

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED **GENESIS**

THE WORDS, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” have evoked considerable debate; but without apology, that is how this book begins. In the words of one of the historic creeds: “I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” These words are only the beginning of this book of beginnings—a prologue to a prologue. Genesis gives more than an account of creation. It also describes other beginnings—humanity’s Fall into sin and the start of God’s elaborate rescue mission for all peoples. It tells what happened *first* in many important respects (creation, sin, judgment, languages, races, marriage); but at the center of Genesis lies God’s sovereign call to Abram and Sarai, a couple of idol worshippers in the Middle East.

AUTHOR AND BACKGROUND The Book of Genesis was written and compiled by Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai. Biblical and extrabiblical evidence points to this fact. Jesus clearly assumes Mosaic authorship of Genesis in the statement, “Moses therefore gave you circumcision” (compare also Acts 15:1). Since the reason for circumcision is mentioned only in Genesis 17, Jesus had to be referring to Moses’ compilation of the story. Second, both Jewish and Christian tradition unanimously agree with this biblical testimony: Moses compiled and wrote the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, in the Wilderness of Sinai. This would place his authorship of Genesis around the fifteenth century B.C.

Many scholars since the nineteenth century have denied Moses’ authorship of Genesis. Instead, some of these scholars have suggested that the Pentateuch, including Genesis, was compiled

at a later date, perhaps in the sixth century B.C. According to this analysis, anonymous editors used at least four documents to piece together the Pentateuch. These four documents were identified by tracing the divine names, such as Elohim and Yahweh, through the Pentateuch, and by tracing certain variations in phraseology and word choice. The four documents are called: the J document, which uses *Yahweh* for God; the E document, which uses *Elohim* for God; the P or Priestly document; and the D or Deuteronomic document. More recently, this dissection of the Pentateuch has been challenged, and no real consensus has emerged from the ensuing scholarly debate.

By appreciating the unified structure of Genesis, Moses’ guiding hand in the compilation and authorship of Genesis can be discerned. Certainly, Moses used other literary sources to piece

together his narrative. Sometimes these sources are identified (see Gen. 5:1). Moses presumably edited these older documents to make them understandable to his readers—the second Israelite generation after the Exodus. And later prophets updated the language for the ensuing generations of Israelite readers.

But after all the analysis, it is clear that Moses wrote and compiled Genesis to encourage the early Israelites while they were preparing to enter the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The content of Genesis would have been especially significant to them. It explains why their ancestors went to Egypt in the first place, why their nation was destined for another Promised Land, and why God had revealed Himself so dramatically to them in the wilderness.

PRINCIPAL MESSAGE Genesis, the book of beginnings, has two parts. The first part (chs. 1–11) serves as a prologue to the second part (chs. 12–50), the book’s main event—God’s sovereign work in Abraham’s family to accomplish His good will for all nations. This prologue (chs. 1–11) provides keys that unlock the rest of the book and the rest of the Bible as well.

Four key concepts presented in Genesis 1–11 are crucial for comprehending the rest of the Bible.

First, the God who entered the lives of Abram and Sarai is the same God who created the entire universe. He is the only true and living God—Yahweh, the Creator and the Savior of the world. Second, all people have rebelled against God, their benevolent Creator, and His good will for them.

Humanity has inherited a state of sinfulness from Adam and Eve’s rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Third, God judges and will judge the actions of all people. God,

by sending the Flood, made it clear to Noah and to everyone that human wickedness is entirely unacceptable. God cannot let evil reign free in His creation. Fourth, sin continues to plague all of humanity—even after the Flood. Although the Flood did not wash away sin, God, as the second half of Genesis (chs. 12–50) reveals, has a plan to save humanity from its own evil deeds.

The first part of Genesis provides the setting for the story of Abram and Sarai (chs. 12–50).

Their world is populated by a broad spectrum of people groups, each with its own language, customs, values, and beliefs, and all have adopted their own imaginary gods.

The main story of Genesis—God’s plan to bless all nations through Abraham’s descendants—starts in chapter 12. It begins with God’s call to Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah) to become the parents of a new people—a new nation. This new nation would become God’s tool for blessing all peoples. Even though Abram and Sarai were merely an elderly couple with the means to travel, God chose to begin His plan of redemption for the entire world with them. The description of their experiences demonstrates the *irruption* (the breaking into from without) of God’s blessing into their lives. Central to God’s blessing was His covenant with Abraham—the *Abrahamic covenant* (see 12:1–3; 15:1–21). God, the awesome Creator of the entire universe, freely chose to make everlasting promises to Abraham and his descendants. These promises in the Abrahamic covenant were the foundation for all of God’s subsequent promises and covenants in the Bible. Genesis is not merely a beginning; it provides the foundation for the rest of the biblical narrative.

CHRIST IN THE SCRIPTURES

According to the New Testament, Adam is “a type of Him who was to come” (Rom. 5:14). In other words, Adam’s life in some ways points vividly to Jesus. Consider that both individuals entered the world through a special act of God, as sinless men. But while Adam is the head of the old creation, Christ is the head of a new creation.

Melchizedek (whose name literally means “king of righteousness”) is a strange and shadowy figure who suddenly appears in Genesis 14. He is the king of Salem (which means “peace”); the Bible calls him “the priest of God Most High.”

TIMELINE

UNDATABLE

Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel

C. 2167 B.C.

Abraham is born in Ur of the Chaldeans

C. 2091 B.C.

Abraham is called to set out for Canaan

C. 2066 B.C.

Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah

C. 2006 B.C.

Jacob is born to Isaac and Rebekah

C. 1991 B.C.

Abraham dies in Canaan

C. 1915 B.C.

Joseph is born to Jacob and Rachel

C. 1886 B.C.

Isaac dies in Canaan

C. 1876 B.C.

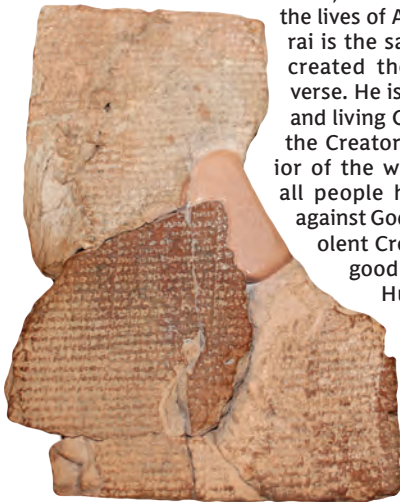
Jacob and his family move to Egypt

C. 1859 B.C.

Jacob dies in Egypt

C. 1805 B.C.

Joseph dies in Egypt



The Atrahasis Epic, c. seventeenth century B.C., contains an account of creation and early human history, including the Flood.

