

GOD WITH US
Part 1: The Great Blessing
Genesis – Deuteronomy

Message 1 – Adam and Eve: Creation and fall
Genesis 1-5

Introduction to the Pentateuch

The first section of the Bible, the “Pentateuch” (“five books”), takes us on a historical journey from the creation of the universe to the death of Moses. At the time of writing, the people of Israel have departed Egypt and are moving toward the land of Canaan under Moses’ leadership. The Pentateuch was written to teach all of us the origins of the universe, earth and humanity, in relationship to God. More specifically, the Pentateuch was designed to show the nation Israel their roots in the sovereign plan and purpose of God. This explains why most of Genesis deals with the history of Abraham, the father of Israel, and his lineage. It also explains why the ending of Genesis tells how Abraham’s descendants ended up moving from Canaan into Egypt. The Book of Exodus opens some 350 years later, the Israelites having become forced laborers in Egypt. The rise of Moses, the deliverer, is recounted. Then, the rest of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) details the formation of the nation Israel out of the womb of Egypt and the movement back toward Canaan, the land promised to Abraham centuries earlier.

En route to Canaan, God entered into a special covenant relationship with Israel at Mt. Sinai, with the purpose of making them a “kingdom of priests,” a holy nation that will represent Him clearly to the whole world. The key to understanding the Pentateuch, then, is the promise God made to Abraham, recorded at the beginning of Genesis 12.

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).

This promise, called “the Abrahamic Covenant,” involves four things: 1) Abraham’s offspring would become a GREAT NATION. 2) They would live in a GREAT LAND. 3) They would have a GREAT NAME. 4) They would become a GREAT BLESSING to ALL the families of the earth. (See Matthew 1:1,16 and Romans 4:16 on how Abraham ultimately became a blessing to the whole world, by providing the lineage for Christ and an example of faith in God’s promises.)

Thus, we can state the central message of the Pentateuch as follows:

Central message: Humanity turned away from God. Yet, God did not turn away from humanity. He chose, instead to draw near; to be with us. The Pentateuch is the story of how God began to bring a great blessing (His own presence) to the world. He chose one nation in which His presence would uniquely dwell. Through Israel’s distinctive way of life, and through their worship of Yahweh, all nations would be invited to see and to know the one true God. To put it more simply: Israel was God’s plan to make Himself known to the world.

Overview of the Pentateuch

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Origins: humanity, nations, Israel	Birth of Israel; covenant w/Yahweh	Laws for worship; duties of priests	Counting nation (2x); disaster/ judgment	Repetition of Law before entering Canaan
“Beginnings”	“Exit”	“Levites”	“Numbering”	“Second Law”

Adam and Eve: The creation and fall of humanity

Genesis 1-5

The Creation Account: 1:1-2:3

When reading the creation account in Genesis 1, keep in mind the audience Moses was addressing and his purpose for writing. He was writing to the Exodus generation introducing them to their unique God and to their origins in His plan for the world. While in Egypt for 300+ years, the Israelites became accustomed to a polytheistic worldview (“many gods”). The numerous Egyptian gods represented different aspects of the world: Ra – the sun god;

Nut – the sky god; Seth – the chaos god; Shu – the air god; Geb – the earth god; Min – the fertility god; etc. In contrast, Israel was being called away from a polytheistic worldview to a strictly monotheistic view. The God that called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, Yahweh (“I AM”), is the one, true God. It will become particularly clear in the Exodus narrative of the plagues brought upon Egypt that Yahweh is directly challenging the reality of these local “gods.” In a different way, the creation account in Genesis 1 makes the same point: *Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the one true God, the creator and sustainer of the entire universe.*

Most importantly, the creation account highlights the fact that humanity is the crowning work of God’s creative activity. Notice the change in meter, tone and content as the creation of man and woman comes into view at the end of day 6.

Day 1. Then God said, “Let there be light ...”

Day 2. Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters ...”

Day 3. Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place...”

Day 4. Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens ...”

Day 5. Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures ...”

Day 6. Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind ...”

Scientists note how the universe in general, and earth in particular, is fine-tuned to support human life (the anthropic principle). Genesis asserts that this fine-tuning is no accident. God made the world for us – and He made us for Himself. We are here by careful divine design.

Day 6 (cont’d). Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish

of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall b

e food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:26-31).

The main message: Man, made uniquely in the image of God, was created to rule the earth at God’s command. The dignity, glory and responsibility of humanity are highlighted by the poetic structure of Genesis 1. (See Psalm 8, a worship song devoted to the subject of man’s unique glory and dignity.)

