

## Introduction to

# GENESIS

**E**ver look up at a starlit sky and ask, “How did we get here?” Since the dawn of time, people have been speculating about the origin of the universe. Have we always been here? Are we the result of a cosmic accident? Did God create the world? While there are many theories about the origin of the universe, the Bible has always stood out with its audacious claim that the universe is the purposeful creation of a personal God: “In the *beginning* God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1, italics added). The scientific consensus now supports the biblical view—the universe did indeed have a beginning.

Not only did the universe have a beginning, but so did everything else. In fact the word *Genesis* actually means “beginning.” In Genesis we get a front-row seat to the beginning of the world, animals, humans, language, marriage, the family, the Sabbath, and much more. And of all things God created, humans stand out uniquely as made in the image of God (1:26-27). While all creation has value, it is this fact that makes each human being particularly special.

In the book of Genesis, you will also see the beginning of a nation chosen and shaped by God: the people of Israel. You’ll also learn how individual choice brought about the fall of humanity and the need for a Savior (chap. 3). Through the interactions of the Creator God with the people he created, you’ll see the rescue plan of God begin to unfold as he works through each generation of the tiny nation of Israel to fulfill a promise made to Adam and Eve (3:15).

The stories of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph play a huge part in the interwoven stories of beginnings. They are the patriarchs—leaders through whom God made covenants or special agreements on a certain course of action. For example, after bringing about a great flood, God promised Noah that he would never again destroy the earth by a flood (9:12-17). God also promised Abraham that he would build a nation out of Abraham’s offspring (15:1-5). The rest of Genesis focuses on the beginnings of that family—their ups and downs—until the sons of Jacob (who eventually became the twelve tribes of Israel) enter Egypt for protection from a famine with the help of a special brother named Joseph. God protected his people, for he had a special plan for them.

As with other books of the Bible, Genesis is meant to help us understand God’s work in the world and what it means for how we are to live. It will begin to unfold the story of how we got here, why we need a Savior, and what God would do about that need. Genesis offers some amazing insights about life that profoundly influence those who read it with an open heart and with an open mind. Are you ready?

**Author:** Moses

**Date:** Most likely written during Israel's wandering in the wilderness (ca 1445-1406 BC)

**What in the world is going on?**

<i>Undated</i>	Creation
<i>Undated</i>	Noah
3300 BC	The beginning date of the Mayan calendar
3300–3200 BC	Dates on clay tablets from the tomb of an Egyptian king named Scorpion
3200 BC	The Sumerians develop pictographic writing about this time
3100 BC	The first phase of Stonehenge begins
3000–1100 BC	The Minoan civilization flourishes on the island of Crete
2900 BC	First Egyptian hieroglyphs
ca 2575–2465 BC	The Great Pyramid in Giza is built during the Fourth Dynasty
ca 2500–1700 BC	Two cities in the Indus civilization (what is now Pakistan) —Harappa and Mohenjo-daro—flourished about this time
2166 BC	Abram (later Abraham) is born
2156 BC	Sarai (later Sarah) is born
ca 2130–1970 BC	During the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties of Egypt, some food shortages occur, as well as boundary conflicts
2091 BC	Abram moves to Canaan
ca 2085 BC	Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
ca 2046 BC	Isaac is born
ca 2006 BC	Jacob and Esau born
ca 2000 BC	Egyptians domesticated the cat in order to catch snakes
ca 1991 BC	Abraham dies
ca 1915 BC	Joseph is born
1908–1875 BC	Sesostris I rules Egypt
1900 BC	Bronze Age in Britain
ca 1885 BC	Joseph rules Egypt
ca 1805 BC	Joseph dies



## THE CREATION

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> 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." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." <sup>7</sup> So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the expanse "sky."<sup>b</sup> Evening came and then morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> Evening came and then morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from

the night. They will serve as signs for seasons<sup>c</sup> and for days and years. <sup>15</sup> They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars. <sup>17</sup> God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, "Let the water swarm with<sup>d</sup> living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." <sup>21</sup> So God created the large sea-creatures<sup>e</sup> and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. <sup>25</sup> So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man<sup>f</sup> in<sup>g</sup> our image, according to our likeness. They will rule

<sup>a</sup>1:1 Or *created the universe* <sup>b</sup>1:8 Or "heavens." <sup>c</sup>1:14 Or *for the appointed times* <sup>d</sup>1:20 Lit *with swarms of* <sup>e</sup>1:21 Or *created sea monsters* <sup>f</sup>1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb 'adam, also in v. 27 <sup>g</sup>1:26 Or *as*

**1:1** The Hebrew word for "God," *Elohim*, is grammatically plural but does not indicate a numerical plural (i.e., "gods"). Hebrew uses the plural form to indicate honor or intensity, sometimes called the "plural of majesty." The pairing of a singular adjective (Ps 7:9) or verb (Gn 20:6) with *Elohim* shows that the one God is intended. From the Israelite standpoint the oneness of the true Deity is never in question. In Dt 6:4 "The LORD," that is, *Yahweh* the God of Israel, is called "our *Elohim*," and declared to be "one."

**1:14-18** The lights were "signs" that mark off time periods. They were not to be heeded as astrological signs, correlating

heavenly movements with events on earth. The worship of heavenly bodies is condemned (Dt 4:19).

**1:26-27** "Let us make ..." (3:22; 11:7; Is 6:8) does not indicate multiple gods. Such a view would be inconsistent with the singular "his own image" (Gn 1:27; see 5:1-2). Ancient theories of the universe's origin typically explained creation as the outcome of sexual cohabitation between male and female deities or of a battle between a deity and a hostile entity. The Bible uniformly affirms that God is asexual with no corresponding female consort. God made the universe by his authoritative speech, not by battling deities.

Gn 1 was written in part to show that the view of the physical world current at that time (i.e., that physical objects represented the work of various deities) was wrong. The cosmos is inanimate and entirely under the control of the one God. Plural and singular forms are combined in 1:26-27 (see "the Spirit of God," v. 2), reflecting God's unity and yet his fullness. Subsequent scriptural revelation develops this further.

Although humans are created in the "image" and "likeness" of God (the terms are essentially synonyms; see 5:3), it does not follow that God has a body. "Image" or "likeness" often refers to a physical

# How Old Is the Earth?

Chris Sherrod

There are two main views among Christians. Old earth creationists (OEC), also known as progressive creationists, believe God created the universe and all life forms in stages separated by long periods of time. They believe the geologic record accurately portrays a very long earth history. Young earth creationists (YEC) believe the universe and all life forms were created in six successive twenty-four-hour days, meaning earth is only thousands of years old. Major arguments for each view include the following:

## OEC

- Speed of light measurements and the distance of stars indicate an ancient universe.
- The Hebrew word *yom* (day) does not always mean a literal day (e.g., Gn 2:4).
- Genesis 1:12 says the land *produced* vegetation on Day Three, indicating growth from seed to maturity. That takes longer than twenty-four hours.
- There is too much activity on Day Six to fit in twenty-four hours (see Gn 1:24-31; 2:15-25).
- Many animals are specifically designed to prey upon other animals. This indicates that by God's design, animal death preceded the fall of Adam and Eve.
- The sun was created on Day Four; thus Days One-Three could not have been twenty-four-hour solar days.
- The testimony of nature powerfully indicates an ancient creation.