© 2013 by Zondervan

The early Israelites had a nomadic lifestyle. They lived in tents, which allowed them to easily move and travel to a new location.
yeowatzup/Flickr, CC-BY 2.0



Some scholars believe that this one who was, in the words of Hebrews 7:3, “made like the Son of God,” was in fact Christ Himself. Christ, after all, is known as the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6).

Joseph’s character and experiences (chs. 39–50) foreshadow the coming of the Messiah in that

both Joseph and Christ are objects of special love by their fathers, hated by their brothers, rejected as rulers over their brothers, conspired against and sold for silver, condemned though innocent, and raised from humiliation to glory by the power of God.

GENESIS OUTLINE

Prologue

- I. The stories of Creation and the Fall 1:1—3:24
 - A. Creation: the seven days 1:1—2:3
 - B. Creation: the making of man and woman 2:4–25
 - C. The fall of humankind and God’s judgment on Adam and Eve 3:1–24
- II. The family of Adam and Eve 4:1—5:32
 - A. Cain and Abel 4:1–26
 - B. The family history of Adam and Eve 5:1–32
- III. The Flood 6:1—9:29
 - A. The sons of God and the daughters of men 6:1–4
 - B. The choosing of Noah 6:5–22
 - C. The arrival of the Flood 7:1–24
 - D. The abating of the waters 8:1–22
 - E. The aftermath 9:1–29
- IV. The early nations and the Tower of Babel 10:1—11:32

Main Section

- I. Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah) 12:1—25:34
 - A. Abram and Sarai and their early experiences in the land of Canaan 12:1—15:21
 - B. Abram and Sarai’s search for a son 16:1—22:24
 - C. Abraham and Sarah’s last days 23:1—25:34
- II. Isaac and Rebekah 26:1—27:45
 - A. Isaac and Abimelech 26:1–33
 - B. Isaac’s blessing on his two sons Jacob and Esau 27:1–45
- III. Jacob and Esau 27:46—36:43
 - A. The sending of Jacob to Laban 27:46—28:5
 - B. Esau’s marriage to a daughter of Ishmael 28:6–9
 - C. God’s self-revelation to Jacob at Bethel 28:10–22
 - D. Jacob’s family 29:1—30:24
 - E. Jacob’s dealings with Laban in Padan Aram 30:25—31:55

- F. The reconciliation of Jacob and Esau 32:1—33:20
 - G. Dinah and her brothers 34:1—31
 - H. The last days of Isaac 35:1—29
 - I. The family records of Esau 36:1—43
- IV. Joseph (with two interludes) 37:1—50:26
- A. Joseph's dreams and a family nightmare 37:1—36
 - B. Interlude 1: Judah and Tamar 38:1—30
 - C. Joseph's humiliation in Egypt 39:1—40:23
 - D. Joseph's exaltation in Egypt 41:1—57
 - E. Joseph's reunion with his family 42:1—47:31
 - F. Interlude 2: Jacob's last days 48:1—50:14
 - G. Joseph's last days 50:15—26

THE HISTORY OF CREATION

GEN. 2:4–9; JOB 38:4–11; JOHN 1:1–5

1 In the ^abeginning ^bGod created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was ^awithout form, and void; and darkness ¹was on the face of the deep. ^bAnd the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

^{3a}Then God said, ^b“Let there be ^clight”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the ^adarkness He called Night. ¹So the evening and the morning were the first day.

⁶Then God said, ^a“Let there be a ¹firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” ⁷Thus God made the firmament, ^aand divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* ^babove the firmament; and it was so. ⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

⁹Then God said, ^a“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and ^blet the dry *land* appear”; and it was so. ¹⁰And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was* good.

^{1:1} ^aPs. 102:25; Is. 40:21; [John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:10] ^bGen. 2:4; [Ps. 8:3; 89:11; 90:2]; Is. 44:24; Acts 17:24; Rom. 1:20; [Heb. 1:2; 11:3]; Rev. 4:11 ^{1:2} ^aJer. 4:23 ^b[Gen. 6:3]; Job 26:13; Ps. 33:6; 104:30; Is. 40:13, 14 ¹Words in italic type have been added for clarity. They are not found in the original Hebrew or Aramaic. ^{1:3} ^aPs. 33:6, 9 ^b2 Cor. 4:6 ^c[Heb. 11:3] ^{1:5} ^aJob 37:18; Ps. 19:2; 33:6; 74:16; 104:20; 136:5; Jer. 10:12 ¹Lit. *And evening was, and morning was, a day, one.* ^{1:6} ^aJob 37:18; Jer. 10:12; 2 Pet. 3:5 ¹expand ^{1:7} ^aJob 38:8–11; Prov. 8:27–29 ^bPs. 148:4 ^{1:9} ^aJob 26:10; Ps. 104:6–9; Prov. 8:29; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5 ^bPs. 24:1, 2; 33:7; 95:5

1:1 In the beginning is a thesis statement, which can be paraphrased, “Here is the story of God’s creation of the heavens and the earth.” The focus is on the creation of the material world—the heavens and the earth. **God:** This standard Hebrew term for deity, *Elohim*, is in the form called the plural of majesty or the plural of intensity. In contrast to the ordinary plural (gods), this plural means “the fullness of deity” or “God—very God.” Even though the word for God is plural, the verb for created is singular. It means “to fashion anew.” This oft-used word in the Bible always has God as its subject. Here, it means that God renewed what was in a chaotic state. God changed chaos into cosmos, disorder into order, emptiness into fullness. **The heavens and the earth** mean “all of creation” or “the cosmos.”