Humans alone bear the image of God. For example: Mentally, we can think, reason, explore and make decisions. Morally, we can embody God’s love, goodness, righteousness, justice, compassion, etc. Socially, we are made for Trinitarian-like relationships. Ultimately, all human self-esteem and self worth is rooted in the fact that we are divine image bearers.

The creation account shows God’s rhythm of work/reflection and concludes with a 7th day of rest (2:1-3), providing the basis for a Sabbath rest day for humanity. When Moses gave Israel the Ten Commandments, the longest one concerned the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). This commandment was not just for Israel; rather, it was rooted in the creation account of Genesis and applies to all of humanity for all time.

A weekly Sabbath is God’s gift to each of us; to recharge ourselves once a week. It is a day we rest, restore, relate and recreate. The Sabbath rest helps us live according to our God-given rhythms of work and rest. Do you have a 24-hour period each week devoted to rest?

* For additional thoughts on the various ways of interpreting of the Genesis 1 creation account, see Addendum at the end of this chapter. These methods of interpretation have a significant bearing on the modern discussion between theologians and scientists on how the world came into existence.

Adam placed in the Garden of Eden: 2:4-25

In Genesis 2, the lens zooms in on the creation of Adam and Eve on day 6. Genesis 2:4-25 is an expanded creation account, focusing on how God fashioned man and woman. Several messages stand out here:

A special home: Adam is formed from the dust of the earth, and God breathes life into him. God planted an exquisite garden specifically for the man to dwell in (2:1-14).

A special job: *“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it” (2:15).* Adam was God’s viceroy (assistant king), ruling the earth at God’s command.

A special tree: Adam was given total freedom to enjoy the Garden (including the *tree of life*); except for the prohibition against eating *“from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (2:17)*. If Adam chose to disobey God, he would experience *“death.”*

True “love” requires the ability to choose. The forbidden tree in the garden was a love-test tree, providing mankind with the daily opportunity to express love to God by choosing Him over another, illicit love. Whenever you say “No” to sin, you are saying “Yes” to God, thus showing Him that you love Him more than anything, or anyone else. (See John 14:23,24)

A special need: God allowed Adam to name all of the animals, while at the same time coming to the realization that none of the animals were a suitable helper *“corresponding to him” (2:20)*.

A special companion: Eve was created from Adam’s side and then brought to the man as a gift from God (2:22). Adam joyfully accepted the divine provision of the woman. He recognized that she was his perfect complement, companion and “helper” (*Ezer – a word used to describe God as our Helper/Savior*). While the man was made from the dirt, for the dirt, and brought to the dirt to work it (focus on *work*), the woman was made from the man, for the man, and brought to the man to help him (focus on *relationship*).

Men, appreciate the fact that the women in your lives are divinely wired to care about the health of relationships. Women are relational saviors. Let them flourish by helping you form deeper, healthier relationships. Resist the temptation to flee into your work-world in the attempt to escape their relational invitations.

A special institution: A clear pattern is given for the ongoing uniting of one man and one woman: *A man shall LEAVE his father and mother; he shall CLEAVE to his wife; the two shall BECOME ONE flesh (2:24)*. Every time a couple stands together to be united in marriage, they are completing the cycle in which the woman returns to the side of the man, from which she was formed, to be his companion.

A special innocence: The account ends with the note that *“the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (2:25)*. They had complete emotional and physical *vulnerability and intimacy*. There was nothing to hide, nothing to cause shame.

The fall of Adam and Eve: 3:1-24

Genesis 3 is pivotal to the message of the entire rest of the Bible. Here, the root problem of humanity is introduced. All of the activity of God from this point forward will be aimed at addressing this root problem: mankind’s rebellion and separation from God.

The temptation from Satan

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (3:1-5).

The heart of Satan’s temptation was to doubt God’s love and to distrust His word. “God is holding back on you!” “He doesn’t want you to reach your full potential.” “Do not believe His word.” “Love *yourself* enough to take this step away from God.”

Satan is “the father of lies” (John 8:44). He is always seeking to get people to question God’s love and to doubt His word. His chief weapon against humanity is not demon possession; it is deceitful deception. Jesus resisted Satan by quoting God’s truth to counter Satan’s lies (Matthew 4:1-11).

The fall of Adam and Eve

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings (3:6,7).

Having turned away from God’s word and God’s love, Adam and Eve expected that they suddenly would enjoy a blissful transformation to some higher level of godlike existence, as promised by the serpent. So it is with sin. There is always the temptation to some shortcut to fulfillment. Instead, as with Adam and Eve, so with all of us: sin brings forth “death.” The first telltale sign of “death” for them was the death of innocence and the birth of *shame*. They became ashamed of their bodies and their sexuality and immediately took steps to hide their shame from one another.