## YEC

- The usual meaning of *yom* is a literal, twenty-four-hour day.
- "There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day," seems to indicate a literal day (Gn 1:5, etc.).
- Sabbath rest (Ex 20:11) seems to imply six literal days of work during creation week.
- The sun was not created until Day Four, but there was life on Day Three (Gn 1:11-13). Life cannot exist for long periods without sunlight, and so the days were not long ages.
- Plants were created on Day Three and animals on Day Five. The interdependence between plants and animals implies that their creation was not separated by long ages.
- If death is an enemy (1Co 15:54), was God's original paradise free from killing, or was it filled with violence, decay, and death? Man was not permitted to eat animals until *after* the flood (Gn 9:2-3).
- If decay and death were originally part of creation, why is creation looking forward to liberation from bondage to decay (Rm 8:20-22)?

Despite these differences, Christians in both groups are committed to God's supernatural creation of all things. Similarly, both are committed to the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Also, it is important to note that even if earth is many millions of years old, this still is not enough time for life to arise naturally and then evolve into the complex species we have today.

Though Christians sometimes passionately disagree about the age of earth, we should not break fellowship about issues of peripheral importance (Rm 14:1). Both parties can work together, support common ground (such as Intelligent Design), and work "in one accord contending together for the faith of the gospel" (Php 1:27). We can have friendly "in-house" debates, graciously discussing our viewpoints in a spirit of love while standing united against the world's deceitful philosophies (Col 2:8).

the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth,<sup>a</sup> and the creatures that crawl<sup>b</sup> on the earth.”

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

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls<sup>d</sup> on the earth.”

<sup>29</sup> God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,<sup>30</sup> for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given<sup>e</sup> every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

**2** So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh<sup>f</sup> day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested<sup>g</sup> on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.<sup>h</sup>

#### MAN AND WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

<sup>4</sup> These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time<sup>i</sup> that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,<sup>5</sup> no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land,<sup>j</sup> and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. <sup>6</sup> But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the

#### CHALLENGE AND TACTICS

**CHALLENGE:** “Evolution is a scientific fact that makes God’s existence unnecessary.”

**TACTIC EMPLOYED:** Google It

Ask, “What do you mean by ‘evolution?’” Even scientists use the word to refer to different ideas at different times. Therefore, until we define it, we cannot determine whether evolution is incompatible with a Creator. Sometimes *evolution* simply refers to change over time; if that’s what someone means when using the word, no problem. Change is not incompatible with a Creator. Another possible definition is the process by which small-scale genetic changes occur within an organism to modify existing characteristics; we might call this microevolution. Again, this kind of evolution is not incompatible with a Creator who designed life to adapt. However, if *evolution* refers to the process by which large-scale genetic change produces entirely new kinds of organisms—we might call this macroevolution—then we question the claim and examine the evidence for this so-called fact of science.

#### FAST FACTS: Faith and Technology

- ▶ The abilities to design and use technology are gifts from God and are signs that humans are uniquely made in his image (Gn 1:27).
- ▶ Technology can be used for good or evil. As Christians, our use of technology should reflect Christ’s commands to love God and others (Mk 12:30-31).
- ▶ Technology influences our worldview and relationships. We must guard our hearts and be rooted in Scripture to discern right from wrong (Pr 4:23; Mt 7:24-27).

ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance

<sup>a</sup>1:26 Syr reads sky, and over every animal of the land <sup>b</sup>1:26 Or scurry <sup>c</sup>1:27 Or man as his own image; he created him as <sup>d</sup>1:28 Or and all scurrying animals

<sup>e</sup>1:30 I have given added for clarity <sup>f</sup>2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read sixth <sup>g</sup>2:2 Or ceased, also in v. 3 <sup>h</sup>2:3 Lit work that God created to make <sup>i</sup>2:4 Lit creation on the day <sup>j</sup>2:5 Or earth

representation of something that may be non-material. Humans were created to serve as God’s representative to govern the earth.

**2:2-3** “Rested” (Hb *shabat*) does not imply fatigue but means only “ceased.” God stopped because his work of creation was complete.

**2:4-26** Chapter 2 is a second creation account only in the sense that it gives a

more detailed accounting than chap. 1, not a contradictory one. While chap. 1 provides a general description, chap. 2 is specific. Twofold accounts were common in ancient theories of creation (e.g., the Babylonian story of Atrahasis). The differences in the order of creation events are due to each narrative’s distinct purposes. The first gives a loosely chronological account, gathering creation

events into a discernible pattern to show the symmetry of creation’s purpose. The second is topical, focusing on the sixth day by expanding on the creation of man and woman. Gn 2 presupposes chap. 1 and does not duplicate all the creation events.

**2:7,21-22** The creation of the first man and woman is not myth. The author of the account intends to portray a historical

## TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 2:17

God promised Adam and Eve that they would surely die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because they did not physically die right after they ate, some skeptics like to say this is a contradiction. Yet the majority of Jewish and Christian commentators agree that, while both Adam and Eve eventually died physically, this passage refers primarily to a *spiritual* death. Paul explained in Romans 5:12-21 how all humans were declared guilty through Adam's sin, which resulted in judgment and condemnation (v. 16). Fortunately, a remedy was made available through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, "as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification" for believers (v. 18). Despite the horrific penalty caused by the original sin, there is a provision for eternal life by way of the cross and faith in Jesus Christ.

and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river went<sup>a</sup> out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers.<sup>b</sup> <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah,<sup>c</sup> where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> Gold from that land is pure;<sup>d</sup> bdellium<sup>e</sup> and onyx<sup>f</sup> are also there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." <sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man

to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him." <sup>19</sup> The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man<sup>g</sup> no helper was found corresponding to him. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one will be called "woman,"  
for she was taken from man.