1:2 The two words *without form . . . void* express one concept—chaos. The earth had been reduced to this state (Jer. 4:23); it was not the way God had first created it (Is. 45:18). **Darkness** is a potent biblical symbol

of evil and wrong (Job 3:5; Ps. 143:3; Is. 8:22; John 3:19). The **deep** is a term for the secret places of the waters (see also 7:11); this term sounds enough like the name of the Babylonian goddess Tiamat to remind the ancient reader of the Babylonian story of creation to which this story stands in dramatic contrast. All these images together portray chaos, disaster, and devastation. From this portrait of utter ruin, God brought an orderly creation. **The Spirit of God was hovering** like a mother stork might hover over her nest—a portent of life to come from the dark, murky depths of the chaos below (the Spirit is described as a dove in Matt. 3:16).

1:3 **Let there be light:** These words express a principal theme of the Bible: God bringing light into the darkness (see Is. 9:1, 2). Here, God produced physical light. The NT records God sending His Son to be the light of the world (John 8:12). In the end, there will no longer be any darkness at all (Rev. 21:23). God **said** it, and it was done: **there was light**. His command caused reality.

1:4 Having examined the light, God declared it to be **good**—a powerful term of God’s blessing.

1:5 **Day . . . Night:** The naming of these elements of creation is a mark of God’s sovereignty. In the thinking of the peoples of the ancient Middle East, naming something was a mark of power or lordship. For them, names were not merely labels, but descriptions with some force to them. Since the sun was not yet created (vv. 14–19), the **first day** (lit., a day, one) is ambiguous. Some say that the “seven days” is a literary frame on which the story of creation is draped. Others argue for a strict pattern of seven 24-hour days.

1:6 In biblical usage, the term **firmament** means “heavens.” Literally, it means “something stretched out, like hammered metal.”

1:7 **divided the waters:** The notion of upper and lower waters is somewhat mysterious. The language may simply refer to waters gathered in a liquid state and to moisture in the atmosphere. The division of the waters is another of God’s acts in bringing order out of disorder.

1:9 The gathering of the waters and the separation of the **dry land** are further actions of God in establishing control over the chaos described in v. 2. Each act of separation and distinction brings order out of disorder, form out of formlessness, cosmos out of chaos. Each act also demonstrates the Lord’s power and wisdom (Prov. 8:22–31).

1:10 Again, naming the creation marks God’s lordship (see v. 5). The naming of the

GOD ▶ (Heb. pl. *’elohim*) (1:1, 26; Deut. 7:9; Is. 45:18) Strong’s #430

The standard Hebrew term for God. This word is related to similar words for deity found throughout almost all Semitic languages. The basic meaning is probably “Mighty” or “the Almighty.” In Hebrew, this word often occurs in a form called “the plural of majesty” or “the plural of intensity.” In contrast to a normal plural (that is, “gods,” such as the false gods of 1 Kin. 19:2), the Hebrew uses this plural to mean “The Fullness of Deity” or “God—Very God!” Many Christians point to the plural form of this word as revealing the plural nature of God. God is one, but He is also three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth ^abring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the ^bfruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. ¹²And the earth brought forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed according to its kind, and the tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that *it was good*. ¹³So the evening and the morning were the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let there be ^alights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and ^bseasons, and for days and years; ¹⁵and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. ¹⁶Then God made two great ¹lights: the ^agreater light to rule the day, and the ^blesser light to rule the night. *He made* ^cthe stars also. ¹⁷God set them in the firmament of the ^aheavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸and to ^arule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was good*. ¹⁹So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living ¹creatures, and let birds fly

above the earth across the face of the ²firmament of the heavens.” ²¹So ^aGod created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was good*. ²²And God blessed them, saying, ^a“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind”; and it was so. ²⁵And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that *it was good*.

²⁶Then God said, ^a“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ^blet them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over ¹all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷So God created man ^ain His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; ^bmale and female He created

^{1:11}^aPs. 65:9–13; 104:14; Heb. 6:7 ^b2 Sam. 16:1; Luke 6:44 ^{1:14}^aDeut. 4:19; Ps. 74:16; 136:5–9 ^bPs. 104:19 ^{1:16}^aPs. 136:8 ^bDeut. 17:3; Ps. 8:3 ^cDeut. 4:19; Job 38:7; Is. 40:26 ¹luminaries ^{1:17}^aGen. 15:5; Jer. 33:20, 25 ^{1:18}^aJer. 31:35 ^{1:20}¹souls ²expanse ^{2:21}^aPs. 104:25–28 ^{1:22}^aGen. 8:17 ^{1:26}^aGen. 9:6; Ps. 100:3; Eccl. 7:29; [Eph. 4:24]; James 3:9 ^bGen. 9:2; Ps. 8:6–8 ¹Syr. *all the wild animals of* ^{1:27}^aGen. 5:2; 1 Cor. 11:7 ^bMatt. 19:4; [Mark 10:6–8]

earth in this verse suggests that the term was used in anticipation in v. 2.

1:11, 12 The broad words **grass, tree, and fruit tree** encompass all plants, shrubs, and trees. The reference to **seed and kind** speaks of the fact that the plant kingdom will continue to reproduce. God not only created plant life; He also set in motion the processes that make plant life reproduce. **1:14, 15** The creation of the sun, moon, and stars is described in general terms in these verses; vv. 16–18 spell out the details. **Lights in the firmament** are luminaries (objects that shine). They produce the division between the day and night. **signs and seasons:** Some have mistakenly viewed these words as a biblical basis for astrology. The signs in this case relate to phases of the moon and the relative positions of stars that mark the passage of time from the vantage point of earth. The two words form a pair that may be translated *seasonal signs*.

1:16 As in vv. 14, 15, the term for **lights** can mean “luminaries.” The word can either designate the sun, which emits light, or the moon, which reflects light. **He made the stars also:** This is a remarkable statement. In the ancient Middle East, other religions worshiped, deified, and mystified the stars. Israel’s neighbors revered the stars and looked to them for guidance. In contrast, the biblical creation story gives the stars only the barest mention, as though the writer shrugged and said, “And, oh, yes. He also made the stars.” Such a statement showed great contempt for ancient Babylonian astrology (see Ps. 29; 93).

1:17 **God set them:** Interestingly, the sun and moon are not named here, though they are clearly intended. The principal

issue throughout these verses is that God alone is in control.

