

The Bible does not discuss the subject of evolution, but its worldview assumes God created the world. The biblical view of creation is not in conflict with science; rather, it is in conflict with any worldview that starts without a creator.

Equally committed and sincere Christians have struggled with the subject of beginnings and come to **differing conclusions**. This is to be expected because the evidence is very old and quite fragmented, due to the ravages of the ages. Polarizations and black-and-white thinking should be avoided. Students of the Bible must be careful not to make the Bible say what it doesn't say, and students of science must not make science say what it doesn't say.

The most important aspect of the continuing discussion is not the process of creation, but the origin of creation. **The world is not a product of blind chance and probability; God created it.**

The Bible not only tells us that the world was created by God, but more importantly, it tells us who this God is. It reveals God's personality, his character, and his plan for his creation. It also reveals God's deepest desire—to relate to and fellowship with the people he created. God took the ultimate step toward fellowship with us through his historic visit to this planet in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. **We can know in a very personal way this God who created the universe.**

The book of Genesis begins with "God created the heavens and the earth." The heavens and the earth are here. We are here. God created all that we see and experience. Here we begin the most exciting and fulfilling journey imaginable.

the earth, but the Bible tells us that God did create it. That fact alone gives worth and dignity to all people.

**Gen 1:2** Who created God? To ask that question is to assume there was another creator before God. At some time, however, we are forced to stop asking that question and realize that there has to be something that has always existed. God is that infinite Being who has always been and who was created by no one. This is difficult to understand because finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite. For example, we can try to think of the highest number, but we can't do it. Likewise, we must not limit the infinite God by our finite understanding.

**Gen 1:2** The statement "the earth was formless and empty" provides the setting for the creation narrative that follows. During

the second and third days of creation, God gave form to the universe; during days four through six, God filled the earth with living beings. The "darkness" was dispelled on the first day, when God created light.

**Gen 1:2** The image of the Spirit of God hovering over the surface of the water is similar to a mother bird caring for and protecting its young (see Deut 32:11–12; Isa 31:5). God's Spirit was actively involved in the creation of the world (see Job 33:4; Ps 104:30). God's care and protection are still active.

**Gen 1:3–2:7** How long did it take God to create the world? There are two basic views about the days of creation: (1) Each day was a literal 24-hour period; (2) each day represents an indefinite period of time (even millions of years).

the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. <sup>8</sup>God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

<sup>9</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>13</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

<sup>14</sup>Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. <sup>15</sup>Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the

The Bible does not say how long these days were. The real question, however, is not how long God took, but how he did it. God created the earth in an orderly fashion (he did not make plants before light), and he created men and women as unique beings capable of communication with him. No other part of creation can claim that remarkable

privilege. It is not important how long it took God to create the world, whether a few days or a few billion years, but that he created it just the way he wanted it.

**Gen 1:6** The "space between the waters" was a separation between the sea and the mists of the skies.

smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>19</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

<sup>23</sup>And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. <sup>25</sup>God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

**Gen 1:25** God saw that his work was good. People sometimes feel guilty for feeling good about an accomplishment. This need not be so. Just as God felt good about his work, we can be pleased with our work when it is well-done. However, we should not feel good about our work if God would not be pleased with it. What are you doing that pleases both you and God?

### Animals

Animals are mentioned throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Animals figured into many important biblical events, including the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, the ten plagues in Egypt, and the life of Jesus Christ. The people of both the Old and New Testaments lived close to the land and were well acquainted with various animals, which explains why the Scripture writers and Jesus himself frequently used animals as object lessons.

Present-day biologists classify animals based on internal and external structures, but in the creation account animals are classified by habitat. Thus, Genesis 1 speaks of water and air animals (Gen 1:20–21); cattle or domesticated animals—that is, animals that live with humans (Gen 1:24); animals that scurry along the ground (Gen 1:24); and wild animals (Gen 1:24). When God made animals, they became living souls (having nephesh—the Hebrew word translated "life" in Gen 1:20, 30). The same word is used in Genesis 2:7 to describe the human being God made; that is, the man became a living soul (nephesh). Both animals and humans are nephesh—that is, they are living souls. Human beings are different from animals in the sense that we have "spirit" (ruach) and we bear the image of God (Gen 1:27).