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

## THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL

**3** Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'"

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. <sup>3</sup> But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

<sup>4</sup> "No! You will not die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "In fact, God knows that when<sup>h</sup> you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be

<sup>a</sup>2:10 Or goes <sup>b</sup>2:10 Lit became four heads <sup>c</sup>2:11 Or of the Havilah <sup>d</sup>2:12 Lit good uncertain <sup>e</sup>2:20 Or for Adam <sup>f</sup>3:5 Lit on the day <sup>g</sup>2:12 A yellowish, transparent gum resin <sup>h</sup>2:12 Identity of this precious stone

event. The first man (Hb *adam*) is treated in genealogies as a historical individual named "Adam" (5:1; Lk 3:38). Since the name *Adam* means "man(kind)," the author also intends him to represent humanity in general (Gn 3:17-18; see Rm 5:12-21). The account of the man and woman's creation views them as special creations, not merely types of humans. The concept of evolution of humans from lower forms is inconsistent with the author's purpose in this narrative.

**2:10-14** The lack of archaeological evidence for the garden of Eden does not mean that it existed only in myth. Despite advances in archaeology, what has been discovered of the ancient Near East is only a small percentage of what might one day be found. The rivers Tigris and Euphrates exist today in modern Iraq. The identities of the Gihon and Pishon are uncertain but may have been local streams or canals. Floods, climatic changes, and land shifts since ancient times may well have

brought about significant changes in topography.

**3:4** The couple did not immediately die physically (see 2:17). By God's grace, their death was postponed till a later time. But their expulsion from the garden (vv. 23-24) shows that the word of God was indeed fulfilled as the immediate consequence of their disobedience. They were cut off from access to the tree of life, which symbolized the source of life (2:9; Rv 2:7; 22:2,14,19). In Israel expulsion

like God,<sup>a</sup> knowing good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

### SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,<sup>8</sup> and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard you<sup>c</sup> in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”

<sup>11</sup> Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, “The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

<sup>13</sup> So the LORD God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?”

And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,  
you are cursed more than any livestock

### TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:5

Since the KJV translates this verse as “ye shall be as gods,” both Mormons and New Age followers have interpreted this to mean that humans have the potential to become gods. Second Nephi 2:25 in the *Book of Mormon* says Adam needed to commit the first sin in order for humans to become gods in the next life. This assumes Satan was telling the truth in Genesis 3:5, but the Bible says Satan “is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44) and “a roaring lion” (1Pt 5:8). Genesis 3:22 shows that Adam and Eve became like God only inasmuch as they learned the difference between good and evil. Thus Satan misled Adam and Eve by telling a half truth. Paul compares the “cunning” serpent to false teachers who twist the gospel when they teach another Jesus (2Co 11:3-4). Rather than earning godhood, in Adam and Eve’s fateful choice we see that “death spread to all people, because all sinned” (Rm 5:12,16).

and more than any wild animal.

You will move on your belly  
and eat dust all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put hostility between you  
and the woman,

and between your offspring  
and her offspring.

He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains;  
you will bear children with painful effort.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
yet he will rule over you.

<sup>a</sup>3:5 Or gods, or divine beings <sup>b</sup>3:8 Lit at the wind of the day <sup>c</sup>3:10 Lit the sound of you

from the tabernacle in the camp, such as quarantine (e.g., Lv 13:46), meant that the person was ceremonially dead until he was declared fit again. The human couple’s expulsion signaled their spiritual death (see Eph 2:1). That their physical death occurred is confirmed by the refrain “then he died” in Adam’s genealogy (Gn 5:5). Physical death for humans was the result of disobedience in the garden (Rm 5:12-21; 6:23).

**3:8** That God walked is a common figure of speech (anthropomorphism). From the human standpoint, it is not possible to describe God’s interaction with people without attributing to him some of the properties of a human body, such as back or face (Ex 33:11,23), eyes or ears (1Kg 8:29; Ps 34:15), arm or hands (Ex 3:20; 6:6; Dt 4:34; 33:3; Is 53:1; Heb 1:10; 10:31). God does not have a physical body

(see note on Gn 1:26-27), although he can manifest himself in the form of a man (18:16-22; 32:30; Ezk 1:26), a burning bush (Ex 3:2-4), or even a fiery pillar (Ex 13:21-22).

**3:9-11** The Bible is full of affirmations of God’s unlimited knowledge (16:13; Ex 3:7; Jb 12:13; 28:23-24; 36:4; Ps 33:13-15; 139:1-4; Is 46:10; Jr 23:24; Mt 10:29; Ac 15:8; Heb 4:13). Therefore God’s questions here are rhetorical; he is not unaware of the couple’s location and what had transpired in the garden. The passage describes God as a parent who instructs his children with restoration as his purpose. He did not question the serpent, because he had no plan to redeem the tempter.

**3:15** This predicted battle between the serpent and the woman would not be a literal confrontation in the garden. The

language is figurative, indicating the life-and-death struggle between the adversary and the human family borne by the woman. Like the word *sheep* in English, the word “offspring” in Hebrew is both singular and plural, meaning either descendants without number, taken as a whole, or one particular descendant. The passage incorporates both meanings by referring to the ongoing opposition to the people of God by their enemies and by predicting the rise of a particular seed, Jesus Christ, who will destroy the serpent in the end (Rm 16:20; Rv 12:9-10).

**3:16** The woman’s penalty was not in bearing children but in the increased pain attached to giving birth. “Yet he will rule over you” does not warrant the enslavement of women as chattel. Woman is also created in the image of God and has the honored role of giving birth by which the

<sup>17</sup>And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.

You will eat from it by means of painful labor<sup>A</sup>

all the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns

and thistles for you,

and you will eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> You will eat bread<sup>B</sup> by the sweat

of your brow

until you return to the ground,

since you were taken from it.

For you are dust,

and you will return to dust.”

<sup>20</sup>The man named his wife Eve<sup>C</sup> because she was the mother of all the living. <sup>21</sup>The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.” <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

#### CAIN MURDERS ABEL

**4** The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”<sup>D</sup> <sup>2</sup>She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. <sup>3</sup>In

the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD.

<sup>4</sup>And Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.<sup>E</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?” <sup>7</sup>If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

<sup>8</sup>Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>G</sup> And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

<sup>10</sup>Then he said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup>So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed.” <sup>12</sup>If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup>But Cain answered the LORD, “My punishment’ is too great to bear! <sup>14</sup>Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me.”

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD replied to him, “In that case,<sup>J</sup> whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.”<sup>K</sup> And he placed a mark on Cain

<sup>A</sup>3:17 Lit it through pain <sup>B</sup>3:19 Or food <sup>C</sup>3:20 Lit Living, or Life <sup>D</sup>4:1 Lit the LORD <sup>E</sup>4:5 Lit and his face fell <sup>F</sup>4:6 Lit why has your face fallen <sup>G</sup>4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits “Let’s go out to the field.” <sup>H</sup>4:11 Lit blood from your hand <sup>I</sup>4:13 Or sin <sup>J</sup>4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read “Not so!” <sup>K</sup>4:15 Or suffer severely

blessing for all humanity is realized (1:26-28). The Lord’s pronouncement predicts the future rivalry between the sexes for dominance, a rivalry resulting from the sinful condition of the man and woman. These words are not an exhortation directed to the man to dominate his wife. Hebrew law recognized the vulnerability of women and required special deference to them (Ex 22:22; Dt 25:5-10). The NT explicitly commands husbands to love and honor their wives (Eph 5:25; Col 3:19; 1Pt 3:7), and Christian husbands and

wives observe their spiritual equality (Gl 3:28) while carrying out their respective God-given roles.