1:21 The verb for **created** is the same one used in v. 1 (see v. 27, the creation of man). **According to its kind** suggests the capability to reproduce themselves (see v. 12). God not only made the living creatures, but He gave them the power to propagate and to proliferate, to fill the air and the seas in great numbers and in wonderful variety.

1:22 **God blessed them:** The first use of this important phrasing in the Bible (see 1:28; 2:3; 12:2, 3), and it is used of fish and birds! **1:24** The expression **living creature** contains the word sometimes used for the soul, but the word can also mean “life,” “being,” “living thing,” or “person,” depending on the context. The same phrase is used for man in 2:7. **cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth:** Three sweeping categories, like those of vv. 11, 20, make the point that God created all living things.

1:25 **God saw that it was good:** The sixth time that this phrasing is used (see 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21). Everything that God had made so far was good.

1:26 **Let Us make** emphasizes the majesty of the speaker and allows for the later revelation of the Trinity (see 11:7; Matt. 28:19). The *Us* cannot refer to the angels that are present with God because man is made in the image of God, not of the angels. **in Our image:** What is the image of God in man? The traditional view is that God’s image includes certain moral, ethical, and intellectual abilities. A more recent view, based on Hebrew grammar and the knowledge of the ancient Middle East, interprets the phrase as meaning “Let Us make man as our image” (the Hebrew preposition in this

phrase can be translated *as*). God placed humankind as living symbols of Himself on earth to represent His reign. This interpretation fits well with the command that follows—to reign over all that God has made.

according to Our likeness: This phrase draws attention to the preceding figure of speech. Since God is Spirit (John 4:24), there can be no “image” or “likeness” of Him in the normal sense of these words. Indeed, image-making was later strongly prohibited because of the clear ties it had with idolatry (see Ex. 20:4–6). We may not make images of God for He has already done so! *We are His images; it is we who are in His likeness.* This is the reason God values people so much: We are made to reflect His majesty on earth. **have dominion:** Rule as God’s regent. That is, people are to rule as God would—wisely and prudently.

1:27 **So God created man:** The third time the verb for *create* is used in ch. 1 (see vv. 1, 21); here it is used three times. The language of vv. 26, 28 is elevated prose; this verse is pure poetry. The 12 words of the original Hebrew are arranged in three lines that have their own poetic repetition and cadence. The term for man is likely associated with the term for the red earth. Here the word is generic, including **male and female**. These words are sexual. Some have thought that the “discovery” of human sexuality was the forbidden fruit of ch. 3. However, these words indicate that human sexuality was a part of the original creation (5:2). Although the misuse of human sexuality is soundly condemned in Scripture (Lev. 18), its proper use is celebrated (2:24, 25; Song). Verses 26–28 include the woman no less than the man in the story of creation.

them. ²⁸Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ^a“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and ^bsubdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that ¹moves on the earth.”

²⁹And God said, “See, I have given you every herb *that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; ^ato you it shall be for food.* ³⁰Also, to ^aevery beast of the earth, to every ^bbird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is ¹life, I have given every green herb for food*”; and it was so. ³¹Then ^aGod saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was very good.* So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth, and ^aall the host of them, were finished. ^{2^a}And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God ^ablessed the seventh

day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

^{4^a}This is the ¹history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵before any ^aplant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not ^bcaused it to rain on the earth, and *there was no man ^cto till the ground; ⁶but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*

⁷And the LORD God formed man *of the ^adust of the ground, and ^bbreathed into his ^cnostrils the breath of life; and ^dman became a living being.*

LIFE IN GOD'S GARDEN

⁸The LORD God planted ^aa garden ^beastward in ^cEden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made ^aevery tree good for that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. ^bThe tree of life *was also in the*

^{1:28} ^aGen. 9:1, 7; Lev. 26:9 ^b1 Cor. 9:27 ¹*moves about on* ^{1:29} ^aGen. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15 ^{1:30} ^aPs. 145:15 ^bJob 38:41 ¹*a living soul* ^{1:31} ^a[Ps. 104:24; 1 Tim. 4:4] ^{2:1} ^aPs. 33:6 ^{2:2} ^aEx. 20:9–11; 31:17; Heb. 4:4, 10 ^{2:3} ^a[Is. 58:13] ^{2:4} ^aGen. 1:1; Ps. 90:1, 2 ¹Heb. *toledoth*, lit. *generations* ^{2:5} ^aGen. 1:11, 12 ^bGen. 7:4; Job 5:10; 38:26–28 ^cGen. 3:23 ^{2:7} ^aGen. 3:19, 23; Ps. 103:14 ^bJob 33:4 ^cGen. 7:22 ^d1 Cor. 15:45 ^{2:8} ^aIs. 51:3 ^bGen. 3:23, 24 ^cGen. 4:16 ^{2:9} ^aEzek. 31:8 ^b[Gen. 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14]

1:28 God blessed them: God’s smile; the warmth of His pleasure (1:22; 2:3; 9:1; 12:2, 3). God delighted in what He had made (Prov. 8:30, 31). The word translated **subdue** means “bring into bondage.” This harsh term is used elsewhere of military conquest (Zech. 9:15) and of God subduing our iniquities (Mic. 7:19). As a king sets off to war to conquer a territory, so humans are told by the Great King to subdue the earth and rule it. Why this need to subjugate the earth? There are at least four possibilities: (1) Sin would ruin the earth, and people would have to expend great effort to live there (see 3:17–19). (2) Satan would defy the will of God and make all good efforts difficult. (3) The earth left to itself would not remain good. Instead, God planned that people would need to manage and control it. (4) The beauty of the earth was only in the garden that God planted (see 2:8); the rest of the earth would be hostile. Whatever the case, subdue does not mean “destroy” or “ruin.” It does mean to “act as managers who have the authority to run everything as God planned.” This command applies equally to male and female.

1:29 Many suggest that Adam and Eve were vegetarians because God gave them **every herb and every tree**.

1:31 This is the seventh use of the term **good** in the creation story (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). It is only one of several key terms that are used in multiples of seven in this text.

2:1 While mention is made of the heavens,

the focus in the first chapter has been on the earth. Although the earth is not the physical center of the universe, it is the center of God’s great creative work.