The purpose of healthy boundaries is to keep us away from the temptation to disobey God’s word. Have you created healthy boundaries in areas of life where you feel vulnerable?

Adam and Eve play the blame game

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to

eat?” The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (3:8-13).

From verse 8 we can surmise that God regularly came to be *with Adam and Eve* in the garden. Man was created to enjoy relationship with God. The God of the Bible is personally involved with His precious, image-bearing children. He enjoys our fellowship! But alas, the fellowship has been broken. *“The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* Hiding from one another, and hiding from God are the first two signs that something has gone terribly wrong. The third sign is that the man and woman immediately tried to evade their responsibilities and pass the blame to another. Adam blames his wife and God (*“The woman whom You gave to be with me...”*). Eve, in turn, blames the serpent.

A sign of emotional/spiritual maturity is when we can accept responsibility for our own sins and stop blaming everyone else for our choices and actions. Jesus referred to this as “taking the log out of your own eye, before trying to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Note that God Himself becomes the first missionary in the Bible. He leaves His home and goes to the place where lost people are. He then calls out to the lost ones: *Where are you?* The entire missionary endeavor of the Bible is fueled by the heart of a God who longs *“to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).*

God’s judgments pronounced

- Judgment on the serpent

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. And I will put enmity (hostility) between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (3:14,15).

Genesis 3:15 is very important. It has been called the “protoevangelium” (“first gospel announcement”). Here, God promises to make war between the offspring of the serpent and a

future male offspring of the woman. A child will come from the woman to deliver a deathblow to the head of the serpent. A few points are worth pondering:

1. The woman, having been the initial object of the serpent's attack, will be given the privilege of bringing into the world the serpent-crusher. This is an act of divine mercy, and a confirmation of the woman's value and power in the fight against evil.

2. The fact that the future, male serpent-crusher will be *bruised on the heel* indicates that the fight to defeat evil will be costly to the God-sent warrior.

3. In later Scripture we learn that no man has *ever* seen God the Father (John 1:18; 5:37). This would seem to indicate that when God came to visit with Adam and Eve in the garden, it was the 2nd person of the Trinity, God the Son, making the daily appearances. This would further mean that it was God the Son giving the promise concerning a future, male serpent-crusher that would come into the world to defeat evil. Thus, we may conclude that the Son of God is here forecasting His own future entrance into the world, through the woman, so that He might personally crush the serpent and defeat the problem of evil. The apostle John will later give this brief summary of the life and work of Jesus Christ: "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose – that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1John 3:8).

- Judgment on the woman

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (3:16).

God's judgment on the woman involves the disruption of her relational world. The pain of birthing and raising children will be greatly multiplied. Further, her relationship with the man will involve struggle. The phrase, "*your desire will be for your husband*" implies a desire to overcome, or control (same word in Genesis 4:7 where God says to Cain that sin has a *desire* to rule him). In response, the man will *rule over* the woman (again, implying a tendency to harshly rule or control her).

Husbands and wives, if you experience an ongoing 'battle of the wills' in your relationship, here you have the roots of that struggle. It is part of the consequence of our turning away from God. Adam and Eve were created to be co-rulers of the world. Instead, as a result of sin, they began to desire to rule each other! Mutual submission is the goal; not "winning" the battle for control. (See Ephesians 5:21f)

- Judgment on the man

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (3:17-19).

God's judgment on the man involves the disruption of his work as God's viceroy. The ground will be cursed and will, as a result, resist man's attempt to bring forth fruit. Thorns and thistles will grow where the man had planted seeds. Instead of the man's work being a joy, it will become burdensome labor. Finally, man will die and be laid to rest in the ground, from which he was originally created. Note the significance of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. What a picture of God's mercy: Jesus bore the curse (crown of thorns) when He went to the cross.

God removes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" – therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life (3:20-24).

There are two acts of divine mercy here. 1. *“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”* There may be more here than just the physical act of giving Adam and Eve clothing. In order to make garments of *skin* for Adam and Eve, there would necessarily have been the death of animals, for the sake of Adam and Eve’s coverings. This is a first hint that God will someday provide the perfect sacrifice in order to “cover” the sin problem for humanity.

