



## INTRODUCTION

### *Author, Date, and Recipients*

Traditionally, Moses is considered to have been the author of Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch (see Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:24; John 5:46). Of course, Moses lived much later than the events of Genesis. Presumably, stories were passed down about those earlier events, and Moses brought them all together.

The first audience would have been the Israelites Moses led through the wilderness. For readers today, Genesis is an essential introduction to the rest of the Bible. It is rightly called the book of beginnings.

### *Theme*

The theme of Genesis is creation, sin, and re-creation. God made the world very good, but first cursed it and then destroyed it in the flood because of man's disobedience. The new world after the flood was also spoiled by human sin (ch. 11). God chose Abraham for a special purpose. Through his family, all nations would be blessed (12:1-3). God's purpose will eventually be fulfilled through Abraham's descendants (ch. 49).

### *Key Themes*

1. The Lord God commissions human beings to be his representatives on earth. They are to take care of the earth and govern the other creatures (1:1-2:25).
2. Instead of acting as God's representatives on earth, the first man and woman—Adam and Eve—listen to the serpent and follow his advice. Their disobedience has devastating results for all mankind and for the entire created world (3:1-24; 6:5-6).
3. God graciously announces that Eve's offspring will free humanity from the serpent's control (3:15). Genesis then begins tracing the history of one family that will become the people of Israel. This family has a special relationship with God and will become a source of blessing to fallen humanity (12:1-3).
4. As a result of Adam's disobedience, his unique relationship with the ground degenerates, resulting in hard work and later in flood and famine. But the special family descending from Adam also brings relief from the difficulties (3:17-19; 5:29; 50:19-21).
5. While Eve's punishment centers on pain in bearing children (3:16), women play an essential role in continuing the unique family line. With God's help, even barrenness is overcome (11:30; 21:1-7; 25:21; 38:1-30).
6. The corruption of human nature causes families to be torn apart (4:1-16; 13:5-8; 25:22-23; 27:41-45; 37:2-35). Although Genesis shows the reality of family conflicts, individual members of the chosen family can also help resolve those conflicts (13:8-11; 33:1-11; 45:1-28; 50:15-21).
7. The wicked are exiled from Eden and scattered throughout the earth (3:22-24; 4:12-16; 11:9), but God is kind to his chosen people and promises them a land of their own (12:1-2, 7; 15:7-21; 28:13-14; 50:24).
8. God is prepared to destroy almost the entire human race because of its corruption (6:7, 11-12; 18:17-33), but he still wants his world to be populated by righteous people (1:28; 9:1; 15:1-5; 35:11).



Outline

- I. Primeval History (1:1-11:26)
  - A. God's creation and ordering of heaven and earth (1:1-2:3)
  - B. Earth's first people (2:4-4:26)
  - C. Adam's descendants (5:1-6:8)
  - D. Noah's descendants (6:9-9:29)
  - E. The descendants of Noah's sons (10:1-11:9)
  - F. Shem's descendants (11:10-26)
- II. Patriarchal History (11:27-50:26)
  - A. Terah's descendants (11:27-25:18)
  - B. Isaac's descendants (25:19-37:1)
  - C. Jacob's descendants (37:2-50:26)

The Near East at the Time of Genesis



c. 2000 B.C.  
The book of Genesis describes events in the ancient Near East from the beginnings of civilization to the relocation of Jacob's (Israel's) family in Egypt. The stories of Genesis are set among some of the oldest nations in the world, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Elam.



# GENESIS

*The Creation of the World*

**I**n the <sup>a</sup>beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was <sup>b</sup>without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he

called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be an expanse<sup>1</sup> in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>And God made<sup>2</sup> the expanse and <sup>e</sup>separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were <sup>f</sup>above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven.<sup>3</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>1</sup>Or a canopy; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 <sup>2</sup>Or fashioned; also verse 16 <sup>3</sup>Or Sky; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 1:2

**1:1-11:26 Primeval History.** Genesis 1-11 surveys the history of the world before Abraham, while chs. 12-50 focus on one main family. There are no real parallels to chs. 12-50 in the literature of other ancient civilizations. However, other ancient stories do exist about both creation and the flood. These stories stand in sharp contrast to the biblical account. Generally they depict creation as a great struggle, often involving conflict between the gods. For example, they claim that the flood was sent because the gods could not stand the noise made by human beings but were unable to control it in any other way. Genesis disproves such stories by its teachings. There is only one God, whose word is almighty. He spoke the world into being. The sun and moon are not gods in their own right but are created by the one God. It is human sin that prompts the flood. These principles in Genesis 1-11 run through the rest of Scripture.