2:2 God did not rest because of fatigue, but because of His accomplishment. God is never weary (Is. 40:28, 29). The verb translated as **rested** is related to the word for Sabbath, which means “rest.” Many assume that the basic meaning of the Sabbath is worship, but this is not the case (Ex. 20:9–11; Deut. 5:12–14). By God’s blessed inactivity on this seventh day, He showed that He was satisfied with the work He had done.

2:3 God blessed the birds and fish (1:22), humans (1:28), and now **the seventh day** (Saturday). He **sanctified** it; He made it holy. Thus, from the beginning of time, God placed special value on a certain day of the week.

2:4 The term translated as **history** is found in ten significant passages in Genesis (here and 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2). The term may be translated **family histories** and is a major marker of the different sections of the Book of Genesis. **In the day** means “when.” **The LORD God** is a significant new term for God. The word translated as **God** is the same word as in 1:1. The word translated as “LORD” is the proper name for God, Yahweh (or Jehovah; see Ex. 3:14, 15). The God of ch. 1 and the LORD God of ch. 2 are the same.

2:5 The order of events in the second creation story is somewhat different from the

first account (1:1–2:3). Conditions were radically different from those we now know and understand. The phrase **not caused it to rain** anticipates the story of the Flood (see chs. 6–9). Here was an element of creation that was still in process. **man to till the ground:** The Hebrew term for man sounds similar to the term for ground (1:26; 2:7).

2:6 The precise meaning of the term translated as **mist** is unknown. Obviously it refers to some manner of irrigation before the Lord brought the cycles of rain into being.

2:7 The word **formed** is the term for a potter’s shaping of pots. Since man is made from the **dust of the ground**, that is where he returns when he dies (see 3:19). Although God created light with a mere word (1:3), He created man by fashioning a body out of mud and clay, transforming the clay into something new, and then breathing life into it. This **breath** may be the narrator’s way of describing the infusion of the human spirit, with its moral, intellectual, relational, and spiritual capacities. God showed tender care and intimate concern in the way He shaped man. **living being:** This is the same term that was used of animal life in 1:24. In this phrase we see how humans and animal life are similar, but the breath of life makes humans distinct from all other creatures.

2:8 The term **Eden** is not explained except that it is **eastward**. The exact location is not known. The planting of a garden is a touch of God’s meticulous, personal care. This picture of a caring and loving God complements the picture of the strong and transcendent Creator in ch. 1.

2:9 As created, man was able to enjoy **pleasant** sights—something that would later become corrupted by sin and give rise to lust (1 John 2:16). Eden was an extraordinarily appointed garden, with choice specimens of the finest trees and plants. Two trees of very special importance were also

HEAVENS ▶ (Heb. *shamayim*) (1:1, 8, 9; 2:1; Ps. 2:4) Strong’s #8064

The Hebrew word for *heavens* may refer to either the physical heavens, the sky or the atmosphere of earth (2:1, 4, 19), or to the dwelling place of God (Ps. 14:2), the spiritual heaven. The expression is probably derived from a word meaning “to be high, lofty.” To describe God as living in the heavens is to describe His exalted position over all people. The physical heavens testify to God’s glorious position and also to His creative genius (Ps. 19:1, 6).

midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good. ^aBdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³The name

of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is ^aHiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of ²Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵Then the LORD God took ¹the man and put him in the garden of Eden to ²tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every

2:9^c [Deut. 1:39] 2:11^a Gen. 25:18 2:12^a Num. 11:7 2:14^a Dan. 10:4 ¹Or Tigris ²Heb. Ashshur 2:15¹ Or Adam ²cultivate

there, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17; 3:24).

2:10–14 God provided a grand river in order to water the garden. With great care, He prepared the habitation of His people. The names Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates relate to later rivers that were known to the first readers of the text. But these later rivers likely would only approximate the

location of the original ones. The Flood obliterated earlier river courses. The New Jerusalem, the habitation of God's people in the future, will have a river as well as a new tree of life (see Rev. 22:1, 2).

2:15 The garden was perfectly prepared. It was man's home and he had to tend and keep it. Even the biblical paradise required work (1:26–28)!

2:16 In His great grace, God gave permission before He gave restriction. The New permission was broad (of every tree), while the restriction was narrow (v. 17). Man could do almost anything he wanted. It appears that man limited his diet to vegetation at first; only after the Flood is there mention of God's gift of meat as well (see 9:3).



GOD AS CREATOR

"God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). These words form one of the Bible's principal assertions about the material world—that God created it all.

The first two chapters of Genesis present two complementary accounts of creation (Ps. 104 and Prov. 8 present two additional accounts). Genesis 1 pictures God in sublime terms—grand and awesome. The Hebrew term used for deity in this section (*Elohim*) speaks of God's majesty, sovereignty, and awesome power. With a mere word, God spoke the entire universe into existence. When He finished, He called every part of His creation "very good" (1:31).

Genesis 2, on the other hand, presents a more personal picture of creation. It focuses on the creation of man and woman—the only beings in creation who reflect the very image of God. In this section, God's personal name (*Yahweh*, or LORD) is used rather than His title, "God." This is because God personally shaped Adam from the dust of the earth, breathing life into him, and forming Eve from Adam's flesh and bone. Moreover, the section depicts God placing Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden and interacting with them.

Of course, these two chapters are not written in terms of modern science. But neither are they written in what would have passed for science in ancient times. If the Bible had been written in the "scientific" language of its day, it would be little more than a relic today. Had it been written in the scientific language of the Middle Ages, it would have been a mystery to its first readers and nonsense to us. Had it been written in the scientific language of our own day, it would have been unintelligible to prior generations—and to be sure, a relic in future years.

These first chapters of Genesis reveal God's identity as Creator in language that makes sense to every sort of audience. The chapters spoke first to a people on the move, at the dawn of Hebrew history. Over the ages, they have spoken to ancient and medieval peoples. And today, they speak to people from all backgrounds. The modern person sometimes wonders why the language is not more precise. Yet these chapters do not aim at precision—their aim is clarity concerning one certain truth: *God created the heavens and the earth.*



These first chapters of Genesis reveal God's identity as Creator of the material world. The Garden of Eden, Kessel, Jan van, the Elder (1626-79)/Johnny van Haeften Gallery, London, UK/ The Bridgeman Art Library

tree of the garden you may freely eat;¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ^ayou shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it ^byou¹ shall surely ^cdie.”