► **GENESIS 1:1–2:4a (cont.)**

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make human beings\* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created human beings\* in his own image.

**Gn 1:26** Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. **Gn 1:27** Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all

the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup>And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

<sup>31</sup>Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

**Gn 2:2** Or *ceased*; also in 2:3.

<sup>2:1</sup>So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup>On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested\* from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

# ADAM

We can hardly imagine what it must have been like to be the first and only person on earth. Adam had to learn to be human on his own. Fortunately, God didn't let him struggle too long before presenting him with an ideal companion and mate, Eve. Theirs was a complete, innocent, and open oneness, without a hint of shame. • One of Adam's first conversations with his delightful new companion must have been about the rules of the garden. They had complete freedom in the garden, with the responsibility to tend and care for it. But one tree was off-limits, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam would have told Eve all about this. She knew that the tree's fruit was not to be eaten. However, she decided to eat the forbidden fruit. Then she offered some to Adam, and he didn't pause to consider the consequences. He went ahead and ate. • In that moment of rebellion something large, beautiful, and free was shattered . . . God's perfect creation. Adam was separated from God by his desire to act on his own. The effect on a plate-glass window is the same whether a pebble or a boulder is hurled at it—the thousands of fragments can never be regathered. • In the case of Adam's sin, however, God already had a plan in motion to overcome the effects of the rebellion. The entire Bible is the story of how that plan unfolds, ultimately leading to God's own visit to earth through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' sinless life and death made it possible for God to offer forgiveness to all. Our own acts of rebellion—both large and small—prove that we are descendants of Adam. Only by asking forgiveness of Jesus Christ can we become children of God.

**Strengths and accomplishments**

- First zoologist—named the animals
- First landscape architect, placed in the garden to care for it
- Father of the human race
- First person made in the image of God, and the first human to share an intimate personal relationship with God

**Weaknesses and mistakes**

- Avoided responsibility and blamed others; chose to hide rather than to confront; made excuses rather than admitting the truth
- Greatest mistake: together with Eve, brought sin into the world

**Lessons from his life**

- As Adam's descendants, we all reflect the image of God
- God wants people who, though free to do wrong, choose instead to love him
- We should not blame others for our faults
- We cannot hide from God

**Vital statistics**

- Where: Garden of Eden
- Occupation: Caretaker, gardener, farmer
- Relatives: Wife: Eve. Sons: Cain, Abel, Seth. Numerous other children. The only man who never had an earthly mother or father.

**Key verses**

“It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it” (Gen 3:12). “Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life” (1 Cor 15:22).

Adam's story is told in Genesis 1:26–5:5. He is also mentioned in Luke 3:38; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13–14.

**Gen 1:26** Why does God use the plural form, “Let *us* make human beings in *our* image”? One view says this is a reference to the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, and the Holy Spirit—all of whom are God. Another view is that the plural wording is used to denote majesty; kings traditionally used the plural form in speaking of themselves. The grammar doesn't decide the matter for us, but in either case it is God who created humans in his image, and God has revealed himself to us as a Trinity clearly through the whole of the Scriptures.

**Gen 1:26** In what ways are we made in God's image? God obviously did not create us exactly like himself because God has no physical body. Instead, we are a reflection of God's glory. Some feel that the image of God can be found in one or more of the uniquely human capacities for reason, creativity, speech, or self-determination. More likely, the image of God is something that describes our entire being as humans, not just one aspect. God made humans to be in a special relationship with him and to reign over creation as his ambassadors and administrators on earth. We ought to reflect his character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness.

Knowing that we are made in God's image provides a solid basis for self-worth. Human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness, or public acclaim. Instead, it is based on being made in God's image. Because we bear God's image, we can feel positive about ourselves. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities he has given us. Knowing that you are a person of worth helps you love God, know him personally, and make a valuable contribution to those around you.

**Gen 1:27** God made both man and woman in his image. Neither one is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning the Bible places both man and woman at the pinnacle of God's creation. Neither gender is exalted over the other nor depreciated.