**3:22** God’s admission that the man “has become like one of us” does not indicate that the serpent’s suggestion that God was insecure about his position was correct. God was not threatened by the man’s wisdom when he expelled him from the garden, but it was necessary to prohibit the couple’s access to the tree of life, or the penalty of death for disobedience could not be carried out. Although the human

couple would die, it was ultimately merciful to deny them the tree; otherwise, they would live forever in a sinful and painful world. God graciously provided for their new environment outside the garden (v. 21), and ultimately for their eternal salvation through the promised “offspring” (v. 15). For the plural “us,” see note on 1:26-27.

**4:4-5** God preferred Abel’s offering not because he liked meat more than vegetables or shepherds more than farmers, but because Abel’s offering was made in faith (Heb 11:4). He offered the best of his

# If God Knew Adam and Eve Would Sin, Why Did He Put the Tree in the Garden of Eden in the First Place?

John Stonestreet

To begin to answer this, a couple of things should be kept in mind. First, it is important to remember *whom* we are talking about. God, the all-powerful Creator of the universe, answers to no one. He doesn't ask for approval for his decisions. Second, it is important to remember *what* we are talking about. We are talking about God's plan for the whole world that he created. God has not chosen to reveal each and every detail of his plan to us. We can only know what he chooses to reveal. And, since we are part of that plan, we are responsible to it, even if we do not fully understand it or approve of it. Still, there are some things God has told us about his plan:

1. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil wasn't a bad tree. Everything that God made, including the tree, was "very good" (Gn 1:31). The source of trouble in this story is Adam and Eve as well as the serpent, not the tree.
2. Adam and Eve had every reason to trust God. He did a great job creating them, and he placed them in a beautiful place where they had everything they needed. God was trustworthy, but Adam and Eve did not trust him.
3. Adam and Eve were created with freedom. God places high value on our choice to obey him, and he created Adam and Eve with freedom so that this was possible. Life without freedom is not really life at all. God wisely gave them freedom, but Adam and Eve abused it.
4. Adam and Eve were not ignorant of God's boundaries. Just as wise teachers test their students, God tested Adam and Eve in their obedience. However, God didn't test them on what they didn't know. They knew which tree was off limits, and they knew the consequences if they ate from it. The rules were plain, but Adam and Eve violated them anyway.
5. God provided for Adam and Eve. Before God told them *not* to eat of the tree, he told them they were "free to eat" of every other tree in the garden (Gn 2:16). They were not in danger of starving, nor were they deprived of variety. They had an all-you-can-eat buffet in the garden, but Adam and Eve were not satisfied.
6. God's plan is much bigger than the garden of Eden. His plan for his creation and his people did not end when Adam and Eve sinned. In fact, God's plan from the very beginning was to redeem his people and his creation. The drama of fall and redemption could never have happened if the tree had not been in the garden. Adam and Eve sinned, but God's plan was bigger than their sin.

One final thought: God's wise, good plan included sending his Son into the world that Adam and Eve ruined. Think about it: from eternity past God ordained that he would become the chief victim of his own plan (Rv 5). The very good news is that he also guaranteed our redemption by his resurrection.

so that whoever found him would not kill him. <sup>16</sup>Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

**THE LINE OF CAIN**

<sup>17</sup>Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. <sup>18</sup>Irada was born to Enoch, Irada fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. <sup>19</sup>Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of the nomadic herdsman.<sup>a</sup> <sup>21</sup>His brother was named Jubal; he was the father of all who play the lyre and the flute. <sup>22</sup>Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

<sup>23</sup>Lamech said to his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;  
wives of Lamech, pay attention  
to my words.  
For I killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for striking me.

<sup>24</sup> If Cain is to be avenged seven times over, then for Lamech it will be seventy-seven times!

<sup>25</sup>Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given<sup>b</sup> me another child<sup>c</sup> in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." <sup>26</sup>A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

**THE LINE OF SETH**

**5** This is the document containing the family<sup>d</sup> records of Adam.<sup>e</sup> On the day that God created man,<sup>f</sup> he made him in the likeness of God; <sup>2</sup>he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. <sup>4</sup>Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

<sup>6</sup>Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. <sup>7</sup>Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

<sup>9</sup>Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. <sup>10</sup>Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

<sup>12</sup>Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup>Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

<sup>15</sup>Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. <sup>16</sup>Mahalalel lived 830 years after



**FAST FACTS: Darwinian Evolution**

- ▶ Darwinism is unable to say how life could have emerged from non-life. The more we learn about the complexity of the cell, the deeper the problem becomes.
- ▶ If Darwinian evolution were true, we should find millions of transitional forms in the fossil record; the missing links are still missing.
- ▶ Darwinists claim natural selection is evidence of macroevolution. However, natural selection, which is basic science, simply demonstrates change within species. This is called microevolution.
- ▶ Critiquing Darwinism does not make a person anti-science. We all share the same scientific evidence. The question is, "What theory or interpretive framework best explains the evidence?"

<sup>a</sup>4:20 Lit the dweller of tent and livestock <sup>b</sup>4:25 The Hb word for given sounds like the name "Seth." <sup>c</sup>4:25 Lit seed <sup>d</sup>5:1 Lit written family <sup>e</sup>5:1 Or mankind <sup>f</sup>5:1 Or Adam, human beings <sup>g</sup>5:2 Hb 'adam

flock ("the firstborn"), and Cain offered only "some" of his produce (Gn 4:3; see Ex 23:19; Lv 2:14).

**4:17** The age-old question, "Who was Cain's wife?", has raised the specter that Cain committed incest, which was prohibited (Lv 18:6-18). But the Mosaic laws were not given until much later, and

even the implied condemnations of incest in Genesis (Lot in 19:30-38; Reuben in 35:22; 49:3-4) relate to a time later than that of Cain and his siblings.

**4:19, 23** The Bible nowhere explicitly forbids polygamy, and Lamech is the first of many polygamists in the OT, including favored patriarchs and kings (e.g., 29:2-1-

30; 1Sm 27:3). We must not assume, however, that the absence of explicit prohibition entails divine approval. Plural marriage is not, and never has been, biblical marriage. When polygamy occurred, it had predictably disastrous results for the family (e.g., 2Sm 13:4-37). We may not fully understand why God did not denounce

## Introduction to

# MATTHEW

**T**he most amazing thing about the book of Matthew is the author. We know that he began his career collecting taxes but ended it as a devoted follower of Christ. Why would Jesus pick a man so despised to be one of his disciples—to be with him constantly for three years? Perhaps he did it to show that true change is possible. If a man like Matthew—hated by his own people for squeezing taxes from them—could learn to trust Jesus as Savior, then anyone could.