**1:1-2:3 God's Creation and Ordering of Heaven and Earth.** The book of Genesis opens with a majestic description of how God created the heavens and earth and then put everything in order so that it might become his dwelling place. God assigns humanity to govern the other creatures on his behalf, so that the whole earth should become the temple of God, the place of his presence, displaying his glory.

**1:1 In the beginning.** The opening verse of the Genesis creation account can be taken as either (1) a *summary* of the entire process of creation or (2) a description of the *first event* in creation. This event would have occurred sometime before the first day (vv. 3-5), and would have included the creation of matter, space, and time. This second view emphasizes the fact that God created the universe from nothing (compare Heb. 11:3). **God created.** The Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is plural, possibly to express God's majesty, but the verb “created” is singular, indicating that God is one being. In contrast to other ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation, Genesis always emphasizes that there is only one God. Whenever the Hebrew verb for “create” occurs in the OT, God is the subject. **Heavens and the earth** here means “everything.” Thus, “in the beginning” refers to the beginning of everything. The text indicates that God created everything in the universe, which means that he created it out of nothing.

**1:2** Before the first actual day of creation (vv. 3-5), the earth was **without form and void** (compare Jer. 4:23), implying that it lacked order and content. The reference to **darkness . . . over the face of the**

In the Hebrew Bible, the title of Genesis is **In the Beginning**, the book's first words. The English title is related to the Greek word *genesis*, which means “beginning.”

**deep** points to the absence of light. **The Spirit of God was hovering** suggests that something was about to happen. There is no reason to think that a long time elapsed between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2.

**1:3-5 And God said.** God's absolute power is seen in that he merely speaks and things are created. Each new section of ch. 1 is introduced by God's speaking. Everything that God speaks into being is **good** (vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). These verses show how God has arranged time in a weekly cycle (**Day . . . Night**). God is pictured as working for six days and resting on the seventh, which is a model for human activity. Day 4 will develop this idea further: the lights are placed in the heavens for signs and seasons, for marking days and years and the times of the festivals, such as Passover. This sense of time having a structure is further emphasized as each stage of God's creative work is separated into specific days. **there was evening and there was morning, the first day.** After each workday there is an evening and then a morning, implying that there is a nighttime (the worker's daily time of rest) in between. Similar phrases divide ch. 1 into six distinctive workdays, with 2:1-3 being a seventh day, God's Sabbath. On the first three days God creates the environment that the creatures of days 4-6 will inhabit. For example, the sea and sky (day 2) are occupied by the fish and birds (day 5). These days can be understood as days in the life of God, but how *his* days relate to human days is more difficult to determine (see 2 Pet. 3:8).

**1:6-8** As light was separated from darkness, so the **waters** are separated to form an **expanse**, which God calls **Heaven**. It is difficult to find a single English word that accurately translates the precise meaning of this Hebrew term (see esv footnote). In this context, it refers to what humans see above them, that is, the region that contains both heavenly lights (vv. 14-17) and birds (v. 20).

**CHAPTER 1** <sup>1</sup>Job 38:4-7; Ps. 33:6; 136:5; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; John 1:3; Acts 14:15; 17:24; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:10; 11:3; Rev. 4:11 <sup>2</sup>Jer. 4:23 <sup>3</sup>2 Cor. 4:6 <sup>4</sup>Job 37:18; Ps. 136:5; Jer. 10:12; 51:15 <sup>5</sup>Prov. 8:27-29 <sup>6</sup>Ps. 148:4

<sup>9</sup> And God said, <sup>9</sup>“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth,<sup>7</sup> and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> And God said, <sup>11</sup>“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants<sup>2</sup> yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for <sup>14</sup>signs and for <sup>14</sup>seasons,<sup>3</sup> and for days and years,<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> And God <sup>16</sup>made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup> And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,<sup>18</sup> to <sup>17</sup>rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

<sup>1</sup> Or *Land*; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 <sup>2</sup> Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29 <sup>3</sup> Or *appointed times* <sup>4</sup> Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20 <sup>5</sup> The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

**Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** God said, “Let us make man” (1:26). This phrase could be the Bible’s earliest indication that God exists as three persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians refer to this as the doctrine of the Trinity.