**Gen 1:28** To “reign over” something is to have absolute authority and control over it. God has ultimate rule over the earth, and he exercises his authority with loving care. When God delegated some of his authority to the human race, he expected us to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share our planet. We must not be careless

## B. The Beginning of Humanity

Learning about our ancestors often helps us understand ourselves. The stories of Adam and Eve in the Garden, followed by the tragic story of their two sons Cain and Abel, explain the sin and suffering in our world and help us to live our lives in reliance on God and his promises.

### 1. ADAM AND EVE

Adam and Eve, our first ancestors, were the climax of God's creation—the very reason God made the world. But they didn't always live the way God intended. Through their mistakes, we can learn important lessons about the way God wants us to live. Adam and Eve teach us much about the nature of sin and its consequences.

#### The Man and Woman in the Garden

**GENESIS 2:4b–25**

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup>neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup>Instead, springs\* came up from the ground

**Gn 2:6** Or *mist*.

and watered all the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from

### DAYS OF CREATION

First Day	Light (so there was light and darkness)
Second Day	Sky and water (waters separated)
Third Day	Land and seas (waters gathered); vegetation
Fourth Day	Sun, moon, and stars (to govern the day and the night and to mark seasons, days, and years)
Fifth Day	Fish and birds (to fill the waters and the sky)
Sixth Day	Animals (to fill the earth) Man and woman (to care for the earth and to commune with God)
Seventh Day	God rested and declared all he had made to be very good

and wasteful as we fulfill this charge. God was careful how he made this earth. We must not be careless about how we take care of it.

**Gen 1:31** God saw that all he had created was excellent in every way. You are part of God's creation, and he is pleased with how he made you. If at times you feel worthless, remember that God made you for a good reason. You are valuable to him.

**Gen 2:2–3** We live in an action-oriented world! There always seems to be something to do and no time to rest. Yet God demon-

strated that rest is appropriate and right. If God himself rested from his work, we should not be surprised that we also need rest. Jesus demonstrated this principle when he and his disciples left in a boat to get away from the crowds (see Mark 6:31–32). Our times of rest refresh us for times of service.

**Gen 2:3** That God blessed the seventh day means that he set it apart for holy use. The Ten Commandments emphasize this distinction by commanding the observance of the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11).

**Gen 2:7** “From the dust of the ground” implies that there is nothing fancy about the chemical elements making up our bodies. The body is a lifeless shell until God brings it to life with his “breath of life.” When God removes his life-giving breath, our bodies once again return to dust. Our life and worth, therefore, come from God's Spirit. Many boast of their achievements and abilities as though they were the originators of their own strengths. Others feel worthless because their abilities do not stand out. In reality, our worth comes not from our achievements but from the God of the universe, who chooses to give us the mysterious and miraculous gift of life. Value life, as he does.

**Gen 2:9, 16–17** Were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil real trees? Two views are often expressed: (1) *The trees were real, but symbolic.* Eternal life with God was pictured as eating from the tree of life. (2) *The trees were real, possessing special properties.* By eating the fruit from the tree of life, Adam and Eve could have had eternal life, enjoying a permanent relationship as God's children.

In either case, Adam and Eve's sin separated them from the tree of life and thus kept them from obtaining eternal life. Interestingly,

► **GENESIS 2:4b-25 (cont.)**

the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. <sup>11</sup>The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. <sup>12</sup>The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. <sup>13</sup>The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. <sup>16</sup>But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—<sup>17</sup>except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

**Gn 2:19** Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. **Gn 2:21** Or *took a part of the man's side*.

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” <sup>19</sup>So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man\* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. <sup>20</sup>He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

<sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs\* and closed up the opening. <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,  
and flesh from my flesh!  
She will be called ‘woman,’  
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

<sup>24</sup>This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

<sup>25</sup>Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

**The Man and Woman Sin**

**GENESIS 3:1-19**

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

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everyone away from God, he will not be the final victor. In Genesis 3:14-15, God promises that Satan will be crushed by one of the woman's offspring, the Messiah.

**Gen 3:1-6** Why does Satan tempt us? Temptation is Satan's invitation to give in to his kind of life and give up on God's kind of life. Satan tempted Eve and succeeded in getting her to sin. Ever since then, he's been busy trying to get people to sin. He even tempted Jesus (Matt 4:1-11), but Jesus did not sin!