Also known as Levi, Matthew's job was to make the Israelites cough up hard-earned cash to the Romans—the ones who conquered his people and controlled their country. Beyond that, it was standard operating procedure for a tax collector to charge even more than the Romans wanted and pocket the difference. You can imagine how Matthew's neighbors felt about someone profiting by helping the enemy. But a miracle happened when Jesus met Levi. Luke records it: "Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me!' So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow him" (Lk 5:27-28). Get that? He left everything behind to follow Jesus. The tax collector's heart and life changed with those two little words from Jesus: "Follow me!"

As a Jew, Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience, embedding in his story prophecies and Old Testament teachings to help his readers realize that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting for centuries. Beginning with his family tree, Matthew wrote of Jesus's earthly heritage and how God worked through ordinary people to bring about his birth. He described how the leaders of Israel knew from the Prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (2:1-6). Matthew also showed to his Jewish readers that Jesus was the chosen one, the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, a verse Matthew quoted: "See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23).

Jesus fulfilled still more prophecies, as Matthew recorded in 4:15-17: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, light has dawned" (from Is 9:1-2). And as Jesus entered Jerusalem the week of his crucifixion, Matthew 21:5 pointed out that this fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy (Zch 9:9).

The Gospel of Matthew contains many prophecies fulfilled through Jesus's life. As the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus explained, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (20:28). And he rose again to live forever. Matthew's Gospel, written by a former tax collector, makes it very clear that Jesus can change people's lives.

Looking for a change? Jesus is just the change you need.

**Author:** Matthew, a Jewish tax collector and disciple of Jesus

**Date:** Written in AD 60–65, the Gospel of Matthew covers events leading up to the birth of Jesus through his crucifixion and resurrection

**What in the world is going on?**

ca 300 BC–AD 100	The Chicanel, an early Mayan civilization in the Late Formative period, flourishes in the lowlands of Guatemala
ca 247 BC–AD 224	The era of the Parthian Empire (established by Arsaces in what is now Khorāsān, Iran)
206 BC–AD 220	Han Dynasty in China (an era interrupted by the Xin Dynasty in AD 9–25); the Silk Road, a trading route that connected China to western countries, was in use especially during the era of the Roman Empire
200 BC–AD 500	A Native American culture known for its burial mounds thrives at Hopewell, in southern Ohio
ca 200 BC–AD 68	The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in AD 1947–1956, date from this era
44 BC	Julius Caesar is assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15)
37–4 BC	Herod the Great is king of Judea
27 BC–AD 476	The era of the Roman Empire
27 BC–AD 14	The reign of Augustus Caesar (Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar) is also <i>Pax Romana</i> —the era of peace in the Mediterranean world
20 BC	King Herod begins massive reconstruction on the temple in Jerusalem
6 BC	Jesus is born
AD 4	After the visit of the magi, Jesus and his family escape to Egypt
AD 6	Twelve-year-old Jesus visits the temple in Jerusalem
AD 8	The Julian calendar, established by Julius Caesar, is finally in use
AD 18–36	Caiaphas is the high priest in Jerusalem
AD 25–220	The Eastern Han Dynasty is in force in China
AD 26–30	Years of Jesus's ministry
AD 26–36	Pontius Pilate is the governor of Judea
AD 30	Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and ascends to heaven
ca AD 60–65	Matthew writes his Gospel

### THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

**1** An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

#### FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- 2** Abraham fathered<sup>a</sup> Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- 3** Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- 4** Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- 5** Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- 6** and Jesse fathered King David.

#### FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon<sup>b</sup> by Uriah's wife,
- 7** Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,<sup>c</sup>
- 8** Asa<sup>c</sup> fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,<sup>d</sup> Joram fathered Uzziah,
- 9** Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,

- 10** Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon,<sup>e</sup> Amon fathered Josiah,
- 11** and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

#### FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- 12** After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
- 13** Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,
- 14** Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,
- 15** Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,
- 16** and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

**17** So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

<sup>a</sup>1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 <sup>b</sup>1:6 Other mss add *King* <sup>c</sup>1:7,8 Other mss read *Asaph* <sup>d</sup>1:8 = Jehoram <sup>e</sup>1:10 Other mss read *Amos*

**1:1** In identifying Jesus as Son of David and Son of Abraham, Matthew linked Jesus to the Davidic messianism of the OT. This connection is suggested in the Davidic covenant (2Sm 7: 12-16; Ps 89:29) and explicitly expressed in the Prophets (Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jr 23:5-6; 30:9; 33: 14-26; Ezk 34:20-24; 37:24-28; Hs 3:5; Am 9: 11; Zch 3:8). Matthew also linked Jesus to the Abrahamic covenant (Gn 12:1-3; 22: 18), in which God promised to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's seed. The two covenants are brought together in Ps 72: 17 (Mt 28: 19). Jesus's Davidic descent was not a theological invention of the early church. It was attested as early as Paul (Rm 1:3) and in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 7: 14). Furthermore, Jesus's immediate family, which was prominent in the early church, would have had to accept the claim. The *Talmud*, a collection of Jewish rabbinical

writings, repeatedly charges Jesus with being born out of wedlock, for example, to Pandera a Roman soldier, so this *is* a polemic against Jesus's lineage. But there is no polemic against Mary's or Joseph's lineages.

**1:2-16** There is evidence that first-century Jews kept genealogical records (for example, the Jewish historian Josephus referred to public registers as sources of some of his information). Matthew's genealogy emphasizes Christ's royal lineage, while Luke's focuses on his biological lineage. For more about the differences between the genealogies, see note on Lk 3:23-38.

**1:17** Matthew omitted several names in his genealogy in order to maintain a three times fourteen generation structure (Gk *egennesen*, translated "fathered," indicated ancestry, not actual fatherhood. "All the generations" must then be

taken to imply "as summarized here.") Matthew was emphasizing Jesus's birth as a culminating moment in Israel's history. The third set of "fourteen" has only thirteen names, unless one counts Jeconiah a second time (or the second set has fifteen, if one begins it with David). Perhaps Matthew reflected the common feeling of his time that Jeconiah could be considered both a preexilic and a postexilic figure (2Kg 24:8-12; 25:27-30). David is the central figure in the lineage of Jesus. When the consonants of his name are added, the sum is fourteen; hence, the importance of the number fourteen to Matthew. David is the fourteenth entry in the genealogy.