**1:9–13** God organizes two further regions: the **dry land**, forming **Earth**; and the **waters**, forming **Seas** (vv. 9–10). God then instructs the earth to bring forth **vegetation** (vv. 11–12). The creation of distinctive locations in days 1–3, along with vegetation, prepares for the filling of these locations in days 4–6.

**1:14–19** These verses, describing the fourth day, correspond with the separating of light and darkness on the first day (vv. 3–5). Here is the creation of **lights** that will govern time, as well as provide **light upon the earth** (v. 15). By referring to them as the **greater light** and **lesser light** (v. 16), the author of Genesis avoids using terms that were also proper names for pagan gods linked to the sun and the moon. The term **made** may simply mean that God “fashioned” or “worked on” these greater and lesser lights. It does not necessarily mean that they did not exist in any form before this. On this day God made it possible that the sun and moon would define the passing of time. The references to **seasons** (v. 14) or “appointed times” (esv footnote) and to **days and years** probably refer to appointed times for religious observances in the Hebrew calendar (see Ex. 13:10).

**1:16 and the stars.** The immense universe that God created (see note on Isa. 40:25–26) is mentioned here only briefly, almost as an afterthought. The focus of Genesis 1 is on the earth.

**1:20–23** This section, on day 5, describes how the **waters** and the **expanse of the heavens** are filled with various kinds of creatures.

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds<sup>4</sup> fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup> So <sup>21</sup>God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> And God blessed them, saying, <sup>22</sup>“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, <sup>26</sup>“Let us make man<sup>5</sup> in our image,<sup>6</sup> after our likeness. And <sup>26</sup>let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

**27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; <sup>27</sup>male and female he created them.

**1:21** The Hebrew term for **great sea creatures** can mean large serpents, dragons, or crocodiles, as well as whales or sharks. Some have suggested that this could also refer to extinct creatures such as dinosaurs.

**1:24–25** **livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth.** These terms group the land-dwelling animals into three broad categories, probably reflecting the way nomadic shepherds would experience them. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and it is hard to know in which category to put some animals.

**1:26** **Let us make man in our image.** Some have suggested that God may be addressing the members of his heavenly court, whom the OT elsewhere calls “sons of God” (e.g., Job 1:6) and the NT calls “angels.” But man is not made in the image of angels (see Gen. 1:27), and the Bible never teaches that angels participated in the creation of human beings. Since God alone creates man (v. 27), many Christians believe that “let us” means God is speaking to himself. If so, this would be the first biblical mention of the “Trinity” (see note on John 1:1).

**1:27** The term **image of God** can be seen as describing the ways in which man is different from all other created beings. It describes how humans resemble God in their ability to think, to communicate, to understand right and wrong, to be creative, and to experience relationships with God and with one another. This allows men and women to represent God as they exercise authority over the rest of creation (see v. 26; and note on v. 28). The Hebrew word for **man** (*adam*), is often a generic term for both male and female, though sometimes it refers to man in distinction from woman (e.g., 2:22, 23; 3:8). It can also be the proper name “Adam” (2:20; 3:17; 4:1; 5:1).

<sup>9</sup> Job 38:8–11; Ps. 33:7; 136:6; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5 <sup>11</sup> Ps. 104:14 <sup>14</sup> Jer. 10:2; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:30, 31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25; Ps. 104:19 <sup>16</sup> Deut. 4:19; Ps. 136:7–9 <sup>18</sup> Jer. 31:35 <sup>21</sup> Ps. 104:25, 26 <sup>22</sup> Ch. 8:17; 9:1 <sup>26</sup> Ch. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8 <sup>27</sup> Ch. 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; James 3:9 <sup>2</sup> Ch. 9:2; Ps. 8:6–8; James 3:7 <sup>27</sup> Ch. 2:18, 21–23; 5:2; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, <sup>28</sup>“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. <sup>29</sup>You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup>And <sup>30</sup>to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**The Seventh Day, God Rests**

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and <sup>2</sup>all the host of them. <sup>2</sup>And <sup>2</sup>on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done,

<sup>1</sup> Or *open country* <sup>2</sup> Or *earth*; also verse 6 <sup>3</sup> Or *spring*

**1:28–30** Although the word “covenant” does not occur in the Bible until 6:18, many consider 1:28–30 along with 2:16–17 to be God’s covenant with Adam. See Hos. 6:7 and note. Adam receives this covenant on behalf of the rest of mankind. Thus, in the NT, Paul views Adam as a representative head of the human race (1 Cor. 15:22).