How could Eve have resisted temptation? By following the same guidelines we can follow. First, we must realize that *being tempted* is not a sin. We have not sinned until we *give in* to the temptation. Second, to resist temptation, we must pray for strength to resist, run from it (sometimes literally), and say no when confronted with what we know is wrong. James 1:12 tells of the blessings and rewards for those who don't give in when tempted.

**Gen 3:1-6** The serpent, Satan, tempted Eve by getting her to doubt God's goodness. He implied that God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share his knowledge of good and evil. Satan made Eve forget all that God had given her and, instead, focus on what God had forbidden. We fall into trouble, too, when we dwell on what God forbids rather than on the countless blessings and promises God has given us. The next time you are feeling sorry for yourself because of what you don't have, consider all that you *do* have and thank God. Then your doubts won't lead you into sin.

**Gen 3:5** Adam and Eve got what they wanted: an intimate knowledge of both good and evil. But they got it by disobeying God, and the results were disastrous. Sometimes we have the illusion that freedom is doing anything we want. But God says that true freedom comes from obedience and knowing what *not* to do. The restrictions he gives us are for our good, helping us avoid evil. We have the freedom to walk in front of a speeding car, but we don't need to be hit to realize it would be foolish to do so. Don't listen to Satan's temptations. You don't have to do evil to gain more experience and learn more about life.

**Gen 3:5** Satan used a sincere motive to tempt Eve: “You will be like God.” It wasn't wrong of Eve to want to be like God. To become more like God is humanity's highest goal. It is what we are supposed to do. But

<sup>26</sup>“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. <sup>27</sup>“It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

<sup>28</sup>“You won't die!” the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>29</sup>“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

<sup>30</sup>The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took

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the tree of life again appears in a description in Revelation 22 of people enjoying eternal life with God.

**Gen 2:15-17** God gave Adam responsibility for the garden and told him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Rather than physically preventing him from eating, God gave Adam a choice and, thus, the possibility of choosing wrongly. God still gives us choices, and we, too, often choose wrongly. These wrong choices may cause us pain, but they can help us learn and grow and make better choices in the future. Living with the consequences of our choices teaches us to think and choose more carefully.

**Gen 2:16-17** Why would God place a tree in the garden and then forbid Adam to eat from it? God wanted Adam to obey, but God gave Adam the freedom to choose. Without choice, Adam would have been like a prisoner, and his obedience would have been hollow. The two trees provided an exercise in choice with rewards for choosing to obey and sad consequences for choosing to disobey. When you are faced with a choice, always choose to obey God.

**Gen 2:18-24** God's creative work was not complete until he made woman. He could have made her from the dust of the ground, as he had made man. But God chose to make her from the man's flesh and bone. In so doing, he illustrated for us that in marriage man and woman symbolically are united into one. This is a mystical union of the couple's hearts and lives. Throughout the Bible, God treats this special partnership seriously. If you are married or planning to be married, are you willing to keep the commitment that makes the two of you one? The goal in marriage should be more than friendship; it should be oneness.

**Gen 2:21-23** God forms and equips men and women for various tasks, but all these tasks lead to the same goal—honoring God.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE	
<b>Gen 2:18-24</b>	Marriage is God's idea
<b>Gen 24:58-60</b>	Commitment is essential to a successful marriage
<b>Prov 5:18</b>	Marriage holds times of great joy
<b>Song 4:9-10</b>	Romance is important
<b>Mal 2:14-15</b>	Marriage creates the best environment for raising children
<b>Matt 5:32</b>	Unfaithfulness breaks the bond of trust, the foundation of all relationships
<b>Matt 19:6</b>	Marriage is permanent
<b>Rom 7:2-3</b>	Only death should dissolve marriage
<b>Eph 5:21-33</b>	Marriage is based on the principled practice of love, not on feelings
<b>Eph 5:23-32</b>	Marriage is a living symbol of Christ and the church
<b>Heb 13:4</b>	Marriage is good and honorable

There is no room for thinking that one gender is superior to the other.