Luke has a different genealogy of Jesus that traces his ancestry all the way back to Adam. See note on Lk 3:23-38 for an explanation of the differences between these two genealogies.

## BONES &amp; DIRT

## —Jesus in Ancient Non-Christian Sources

Extrabiblical literature and archaeological sources support the historical reality of Jesus. In fact, so numerous are these sources—some more reliable than others—that scholars can now reconstruct the salient features of the life of Christ without appealing to the Bible.

- ▶ Jesus lived during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Cornelius Tacitus, Roman historian).
- ▶ He lived a virtuous life (Flavius Josephus, Jewish historian).
- ▶ He was a wonder worker (Josephus).
- ▶ He had a father named Joseph and a brother named James (James Ossuary inscription).
- ▶ He was acclaimed to be the Messiah (Josephus, Mara bar-Serapion).
- ▶ He was executed (Mara bar-Serapion, Alexamenos Graffito).
- ▶ He was crucified under Pontius Pilate (Tacitus, Josephus, Yehohanan Ossuary).
- ▶ He was crucified on the eve of Passover (Babylonian Talmud).
- ▶ Darkness and an earthquake occurred when he died (Thallus, Phlegon, Lucian of Samosata, Julius Africanus).
- ▶ His disciples believed he rose from the dead (Josephus).
- ▶ Conspiracy surrounding the disciples' alleged attempt to steal the body of Jesus circulated early (Teledothu Jesu).
- ▶ Jesus's disciples were willing to die for their beliefs (Tacitus, Suetonius).
- ▶ Christianity spread rapidly, even as far as Rome (Tacitus).
- ▶ Jesus was seen as the center of civil disobedience in Rome (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas).
- ▶ His disciples denied the Roman gods and worshiped Jesus as God (Pliny the Younger, Lucian, Megiddo Church mosaic floor inscription).

In all, there are a dozen non-Christian documentary sources extant from within 150 years of Jesus that offer support for his life, death, and ministry. This stands in stark contrast to the second hand histories that document the life of Alexander the Great, the basics of which are generally accepted as accurate. They are 300 to 500 years removed from the events they describe.

## THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

<sup>18</sup> The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged<sup>a</sup> to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> **See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,<sup>b</sup>** which is translated “God is with us.”

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her <sup>25</sup> but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son.<sup>c</sup> And he named him Jesus.

## WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>1:18 Or betrothed <sup>b</sup>1:23 Is 7:14 <sup>c</sup>1:25 Other mss read to her firstborn son <sup>d</sup>2:2 Or to pay him homage

**1:18–25** This passage, unique to Matthew, shows the exemplary character of Joseph. He did not question the angel’s explanation for Mary’s pregnancy. He obeyed without question what the angel told him to do, going ahead with his plans to take Mary as his wife.

**1:22–23** Matthew cited the Greek version of Is 7: 14 virtually verbatim, including the Greek word *parthenos* (“virgin”). The underlying Hebrew word, *almah*, means something like “a marriageable girl.” It probably always refers in the OT to virgins (Pr 30: 19 has been suggested as a counterexample, but it is not obviously such). Is 7: 14 was a prophesied sign to Judah’s King Ahaz that an impending

military crisis would be averted by God. The prophecy received an immediate fulfillment in Isaiah’s own son (Is 8: 1–4), but that son was a “sign” of a greater fulfillment (Is 8: 18), and the prophecy thus continued to present the ultimate manifestation of “God is with us” in Is 9: 1–7. The name Jesus (“Yahweh saves”) describes what Jesus does; Immanuel (“God is with us”) describes who Jesus is. Matthew included the prophecy to assert the divinity of Jesus.

**2:1–2** Some interpreters deny the historicity of the wise men’s visit. One reason for doing so is a general anti-supernaturalism. Another is the alleged parallelism in form and/or content with legends

or myths of great people or gods in the ancient Mediterranean world. Some take the star as purely supernatural, since it pointed the way to where Jesus lay (v. 9). Several scientific explanations have been offered to identify the star of Bethlehem, such as it being a conjunction of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn in 7–6 BC or perhaps the appearance of a comet in 5 BC. Wise men (sometimes translated as “magi”) were originally a religious class in Media and the Persian Empire, but the word *magi* came to describe any student of astrology and lore. These men had probably been studying Jewish texts such as Nm 24: 17 in order to correlate their astronomical observations with the birth of a Jewish king.

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

<sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> **And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah:**

**Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”<sup>A</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”<sup>B</sup>

<sup>9</sup> After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him.<sup>C</sup> Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

#### THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

<sup>13</sup> After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him.” <sup>14</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. <sup>15</sup> He stayed there until Herod’s death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.**<sup>D</sup>



Herod's Tomb

#### BONES & DIRT—Herod the Great

Bible readers know Herod the Great as the ruler who attempted to kill the newborn Jesus (Mt 2:1-18), and who remodeled the Jerusalem temple and its platform (Jn 2:20). He also ordered the construction of hilltop palaces such as Masada, the Herodium, and Macherus. Confidence in the reliability of the Bible’s portrayal of King Herod (37–4 BC) has been bolstered by several archaeological discoveries. For instance, Ehud Netzer of Hebrew University led excavations in 2007 at the Herodium, where he unearthed what is believed to be Herod’s tomb. The finding fit the biblical timeline, plus it is consistent with the account Josephus, the Jewish historian who said Herod was buried with great pomp at this site (*War* 1.21.10; *Antiquities* XIV.13.9). Netzer is also well known for his search for Herodian remains at Masada, Herod’s fortress palace nestled on an arid plateau overlooking the western shores of the Dead Sea. Here, while excavating pottery from a cave, he discovered a shard with three lines of Latin inscription identifying the “Herod, King of Judea” as well as the date and type of wine Herod imported from Europe. These and other archaeological discoveries prove beyond doubt Herod’s true existence and support the New Testament data.

#### THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

<sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had

<sup>A</sup>2:6 Mc 5:2 <sup>B</sup>2:8 Or and pay him homage <sup>C</sup>2:11 Or they paid him homage <sup>D</sup>2:15 Hs 11:1

**2:6** Matthew did not quote Mc 5:2 directly but paraphrased it to bring out the sense of the passage. Thus, while the Prophet Micah noted the smallness of Bethlehem in relation to its being the home of the Ruler, Matthew emphasized Bethlehem’s significance by calling it “by no means least” of Judah’s towns. (The reading of “rulers” for

thousands predates Matthew. These terms are spelled the same in Hb.) He concluded with a quote from 2Sm 5:2 (Ezk 34:23), since the identification of Bethlehem as the ruler’s hometown set the prophecy in the stream of Davidic messianism (and was so understood in first-century Judaism). The principle of biblical inerrancy

requires only that a NT paraphrase of an OT text preserves the intent of that text or expresses its implications.