**1:28** **Be fruitful and multiply.** From the time of creation, God’s plan has been that the whole earth should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his representatives. To **subdue** the earth and to **have dominion** over it probably means that humans are permitted to make the earth beneficial for themselves. They are to investigate and develop its resources. This command provides a basis for wise scientific and technological development. It does not mean that humans may exploit the earth and its creatures simply to satisfy their own greed.

**1:31** One final occurrence of **behold**, it was **very good** invites the reader to imagine seeing creation through God’s eyes. Despite the invasion of sin (ch. 3), the material creation retains its basic goodness (see 1 Tim. 4:4).

**2:1–3** God has now completed the process of putting his creation in order (see note on 1:1–2:3). That God **rested** does not imply he was weary from labor. Rather, God’s resting hints at the purpose of creation. God’s purpose for the earth is that it should become his dwelling place, not simply a place for his creatures. **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy** (2:3). These words provide the basis for God’s instructing the Israelites to rest from their normal labor on the Sabbath day (see Ex. 20:8–11).

**2:4–4:26** **Earth’s First People.** Centered initially on the garden of Eden, the episodes in this part of Genesis recount how God’s ordered creation is thrown into chaos by the human couple’s disobedience. The subsequent story of Cain and Abel and then Lamech (ch. 4) shows human society spiraling downward into violence. These events are essential for understanding not only the rest of Genesis but the rest of the Bible as well.

**2:4** **These are the generations of.** This is the first of 11 such headings in Genesis (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). **LORD God.** Throughout 1:1–2:3 the generic word “God” was used for the Creator. The reader is now introduced to God’s personal name, “Yahweh,” which is rendered in most English Bible translations as “LORD,” using small capital letters. This practice comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of substituting for “Yahweh” the Hebrew term for “LORD” when reading the biblical text. The Septuagint (an ancient

and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

**The Creation of Man and Woman**

<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup>These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

<sup>5</sup> When no <sup>5</sup>bush of the field<sup>1</sup> was yet in the land<sup>2</sup> and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man<sup>3</sup> to work the ground,<sup>6</sup> and a mist<sup>3</sup> was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—<sup>7</sup> then the LORD God formed the man of <sup>7</sup>dust from the ground and <sup>7</sup>breathed into his <sup>7</sup>nostrils the breath of life, and <sup>7</sup>the man became a living creature. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD God planted a

**PROFILE: ADAM**

Adam, whose name means “man,” was the first human being. Created out of dust, he was made in the image of God. Adam was given dominion over the rest of creation and was placed in the garden of Eden to care for it. God created Eve as a helper for Adam, and together they enjoyed perfect fellowship with their Creator. But Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, which brought sin and death into the world. Because of their sin, all humans are now born sinners and will someday die. The Bible tells the story of how God redeems his creation from the curse of Adam’s sin. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

**KEY REFERENCE:** GENESIS 2:7

Greek translation of the OT used the Greek word for “LORD” (*Kyrios*) to refer to God. That translation was then quoted many times by the NT authors, who also used *Kyrios* rather than Yahweh for God’s name. See notes on Ex. 3:14; 3:15.

**2:7** **then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground.** The verb “formed” describes a potter fashioning clay into a particular shape. The close relationship between the man and the ground is reflected in the Hebrew words *adam* for man and *adamah* for the ground. **living creature.** The same Hebrew term is used in 1:20, 24 for sea and land creatures. (See Paul’s quotation of this passage in 1 Cor. 15:45.)