**Gen 2:24** God gave marriage as a gift to Adam and Eve. They were created perfect for each other. Marriage was not just for convenience, nor was it brought about by any particular culture. It was instituted by God and has three basic aspects: (1) The man leaves his parents and, in a public act, promises himself to his wife; (2) the man and woman are joined together by taking responsibility for each other's welfare and by loving each other above all others; (3) the two are united into one in the intimacy and commitment of sexual union that is reserved for marriage. Strong marriages include all three of these aspects.

**Gen 2:25** Have you ever noticed how a little child can run naked through a room full of strangers without embarrassment? He is not aware of his nakedness, just as Adam and Eve were not embarrassed in their innocence.

But after Adam and Eve sinned, shame and awkwardness followed, creating barriers between themselves and God. We often experience these same barriers in marriage. Ideally a husband and wife have no barriers, feeling no embarrassment in exposing themselves to each other or to God. But like Adam and Eve we put on fig leaves (barriers) because we have areas we don't want our spouse, or God, to know about (Gen 3:7). Then we hide, just as Adam and Eve hid from God. In marriage, lack of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a breakdown of physical intimacy. In the same way, when we fail to expose our secret thoughts to God, we break our lines of communication with him.

**Gen 3:1** Disguised as a shrewd serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve. At one time, Satan had been a glorious angel. But in pride, he rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. As a created being, Satan has definite limitations. Although he is trying to tempt

**Creation Stories**

Several ancient civilizations wrote down their own accounts of how the world was created. The best known of these extra-biblical creation myths is a Babylonian adaptation of the Sumerian story called *Enuma Elish*. The gods Tiamat and Apsu existed from the beginning, but after other gods were born Apsu tried to do away with them. One of the gods, Ea, killed Apsu; then Tiamat was herself killed by Ea's son Marduk, the god of Babylon in whose honor the poem was composed. Marduk used the two halves of Tiamat's body to create the foundation for both heaven and earth. He then set in order the stars, sun, and moon. Lastly, to free the gods from menial tasks, with Ea's help he created mankind from clay mingled with the blood of Kingu, the rebel god who had led Tiamat's forces. Other creation stories are found in Babylonian records. The Epic of Atrahasis describes the creation of man as a solution to relieve the gods of the work of cultivating the land.

In contrast to these stories from the surrounding cultures, Israel's creation story shows that God is completely in control. He is not one of many gods, and his creation of humanity was not a matter of convenience but an act of love. God created humans to rule his creation and have relationship with him, not simply to do the hard work that he didn't want to do.



Satan misled Eve concerning the right way to accomplish this goal. He told her that she could become more like God by defying God's authority, by taking God's place and deciding for herself what was best for her life. In effect, he told her to become her own god.

To become like God is not the same as trying to become God. Rather, it is to reflect his characteristics and to recognize his authority over our lives. Like Eve, we often have a worthy goal but try to achieve it the wrong way. We act like a political candidate who pays off an election judge to be “voted” into office; serving the people is no longer his highest goal.

Self-exaltation leads to rebellion against God. As soon as we begin to leave God out of our plans, we are placing ourselves above him. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

**Gen 3:6** Satan tried to make Eve think that sin is good, pleasant, and desirable. A knowledge of both good and evil seemed harmless to her. People usually choose wrong things because they have become convinced that those things are good, at least for themselves.

Our sins do not always appear ugly to us, and the pleasant sins are the hardest to avoid. So prepare yourself for the attractive temptations that may come your way. We cannot always prevent temptation, but there is always a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13). Use God's Word and God's people to help you stand against it.

**Gen 3:6-7** Notice what Eve did: She looked, she took, she ate, and she gave. The battle is often lost at the first look. Temptation often begins by simply seeing something you want. Are you struggling with temptation because you have not learned that looking is the first step toward sin? You would win over temptation more often if you followed Paul's advice to run from those things that produce evil thoughts (2 Tim 2:22).

**Gen 3:6-7** One of the realities of sin is that its effects spread. After Eve sinned, she involved Adam in her wrongdoing. When we do something wrong, often we try to relieve our guilt by involving someone else. Like toxic waste spilled into a river, sin swiftly spreads. Recognize and confess your sin to God before you are tempted to pollute those around you.