**2:16** No sources outside the Bible corroborate this episode, but it fits the character of Herod as reported in the writings of the historian Josephus. In addition to atrocities he had earlier perpetrated, Herod grew

learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup>Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup> **A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping,<sup>a</sup> and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.<sup>b</sup>**

#### THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

<sup>19</sup>After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, <sup>20</sup>saying, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead.” <sup>21</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

#### THE HERALD OF THE CHRIST

**3** In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea <sup>2</sup>and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” <sup>3</sup>For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

**A voice of one crying out in the wilderness:**

**Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!<sup>c</sup>**

<sup>4</sup>Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup>When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Therefore produce fruit consistent with<sup>d</sup> repentance. <sup>9</sup>And don't presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup>“I baptize you with<sup>e</sup> water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove<sup>f</sup> his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out.”

<sup>a</sup>:2:18 Other mss read *Ramah, lamentation, and weeping*, <sup>b</sup>:2:18 Jr 31:15 <sup>c</sup>:3:3 Is 40:3 <sup>d</sup>:3:8 Lit *fruit worthy of* <sup>e</sup>:3:11 Or *in* <sup>f</sup>:3:11 Or *to carry*

increasingly paranoid in his last years and committed or planned several political executions, including those of his own family. The slaughter of perhaps twenty or so babies in an insignificant village to protect his throne is thus entirely plausible and would hardly merit mention in historical sources. That Herod based his decision to kill all male children two years or younger on the timing ascertained from the wise men indicates that they had initially seen the star rise two years earlier. It is unknown whether the initial appearance corresponded to the birth (making Jesus two years old at this point) or merely foretold it (so that Jesus at this point was still a baby).

This Herod, known as Herod the Great, was different from the other three members of the Herodian dynasty mentioned in the Gospels. They are: (1) Herod Archelaus, son and successor of Herod the Great who ruled over Judea (v. 22); (2) Herod Antipas, who executed John the

Baptist (Mk 6: 17-29) and who returned Jesus for sentencing by Pilate (Lk 23:6-12); and (3) Herod Philip, ruler in extreme northern Galilee when Jesus began his public ministry (Lk 3: 1, 19-20).

**2:17-18** Matthew loosely translated the Hebrew of Jr 31: 15. Ramah was the staging point for the Babylonian exile (Jr 40: 1-2), an event Matthew had already identified as important to Jesus's identity (Mt 1: 17). But Jr 31: 16-35 also promised an end to the exile and the institution of the new covenant with Israel, events associated elsewhere with the messianic reign (Jr 30: 1-9; 33: 14-26; see Mt 26:28). With the birth of Jesus, the Davidic Son had arrived and the exile was ended. Thus the weeping in Bethlehem fulfilled, or culminated, Rachel's weeping. This is the final mourning of exiled Israel.

**2:23** According to Lk 1:26 and 2:4, Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth prior to the birth of Jesus, prompting some to

claim that Matthew was unaware of this and thus presented Bethlehem as their hometown. But Matthew's focus was only the well-known fact that Nazareth was Jesus's hometown at the start of his ministry. He was not concerned to tell the reader the hometown of Jesus's parents. Though he first mentioned them in connection with the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, he nowhere stated that Bethlehem was their hometown. The quote corresponds to no known passage in the OT. The best possibility is that Matthew alluded to Is 11: 1 (“shoot” = Hb *nezer*), but others suggest that “a Nazarene” is a title of dishonor and thus alludes to those texts in which the Messiah is despised (Ps 22:6-8; Is 53:2-3). The two may go together, since Is 11: 1 describes the Messiah as arising from the ignominious conditions into which David's house had fallen and has links to the Servant of Is 49-53 (Is 11: 1, 10, 12; 49:22; 53:2).

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup>Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

<sup>16</sup>When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him,<sup>a</sup> and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

**4** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

<sup>2</sup>After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>Then the tempter approached him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

<sup>4</sup>He answered, "It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**"<sup>b</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

**He will give his angels orders  
concerning you,  
and they will support you  
with their hands  
so that you will not strike  
your foot against a stone.**"<sup>c</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jesus told him, "It is also written: **Do not test the Lord your God.**"<sup>d</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me."<sup>e</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Then Jesus told him, "Go away,<sup>f</sup> Satan! For it is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.**"<sup>g</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

### TWISTED SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:15-17

Members of cults and non-Christian religions take issue with Christian teaching about God's nature, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity. Critics point to this passage as evidence that the New Testament teaches tri-theism (three gods). After all, it is argued, there are three distinct divinities referenced here: the Father, whose voice comes out of heaven; the Son, who is being baptized by John the Baptist; and the Holy Spirit, who came down upon Jesus as a dove. Therefore, how can Christians speak of God as one when this clearly shows he is three? The answer is that God is one in essence (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29), yet three in Person: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is no contradiction, for God is one in one thing (*what* he is—his unified, divine essence) and three in another (*who* he is—three individual Persons making up the Trinity). Each member is distinct from the others, and so they are described as distinct; and yet they share equally and eternally in the divine essence, making them fundamentally unified.

### MINISTRY IN GALILEE

<sup>12</sup>When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup>This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>15</sup> **Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
along the road by the sea,  
beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles.**

<sup>16</sup> **The people who live in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those living in the land of the  
shadow of death,  
a light has dawned.**<sup>h,i</sup>

<sup>17</sup>From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near."

### THE FIRST DISCIPLES

<sup>18</sup>As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>"Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for<sup>j</sup> people." <sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>21</sup>Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called

<sup>a</sup>3:16 Other mss omit for him <sup>b</sup>4:4 Dt 8:3 <sup>c</sup>4:6 Ps 91:11-12 <sup>d</sup>4:7 Dt 6:16 <sup>e</sup>4:9 Or and pay me homage <sup>f</sup>4:10 Other mss read "Get behind me" <sup>g</sup>4:10 Dt 6:13 <sup>h</sup>4:16 Lit dawned on them <sup>i</sup>4:15-16 Is 9:1-2 <sup>j</sup>4:19 Or you fishers of

them. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

#### TEACHING, PREACHING, AND HEALING

<sup>23</sup>Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every<sup>a</sup> disease and sickness<sup>b</sup> among the people. <sup>24</sup>Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them. <sup>25</sup>Large crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

**5** When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then<sup>c</sup> he began to teach them, saying:

#### THE BEATITUDES

- <sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- <sup>5</sup> Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.
- <sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
- <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

<sup>11</sup>“You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

#### BELIEVERS ARE SALT AND LIGHT

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty?<sup>d</sup> It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

#### CHRIST FULFILLS THE LAW

<sup>17</sup>“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter<sup>e</sup> or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

#### MURDER BEGINS IN THE HEART

<sup>21</sup>“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder**,<sup>f</sup> and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. <sup>22</sup>But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister<sup>g</sup> will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults<sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup>4:23 Or every kind of <sup>b</sup>4:23 Or physical ailment <sup>c</sup>5:2 Lit Then opening his mouth <sup>d</sup>5:13 Or how can the earth be salted? <sup>e</sup>5:18 Or not one iota; iota is the smallest letter of the Gk alphabet. <sup>f</sup>5:21 Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17 <sup>g</sup>5:22 Other mss add without a cause <sup>h</sup>5:22 Lit Whoever says ‘Raca’; an Aramaic term of abuse that puts someone down, insulting one’s intelligence

**4:24** Matthew distinguished between physical maladies and demon possession (though he also could relate the two, 17: 14-18). Contrary to what modern critics claim, the disciples did know the difference between a physical ailment and demon possession.