¹⁸And the LORD God said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; ^aI will make him a helper comparable to him.*” ^{19a}Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and ^bbrought them to ¹Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name. ²⁰So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹And the LORD God caused a ^adeep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²²Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He ¹made into a woman, ^aand He ^bbrought her to the man.

²³And Adam said:

“This is now ^abone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called ¹Woman,
Because she was ^btaken out of ²Man.”

^{24a}Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and ^bbe¹ joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

^{25a}And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ^bashamed.

THE TEMPTATION AND FALL OF MAN ROM. 5:12–21

3 Now ^athe serpent was ^bmore cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the ^afruit of the trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God

^{2:17} ^aGen. 3:1, 3, 11, 17 ^bGen. 3:3, 19; [Rom. 6:23] ^cRom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22 ¹Lit. *dying you shall die* ^{2:18} ^a1 Cor. 11:8, 9; 1 Tim. 2:13 ^{2:19} ^aGen. 1:20, 24 ^bPs. 8:6 ¹Or *the man* ^{2:21} ^aGen. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12 ^{2:22} ^aGen. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:13 ^bHeb. 13:4 ¹Lit. *built* ^{2:23} ^aGen. 29:14; Eph. 5:28–30 ^b1 Cor. 11:8, 9 ¹Heb. *Ishshah* ²Heb. *Ish* ^{2:24} ^aMatt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31 ^bMark 10:6–8; 1 Cor. 6:16 ¹Lit. *cling* ^{2:25} ^aGen. 3:7, 10 ^bIs. 47:3 ^{3:1} ^aChr. 21:1; [Rev. 12:9; 20:2, 10] ^b2 Cor. 11:3 ^{3:2} ^aGen. 2:16, 17

2:17 the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: The phrase suggests “full knowledge” by tying together two contrasting words (as in 1:1, “heavens and earth”). We know little about this tree. Presumably, God wanted man to learn wisdom, but wisdom tied to his relationship with his Creator. **shall surely die:** These emphatic words are made of two forms of the verb meaning “to die.” The point is not that the guilty person would drop dead right then, but that it would certainly happen—there is no escape (Heb. 9:27).

2:18 It is not good: The first time a negative assessment appears in Genesis (see 1:31). God did not want Adam to be lonely, so He fashioned a **helper comparable to him**. This phrase indicates that this helper (or partner) would be truly fitting and fully adequate—just right. Some have thought that the term is demeaning, but it simply means “one who helps,” and in fact is used to describe God when He comes to our aid (see Ps. 33:20; 115:9, 10, 11). It does not refer to someone who is secondary or inferior.

2:19 The same verb for **formed** used here for God’s creation of animals is also used for His creation of man (in v. 7). Again, the verb suggests a potter at work casting his pots. But now, the pots are a lion and a raccoon, a raven and a stork. It appears that God created each animal (or group of animals) for the man to observe, study, and classify, **to see what he would call them**. In giving each animal its **name**, Adam demonstrated his right as God’s regent (see 1:26–28). He was lord over all created order. Furthermore, Adam’s names “stuck.” That is, he demonstrated perfect insight in the names he used for the animals. They were more than titles; they were terms that described the animals accurately.

2:20 In his close study of the living things that God paraded before him, Adam did not find a **helper comparable to him**. He needed a companion just like him, not a servant

or an aide (see v. 18); but another life like himself—with intelligence, personality, ethical and moral sensitivity, and spirituality. Yet the only living things that Adam found were some fascinating animals!

2:21 This is the first surgery, and God was the Surgeon. In His kindness, God used an unusually **deep sleep** as an anesthetic for the task. God’s use of a **rib** was fitting. He might have started over with dust and clay. But by using a part of Adam himself, the identification of Adam with his partner would be ensured. As Luther observed, God might have taken a bone from a toe and thus signified that Adam was to rule over her; or He might have taken a bone from his head to indicate her rule over him. But by taking a bone from his side, God implied equality and mutual respect.

2:22 The verb **made** means “to build.” The expansion of one small part into a complete body makes sense in today’s understanding of molecular structure and DNA.

2:23 This is now means “At last!” **bone of my bones:** Adam’s wording is poetic and exalted—seeing Eve was a shocking and exhilarating experience because the match was perfect. Here was a mirror of himself, someone just like him, and yet different! **She shall be called Woman:** In giving the woman her name, Adam was functioning as he had in naming the animals (v. 19). Yet the name that he gave her matched his own. She was woman, and he was man—perfectly suited for each other.

2:24 In marriage, a man is to **leave** his family, join his wife, and unite with her. Though this process establishes a new home distinct from the parents’, it does not sever all ties with the extended family (the clan). In the biblical period, extended families were quite close and interdependent. The words **be joined** speak of both a physical embrace and more general aspects of marital bonding. In marriage, man and woman are a “we,” not just a “me and you.” **One flesh**

suggests both a physical, sexual bonding and a lifelong relationship. There are still two persons, but together they are as one (see Eph. 5:31). In the NT, Jesus refers to this text as the foundation of the biblical view of marriage (Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16).

2:25 Because the man and the woman knew only good, they **were not ashamed** even though **they were both naked**. They were comfortable in their physical bodies, in their sexuality, in their relationship, and in their work—with no wrongdoing. The wording of vv. 24, 25 suggests the couple experienced sexual relations in the garden as a part of their God-intended experience. At 4:1 we first read of procreation, not necessarily the couple’s first sexual experience together.

3:1 With no introduction, **the serpent** appeared in Paradise. This is the first clue in Scripture of creation outside the one Adam and Eve experienced. The serpent symbolizes something both fascinating and loathsome. Yet neither Adam nor Eve saw the danger embodied in the serpent. The Hebrew word for **cunning** sounds like the Hebrew word for **naked** in 2:25. Adam and Eve were naked in innocence; the serpent was crafty and sneaky. In Eve’s innocence and naiveté, she showed no surprise on hearing a strange voice from the snake. **Has God indeed said:** Note that the serpent did not use the divine name Yahweh.

3:2 We may eat: Eve repeated the positive words of God (see 2:16).