**2:8–9** God provides a suitable environment for the man by planting a **garden in Eden, in the east.** The name “Eden” suggests luxury and pleasure. It probably refers to a region much greater than the garden itself. God formed the man in the “land” (see vv. 5–7), and then **put** him in the garden (compare v. 15). The earliest translation

<sup>28</sup> Ch. 9:1, 7 <sup>29</sup> Ch. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15; 145:15, 16 <sup>30</sup> Ps. 147:9 <sup>31</sup> Eccles. 7:29; 1 Tim. 4:4 **CHAPTER 2** <sup>1</sup> Deut. 4:19; Ps. 33:6 <sup>2</sup> Ex. 20:8–11; 31:17; Deut. 5:12–14; Heb. 4:4 <sup>4</sup> Ch. 1:1 <sup>5</sup> [ch. 1:11, 12] <sup>6</sup> Ch. 3:23 <sup>7</sup> Ch. 3:19, 23; 18:27; Ps. 103:14; Eccles. 12:7; 1 Cor. 15:47 <sup>8</sup> Ch. 7:22; Job 33:4; Isa. 2:22 <sup>9</sup> Job 27:3 <sup>10</sup> Cited 1 Cor. 15:45

## A HELPER FIT FOR HIM

### GENESIS 2

I've had no greater joy in life than witnessing the wedding celebrations of my two daughters. One thing that contributed greatly to the happiness of that experience is that I, their father, performed the ceremonies. In doing so I reflected at length on Genesis 2, where we are given profound teaching on what it means to be a woman.

After God created Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, he placed him in the garden of Eden. There, in the splendor and beauty of that garden, as yet unstained by sin, one might think that Adam could ask for little more. With dominion over the creation and access to all the glory of God's handiwork, it seemed as if "paradise" was the only word fit to describe the life that was his.

But something wasn't quite right. There was something incomplete and unfinished about Adam's existence. For we read that the Lord God of heaven and earth looked down upon the pinnacle of his creative efforts and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18). On the one hand, a woman is made in the image of God, whether married or not. At the same time, a husband and wife are made for one another. They are to be lifelong companions, best friends, united in covenant relationship.

But there is an even greater message in marriage. Scripture tells us that when God chose to create this universe and all that is in it, he had one ultimate and all-consuming purpose in his heart. Everything else was subordinate to this one goal. Whatever else God would do or say, it would all serve to achieve this single, consummate design—namely, to glorify himself by securing a bride for his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. All of biblical history, from the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis to the descent of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation, is the story of the Father's loving redemption and relentless pursuit of a bride, the church, for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Marriage is the glorious opportunity for a man and a woman to embody, express, and illustrate this love relationship between Jesus Christ and his bride, the church.

And yet this is not to say that marriage is required for a fulfilling life. Jesus himself, after all, was single his whole life. As meaningful as marriage is, what brings supreme fulfillment in life is not knowing and being loved by any other human being, but knowing and being loved by God. While it will be painful to lack the companionship of marriage, all God's people, married or single, are called to trust in him alone for their joy and comfort. He will never leave us or forsake us. He is a good Father.

SAM STORMS



<sup>8</sup>garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup>And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. <sup>10</sup>The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, <sup>11</sup>and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of <sup>12</sup>Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup>And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>And the name of the third river is the <sup>15</sup>Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man <sup>16</sup>and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil <sup>18</sup>you

shall not eat, for in the day that you eat <sup>19</sup>of it you <sup>20</sup>shall surely die."

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; <sup>19</sup>I will make him a helper fit for <sup>20</sup>him." <sup>19</sup>Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed <sup>21</sup>every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and <sup>22</sup>brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam <sup>21</sup>there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>22</sup>So the LORD God caused a <sup>23</sup>deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made <sup>23</sup>into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

"This at last is <sup>24</sup>bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was <sup>25</sup>taken out of Man."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Or when you eat <sup>2</sup>Or corresponding to; also verse 20 <sup>3</sup>Or And out of the ground the LORD God formed <sup>4</sup>Or the man <sup>5</sup>Hebrew built <sup>6</sup>The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

**The Euphrates** (2:14) is the longest and most important river in southwest Asia. Early settlers depended on the river for commerce and agriculture. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers form what is today the Shatt-al-Arab, a waterway that flows into the Persian Gulf.

into Greek (the Septuagint) used the word *paradeisos*, from which comes the English term "paradise" (compare Luke 23:43), to translate the Hebrew term for "garden." The abundance of the garden is suggested by the fact that it contained **every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food** (Gen. 2:9). This very abundance will later become a source of temptation (3:6). On **the tree of life**, see note on 3:22-24. On **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, see note on 2:17.