**5:19** Some have seen in this verse not the voice of Jesus but a later reaction against the apostle Paul’s brand of Christianity. However, there is no reason why Jesus could not have said these words. Given what Jesus had said of his status with regard to the law, keeping

and teaching the commandments must take on different force than strict adherence. The law is good and remains valid (Rm 3: 31; 1Tm 1:8). Loving God and neighbor is a fulfillment of the law (Mt 7: 12; 22: 37-40; Rm 13: 8-10; Gl 5: 14; Jms 2: 8).

his brother or sister, will be subject to the court.<sup>a</sup> Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hellfire.<sup>b</sup> <sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to<sup>c</sup> the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.<sup>d</sup>

### ADULTERY BEGINS IN THE HEART

<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery.**<sup>e</sup> <sup>28</sup> But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

### DIVORCE PRACTICES CENSURED

<sup>31</sup> "It was also said, **Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.**<sup>f</sup> <sup>32</sup> But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### TELL THE TRUTH

<sup>33</sup> "Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord.**<sup>g</sup> <sup>34</sup> But I tell you, don't take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God's throne; <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black.

### CHALLENGE AND TACTICS

**CHALLENGE:** "I'm basically good, so God wouldn't send me to hell."

**TACTIC EMPLOYED:** Google It

Ask what they mean by "basically good." By necessity they assume the existence of a standard by which goodness can be measured. They may compare themselves to someone like Hitler and decide they are pretty good. But neither Hitler nor any other human provides the standard against which we must measure ourselves. Holy God is the only standard. Compared to a morally perfect being, none of us look good. As the Bible says, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rm 3:10). How many laws do we need to break before we're guilty? Just one! We break God's moral laws every day, disqualifying us from the "basically good" category.

<sup>37</sup> But let your 'yes' mean 'yes,' and your 'no' mean 'no.' Anything more than this is from the evil one.

### GO THE SECOND MILE

<sup>38</sup> "You have heard that it was said, **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.**" <sup>39</sup> But I tell you, don't resist<sup>1</sup> an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup> As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

### LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, **Love your neighbor'** and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies<sup>k</sup> and pray for those who<sup>l</sup> persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be<sup>m</sup> children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary?<sup>n</sup> Don't even the Gentiles<sup>o</sup> do the same? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

<sup>a</sup>5:22 Lit *Sanhedrin* <sup>b</sup>5:22 Lit *the gehenna of fire* <sup>c</sup>5:25 Other mss read *judge will hand you over to* <sup>d</sup>5:26 Lit *quadrans*, the smallest and least valuable Roman coin, worth 1/64 of a daily wage <sup>e</sup>5:27 Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18 <sup>f</sup>5:31 Dt 24:1 <sup>g</sup>5:33 Lv 19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21 <sup>h</sup>5:38 Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21 <sup>i</sup>5:39 Or *don't set yourself against, or don't retaliate against* <sup>j</sup>5:43 Lv 19:18 <sup>k</sup>5:44 Other mss add *bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,* <sup>l</sup>5:44 Other mss add *mistreat you and* <sup>m</sup>5:45 Or *may become, or may show yourselves to be* <sup>n</sup>5:47 Or *doing that is superior; lit doing more* <sup>o</sup>5:47 Other mss read *tax collectors*

# How Should a Christian Respond to Islamic Jihad?

Nabeel Qureshi

I will never forget how I felt on September 11, 2001. I was eighteen years old, a freshman in college, and a Muslim. I first heard the news in the student union at my university, when I saw dozens of people gathered around a TV. They were watching repeatedly looped footage, first of the World Trade Center being hit by a plane and then of the Towers crumbling, killing thousands. Word began to spread this was not an accident, but a terrorist attack perpetrated by Muslims as an act of Jihad.

That is when it hit me: the danger was not just on TV. It was all around me. People might react angrily, even violently, toward Muslims, and I was Muslim. How would they respond to me? As far as they knew, I believed the same thing as the terrorists.

But this was not the Islam I knew. My parents had taught me that Islam was a religion of peace and that I was supposed to love my country. Islam as I knew it was very different from the terrorists' beliefs. So what did Islam really teach?

Instead of just believing what I had always been told by my elders and imams, I started investigating Islam for myself. What I learned was that the Islam I had learned, a peaceful Islam, did not reflect the Islam that Muhammad taught. From the moment Muhammad had a fighting force, he launched more than eight battles a year, taking thousands of women and children as slaves, beheading hundreds of teenage boys and men, and conquering Arabia in the name of Islam. As I explain in my book, *Answering Jihad*, if we define Islam as the religion that Muhammad taught, then violent Jihad is woven into the very fabric of the faith.

But most Muslims do not follow Muhammad in fighting; in fact, very few even know the truth about Jihad. I certainly didn't. I had been taught in the mosques that Muhammad only fought defensively and unwillingly. Only later did I discover Muhammad's love for Jihad.

It is critical that we understand this: Muslims do not all believe the same thing. Muslims are people—people who all understand their religion in different ways, just as there are many kinds of Christians with different views.

As a Christian, I follow the commands of Jesus. Jesus's teachings are not normal. They are otherworldly, almost unbelievable. Jesus tells us to pray for those who persecute us, to put away our swords, and to love our enemies. This is because all people are created in the image of God, and that includes Muslims.

So Jesus commands us to love Muslims, but that doesn't mean we should love Islam. Again, Muslims are people; Islam is a religion. We must love Muslims, but we must speak the truth about Islam. And that is how Christians should respond to Islamic Jihad: by proclaiming the truth and loving Muslims, which means taking a stand against Islam by taking a stand for the Gospel. I am living proof: Muslims are coming to Christ at unprecedented rates. There have been more conversions in the past fourteen years than the previous fourteen centuries. This increase in the ranks of heaven means a decrease in the ranks of Islam. The gospel is the best answer to Islamic Jihad.