3:3 There was one tree Eve knew to be off limits. This tree was in the middle of the garden. **nor shall you touch it:** Some interpreters suggest that the woman was already sinning by adding to the word of God, for these words were not part of God’s instructions in 2:17. Yet the first sin was not lying, it was eating the fruit that God had forbidden. Her words reflected the original command well enough and indeed they would have ensured that the command would be kept.

has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you ^atouch it, lest you die.’”

^{4a}Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶So when the woman ^asaw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* ¹pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit ^band ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, ^aand they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves ¹coverings.

⁸And they heard ^athe ¹sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the ²cool of the day, and Adam and his wife ^bhid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”

¹⁰So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, ^aand I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

¹¹And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

¹²Then the man said, ^a“The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

¹³And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, ^a“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of
the field;

On your belly you shall go,
And ^ayou shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between ^ayour seed and ^bher Seed;

^cHe shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

3:3 ^aEx. 19:12, 13; Rev. 22:14 3:4 ^aJohn 8:44; [2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14] 3:6 ^a1 John 2:16 ^b1 Tim. 2:14 ¹Lit. *a desirable thing* 3:7 ^aGen. 2:25 ¹*girding coverings* 3:8 ^aJob 38:1 ^bJob 31:33; Jer. 23:24 ¹Or *voice* ²Or *wind, breeze* 3:10 ^aGen. 2:25; Ex. 3:6; Deut. 9:19; 1 John 3:20 3:12 ^a[Prov. 28:13] 3:13 ^aGen. 3:4; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14 3:14 ^aDeut. 28:15–20; Is. 65:25; Mic. 7:17 3:15 ^aJohn 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:8 ^bIs. 7:14; Luke 1:31, 34, 35; Gal. 4:4 ^cRom. 16:20 [☆]; [Rev. 12:7, 17]

3:4 For the first time (here), Satan lied: **You will not surely die.** Lying was Satan’s craft right from the beginning (John 8:44). The serpent boldly denied the truth of what God had said. In essence, the serpent called God a liar.

3:5 By arguing that God had an ulterior motive, the serpent appealed to Eve’s sense of fair play. **you will be like God:** God’s fullness of knowledge was only one of the superiorities that set Him apart from the woman. But the serpent combined all of God’s superiority over the woman into this one audacious appeal to her pride.

3:6 Notice the parallel to 2:9; this tree was like the other trees. It was **good for food.** These words imply that this was the first time Eve considered disobeying God’s command. After all, there was nothing in the tree that was poisonous or harmful, and it was **desirable.** The issue was one of obedience and disobedience to the Word of God. **She took:** The first step. **She ate:** The final step. Once she disobeyed God, all the world changed. (Note, however, that Rom. 5:12 speaks of the sin of Adam rather than the sin of Eve.) Because she did not die, she **gave it to her husband. And he ate:** Adam sinned with his eyes wide open. He did not even ask a question. He knew as well as she that the fruit was forbidden. Adam and Eve had now broken faith with the Lord, and the world was forever changed.

3:7 The serpent was right—they knew good and evil (v. 5). This is the awful truth about a skilled liar—the deception comes mixed with truth. Their eyes **were opened.** They discovered that **they were naked.** All of a sudden with no one around but the

two of them, they were ashamed (see 2:25). Their lovely naiveté was now replaced by evil thoughts, and they covered themselves with **fig leaves.**

3:8 The scene is pathetic and sad. Here comes the Lord for an evening walk and a cozy chat. But Adam and Eve, who have “become wise,” cower in the trees to avoid being seen by the Creator of the universe. What had been a perfect, shameless fellowship has turned into dreadful fear of God—not fear in the sense of true piety, as with Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon—but the raw terror of being discovered in the wrong.

3:9 God, in His mercy, did not destroy both of them immediately. He even called out to them and interacted with them (see vv. 10–12). God’s mercy reaches further than we usually believe—or else we would all be destroyed.

3:11 The Lord carried the interrogation to its sad ending by posing one question after another.

3:12 A guilty man’s first line of defense is blame. Adam blamed **the woman**, and then he blamed God for having given her to him (for David’s contrasting response to Nathan, see 2 Sam. 12:13).

3:13 **the serpent deceived me, and I ate:** A simple statement of fact.

3:14 **to the serpent:** The Lord turned first to the serpent and brought His judgment upon him. God did not excuse the woman because she was deceived, but He did bring the harsher judgment on the one who deceived her. The language in these verses is poetry, something that adds solemnity to them. The word translated as **cursed** in this verse is used only of the curse on the serpent and on the ground

(v. 17). The woman and the man faced harsh new realities, but they were not cursed (God had already blessed them; 1:28). The text suggests that the serpent became a creature that slithers on the ground and appears to eat dust. This implies that before this the serpent had some other bodily form.

3:15 **enmity between you and the woman:** This is not just about snakes; it is about the enemy of our souls, Satan. **your seed and her Seed:** The language is ambiguous, but still contains the promise of a child. The term *seed* may be translated *offspring* (as in 15:3) or *descendants* (as in 15:5, 13, 18). The term may refer to an individual (Gal. 3:16) or a group of people. This means, among other things, that Eve would live—at least for a while. The Seed of the woman is the Promised One, the coming Messiah of Israel. *Seed* continues to be used throughout the Bible as a messianic term (see Num. 24:7; Is. 6:13). The meaning of the phrase **your seed** as it applies to the serpent is uncertain (but see John 8:37–47). The reference is ultimately to Satan. **your head:** This is sometimes called the “first gospel” because these words, as indirect as they are, promise the Coming One whom we know to be the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. The Lord was showing mercy even as He judged (see also 4:15). **Bruise His heel** speaks of a serious injury, but it is contrasted with the bruising of the **head**—the defeat—of the serpent’s seed. When Jesus went to the cross, He was bruised in His heel. That is, He suffered a terrible but temporary injury (John 12:31; Col. 2:15). In His resurrection, He defeated His enemy.

¹⁶To the woman He said:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow
and your conception;

^aIn pain you shall bring forth children;

^bYour desire *shall be* for your husband,
And he shall ^crule over you.”

¹⁷Then to Adam He said, ^a“Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree ^bof which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

^c“Cursed is the ground for your sake;

^dIn toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall
^bbring forth for you,
And ^ayou shall eat the herb of
the field.