**2:10-14** The description of the **river that flowed out of Eden** dividing into **four rivers** implies that Eden occupied a central location in the ancient world. In spite of the very specific details provided, however, Eden's location remains a mystery. While the names **Tigris** and **Euphrates** are associated with the two rivers that surround Mesopotamia, the rivers **Pishon** and **Gihon**, as well as the regions of **Havilah** and **Cush**, have not been satisfactorily identified. The reference to **gold** and **onyx** points to the land's rich resources.

**2:15-16** The overall picture of Eden suggests that the park-like garden is part of a divine sanctuary. **The man is put in the garden to work it and keep it**. Since God commanded Adam to work before Adam had committed any sin, work did not come as a result of sin. Productive work is part of God's good purpose for humans. The fact that God **commanded the man** implies that God gave the man a leadership role, including the responsibility to guard and care for all of creation (v. 15). This leadership role is related to Adam's relationship with Eve as his wife, who was given as "a helper fit for him" (v. 18). (On the NT understanding of the relationship between husband and wife, see Eph. 5:22-33.)

**2:17** The fruit of **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** has been variously understood as giving (1) sexual awareness, (2) moral

discrimination, (3) moral responsibility, and (4) moral experience. Of these possibilities, the last is the most likely. If Adam disobeys God and eats the fruit of this tree, he will come to know evil by experience. **you shall surely die**. What kind of death does this threaten: physical, spiritual, or some combination of the two? The Hebrew word can be used for any of these ideas, and the only way to discover what "surely die" means in this case is to see what happens as the story unfolds (see note on 3:4-5). **In the day that you eat of it** does not mean that death will come on that very day. It means that once the forbidden fruit is eaten, death will become a certainty.

**2:18 Not good** is a jarring contrast to 1:31. **Helper** is one who supplies strength in an area that is lacking in the one who is helped. **Fit for him** or "matching him" (see esv footnote) is not the same as "like him." A wife is not to be just like her husband but is to complement him. **I will make him** can also be translated "I will make for him," which explains Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 11:9.

**2:20 The man gave names**. By naming the animals, the man demonstrates his authority over all the other creatures. **Adam**. See note on 5:1-2.

**2:23-24 This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh**. Compare 29:14. Marriage creates the closest of all human relationships. Heterosexual monogamy is the divine pattern for marriage that God established at creation. **Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife**. Marriage creates obligations that are more important than one's duty to one's parents. In ancient Israel, sons did not move away from home when they married. They lived near their parents and inherited their father's land. But they "left" their parents in the sense of putting their wife's welfare before that of their parents. The term "hold fast" is used elsewhere for practicing covenant faithfulness (e.g., Deut. 10:20). Thus, other Bible texts call marriage a "covenant" (e.g., Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). Paul's teaching on marriage in Eph. 5:25-32 is founded on this text. When a man leaves his parents and takes a wife, **they shall become one flesh**. That is, they become one

<sup>8</sup>ver. 15; ch. 13:10; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8; Joel 2:3 <sup>9</sup>ch. 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14  
<sup>10</sup>ver. 17 <sup>11</sup>ch. 10:7, 29; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7 <sup>14</sup>Dan. 10:4 <sup>15</sup>ver. 8 <sup>17</sup>ch. 31:3-11, 17 <sup>18</sup>Rom. 6:23; James 1:15 <sup>18</sup>1 Cor. 11:9; 1 Tim. 2:13 <sup>19</sup>ch. 1:20, 24 <sup>19</sup>Ps. 8:6  
<sup>21</sup>ch. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12 <sup>23</sup>ch. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13; [Eph. 5:28-30]  
<sup>21</sup>1 Cor. 11:8

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**The Fall**

**3** Now “the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You<sup>1</sup> shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup>“But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,<sup>2</sup> she took of

its fruit <sup>x</sup>and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, <sup>y</sup>and he ate. <sup>7</sup><sup>z</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, <sup>a</sup>and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool<sup>3</sup> of the day, and the man and his wife <sup>b</sup>hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, <sup>c</sup>because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup>The man said, <sup>d</sup>“The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, <sup>e</sup>“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent,

<sup>1</sup>In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1-5 <sup>2</sup>Or *to give insight* <sup>3</sup>Hebrew *wind* <sup>4</sup>In Hebrew *you* is singular in verses 9 and 11

unit, a union of man and woman. This oneness is consummated in sexual intercourse. Jesus appeals to this verse and to Gen. 1:27 when teaching about marriage (Matt. 19:4-5).

**2:25 naked and . . . not ashamed.** The man and woman are living in a state of innocent delight.

**3:1-24** The sudden arrival of a speaking **serpent** presents a challenge to the human couple. Their choice to disregard God’s instructions is an act of willful rebellion that has terrible consequences for all of creation. Nothing is said about where the serpent came from. The text does not indicate when or how the serpent became evil. It is clear, however, that evil entered the created world at some time after God’s “very good” work of creation was completed (1:31). Unlike the teachings of some other religions, the Bible never teaches that evil has always existed. See notes on Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19.

**3:2-3** The woman’s response echoes the divine instruction given in 2:16-17 (see note on 2:17), although she fails to identify the tree clearly, and she adds, “neither shall you touch it.”

**3:4-5** The serpent directly contradicts what God has said. He presents the fruit of the tree as something worth having. By eating it, he says, Adam and Eve will be **like God, knowing good and evil**. The irony of the serpent’s remarks is that Adam and Eve, unlike the serpent, were already made in the image of God (1:26-27). They are already “like God.” This means they are expected to exercise authority over all the beasts of the field—including the serpent! By obeying the serpent, however, they betray the trust that God has placed in them. **You will not surely die**. It is sometimes claimed that the serpent is correct when he says this, for they do not immediately “die.” Further, their eyes are in fact opened (3:7), and God acknowledges that “the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil” (v. 22). Yet the serpent speaks only half-truths. What Adam and Eve will experience outside of Eden is not life as God intended. It is spiritual death.

**3:6 when the woman saw that the tree was good.** Somehow the serpent has made the woman discontented with the permitted trees (2:16), and she desires instead the forbidden one. Apparently she is attracted to the tree’s ability **to make one wise** (see note on 2:17). **she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.** As Adam ate what God had forbidden, he was deliberately rebelling against God. The fact that he was “with” Eve at the time meant that

**PROFILE: EVE**

God created Eve, whose name means “life,” as a helper for Adam. Fashioned from one of Adam’s ribs, Eve became the mother (that is, the female ancestor) of all human beings. Though enjoying perfect fellowship with God, Eve was deceived by the serpent and disobeyed God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve were driven from the paradise of Eden and began to experience great hardship. For Eve, that included pain in childbearing. Yet, as promised in Genesis 3:15, one of her offspring would defeat the serpent and bring salvation and eternal life to all who put their trust in him.

**KEY REFERENCE: GENESIS 2:23**

he had failed to carry out his God-given responsibility to guard and “keep” both the garden and his wife (see 2:15). The disastrous consequences of Adam’s sin include the fall of mankind, the beginning of every kind of sin, suffering, and pain, along with spiritual and physical death for the entire human race.

**3:9 the LORD God called to the man . . . , “Where are you?”** Both “man” and “you” are singular in Hebrew. God thus confronts Adam first, holding him primarily responsible for the sin committed by both Adam and Eve. Adam is thus treated as the representative or “head” of the husband-and-wife relationship, established before the fall (see note on Eph. 5:23-24).

**3:14-15** The serpent is punished for tempting the woman. It will live in ongoing hostility with the woman, which will be carried on by their respective **offspring**.

<sup>24</sup>Cited Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31; [Ps. 45:10; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11] **CHAPTER 3** <sup>1</sup>Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2 <sup>3</sup>ch. 2:17 <sup>4</sup>ver. 13; John 8:44; [2 Cor. 11:3] <sup>6</sup>1 Tim. 2:14 <sup>7</sup>ver. 12, 17; Hos. 6:7 <sup>7</sup>ver. 5 <sup>8</sup>ch. 2:25 <sup>8</sup>[Ps. 139:1-12; Jer. 23:23, 24] <sup>10</sup>ver. 7; ch. 2:25 <sup>12</sup>ch. 2:18; Job 31:33 <sup>13</sup>ver. 4; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14