¹⁹ ^aIn the sweat of your face you shall
eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;

^bFor dust you *are*,
And ^cto dust you shall return.”

²⁰And Adam called his wife’s name ^aEve,¹ because she was the mother of all living.

²¹Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—²³therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden ^ato till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So ^aHe drove out the man; and He placed ^bcherubim ^cat the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of ^dlife.

CAIN MURDERS ABEL

LUKE 11:51; HEB. 11:4; 12:24

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore ¹Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” ²Then she bore again, this time his brother ¹Abel. Now ^aAbel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³And ¹in the process

^{3:16} ^aIs. 13:8; John 16:21 ^bGen. 4:7 ^c1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22; 1 Tim. 2:12, 15 ^dLit. *toward* ^{3:17} ^a1 Sam. 15:23 ^bGen. 2:17 ^cGen. 5:29; Rom. 8:20–22; Heb. 6:8 ^dJob 5:7; 14:1; Eccl. 2:23 ^{3:18} ^aPs. 104:14 ¹cause to grow ^{3:19} ^a2 Thess. 3:10 ^bGen. 2:7; 5:5 ^cJob 21:26; Eccl. 3:20 ^{3:20} ^a2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13 ¹Lit. *Life or Living* ^{3:23} ^aGen. 4:2; 9:20 ^{3:24} ^aEzek. 31:3, 11 ^bEx. 25:18–22; Ps. 104:4; Ezek. 10:1–20; Heb. 1:7 ³Gen. 2:8 ^dGen. 2:9; [Rev. 22:2] ^{4:1} ¹Lit. *Acquire* ^{4:2} ^aLuke 11:50, 51 ¹Lit. *Breath or Nothing* ^{4:3} ¹Lit. *at the end of days*

3:16 your sorrow and your conception:

These two words mean “your sorrowful conception” (see 1:2; 4:12; 9:2; Ps. 9:2). That is, the woman’s joy in conceiving and bearing children will be saddened by the pain of it. The word *desire* can also mean “an attempt to usurp or control” as in 4:7. We can paraphrase the last two lines of this verse this way: “You will now have a tendency to dominate your husband, and he will have the tendency to act as a tyrant over you.” The battle of the sexes has begun. Each strives for control and neither lives in the best interest of the other (see Phil. 2:3, 4). The antidote is in the restoration of mutual respect and dignity through Jesus Christ (see Eph. 5:21–33).

3:17–19 Adam got his share of blame, even though he tried to escape it (v. 12). **Cursed is the ground:** Though the curse was not directed at the man, it is trouble for the man. Now his life will be marked by **toil, thorns and thistles, sweat,** and finally death. These words imply that before the Fall the ground was not filled with noxious weeds and work would have been more pleasant (2:15). **to dust you shall return:** Death will now come to humankind, whereas there had been the possibility of living forever (see Rom. 5:12–14). The word of God was sure: God had stated that they would certainly die (2:17). Now they were served notice concerning the process of aging and decay that was already at work (see 5:5; 6:3).

3:20 The name *Eve* is related to the verb meaning “to live.” Eve is our common mother, just as Adam is our common father. This is Adam’s second name for her. The first was *woman*, the feminine complement to his own masculinity (2:23).

3:21 This is the first place the Bible mentions the killing of animals for human use—this time for **tunics**.

3:22 become like one of Us: By means of their rebellious act, the man and woman now shared something with God. But they were also at enmity with Him because of their sin. Adam and Eve’s knowledge of good and evil had made them not wise but foolish. The fruit of the **tree of life** stopped aging. To eat of this tree was **to live forever**. One day this tree will be planted anew and its fruit will be for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

3:23 The man had been formed by God outside the **garden** (2:5–8, 15) and had been given the task of tending and keeping it. Now he was removed from the garden and sent back to till the soil **from which he was taken** (see 2:5; 3:17–19).

3:24 Even though Eve sinned first, this section (vv. 22–24) focuses on the **man**, Adam. This is the first reference to holy angels or the **cherubim** in the Book of Genesis. The creation of the angels (including those who rebelled against God; see 6:1–4) preceded the creation activities described in chs. 1; 2. A cherub (pl., cherubim) is an angel who takes on a particular form (see Ex. 25:18–22; cf. Ezek. 1:5–28). Cherubim, like all angels, are spirit beings, but they can take on physical bodies. Adam and Eve were barred from the garden that God had planted for their enjoyment with a **flaming sword**. There was no way back in. The fact that the **tree of life** remained, even though guarded by angels and a sword, was a ray of hope. Is it not possible that the very fact He guarded it, but did not uproot it, signifies that one day its fruit may be eaten again? Indeed, one day we will see it again (Rev. 22:2). Adam

and Eve were no longer welcome in God’s presence, but they had the hope that one day Paradise would be regained.

4:1 The verb **knew** is a splendid euphemism for sexual intercourse. It describes an intimate relationship that includes ardor and passion, but also mutuality and oneness. This was an act of procreation, but most likely not the first sexual union between Adam and Eve. The name **Cain** is related to a word meaning “craftsman” or “metalworker,” but it also sounds like the Hebrew word translated **I have acquired**. At times in Genesis, the meaning for a name is taken directly from it (for example, Ishmael in 16:11); at other times the meaning is based on a pun—a word that sounds similar to the name itself.

4:2 We have no explanation of the name **Abel** as we have with Cain (v. 1). Perhaps after Abel was murdered (v. 8), the parents looked back with sadness on the brevity of his life and called him Abel (meaning “vapor”) because his life was over so quickly. Keeping **sheep** and tilling the **ground** were equally valid occupations. They reflected merely different interests of the two brothers, not their character. The story of Cain and Abel begins a motif in Genesis of competing sons (like Esau and Jacob, 25:26).

4:3 Genesis does not explain how the practice of sacrificial worship began. The first readers of the book understood it well, because they had been instructed in full by God through Moses (see Leviticus). Some people assume that Cain’s sacrifice of **fruit** was deficient because it did not involve the shedding of blood, which God required for forgiveness of sins (see Heb. 9:22). But nothing in ch. 4 indicates that Cain and Abel came to God for forgiveness; their