2. The expulsion from the Garden was motivated by God’s love for mankind. God did not want Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life and to live in a sinful, fallen condition *forever*. Thus, he drove them out and stationed a fearsome angel to guard the entrance into the garden, lest Adam and Eve be tempted to go back in to their former paradise. The whole story of the Bible centers on God’s effort to get mankind back into the garden, to enjoy His presence forever. This He accomplishes in the final chapters of the last book of the Bible, Revelation.

The gospel (good news) in Genesis 3. Sin has barely entered into our world and we find the God of love rushing in to save us. Notice the various ways the gospel is forecast in Genesis 3.

- God is the first missionary. *Adam, where are you?*
- Woman will help defeat evil. *I will put enmity between you and the woman.*
- She will bear a savior-child. *“... and between your seed and her seed.”*
- This One will be the serpent crusher. *He will bruise you on the head.*
- *Thorns and thistles it shall grow for you.* Jesus took the crown of thorns.
- God made the first sacrifice. *The Lord God made garments of skin and clothed them.*

The Spread of Sin: 4:1-26

Genesis 4 is designed to show the impact of sin as it spreads to Adam and Eve’s descendants. Cain, in a fit of jealousy, murdered his brother Abel. His judgment was to become an outcast and a wanderer on earth. Imagine the impact of these losses to Adam and Eve. One son is dead; the other is an outcast. Lamech, a later descendant of Cain, was a vicious murderer. He killed a boy who struck him! Ironically, the first “song” in the Bible is Lamech’s

murder song. He proudly declared that he was 11 times as guilty as Cain! Clearly, relational conditions upon Earth were deteriorating at an alarming rate.

One small note of consolation is sounded at the end of this sad chapter.

“Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, “God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.” To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord” (4:25,26).

This is the first mention of people beginning to pray and worship the Lord by name. As we will soon see, conditions upon earth had become so wicked that people were forced to cry out to God for deliverance. The answer to their prayers is found in the re-birth of the human race through a man named Noah.

Cain had his own ideas about how to worship God. Abel submitted himself to God’s ways. We cannot create God in our own image and then form a religion that fits our own terms for relating with Him. God always sets the terms for restoring our relationship with Him. The proud soul shakes a fist at heaven and

The Lineage from Adam to Noah: 5:1-32

The purpose of the genealogy in Genesis 5 is to make the connection between Adam and Noah, who will become central to the second major act in the story of God and humanity. Three things stand out in this genealogy: 1) The longevity of life was significant, though steadily declining, as seen in this genealogy and the one found in Genesis 11. 2) Enoch was one of only two people to escape death (Elijah being the second). *Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him (5:24)*. God took Enoch straight to heaven, cutting his life short at just 365 years! 3) The genealogy concludes with the hope that “Noah” (“rest, comfort”) will bring some form of relief from the burden of the curse:

“This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed” (5:29).

Addendum

Various ways of interpreting the creation account in Genesis 1.

In the attempt to harmonize Scripture with the findings of modern science, biblical scholars have offered a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1. Every view must balance the evidence of Scripture *and* science. Every view must also determine the degree to which Genesis 1 is a literal *or* a poetic account of God's creative work. Following are some current ways of understanding Genesis 1.

- **The young-earth theory.** This view holds that the creation "days" of Genesis 1 are literal 24-hour days. On this view, the universe came into existence recently (6,000 – 10,000 years ago). The *apparent* old age of the earth and the universe, as seen through the lens of science, can be explained by various factors: 1) Things came into existence with "apparent age" (eg. light beams from distant galaxies were already there; trees were full grown, Adam and Eve were created as adults, etc.). 2) The flood in Noah's day (Genesis 6) created severe geological conditions in which all the fossil layers on earth were compressed in a one-year time period while the waters covered the earth.

- **The day-age theory.** The Hebrew word "day" (yom) is capable of both literal and figurative meanings. In the Old Testament, a "day" can be a very long period of human history; or, it can be a regular 24-hour day. This theory holds that the "days" of the Genesis creation account are figurative, meaning long, undefined periods of time during which creation took place as a gradually unfolding process.

- **The gap theory.** On this view, it does not really matter whether the "days" are literal 24-hour days, or long periods of time. In between each "day" is a gap, or extended period of time. These gaps could be thousands of years, or millions of years.

- **The ruin-recreation theory.** This view notes that the words "formless and void" in Gen.1:2 are words that usually refer to *evil* conditions. This theory suggests that a cosmic conflict between God and Satan took place after the initial creation (1:1). Thus, the creation account beginning at verse 3 is actually a re-creation account after the chaos resulting from the God-Satan conflict. The original creation of Genesis 1:1 could be very old, while the re-creation of Genesis 1:3ff could be more recent.

- **The framework theory.** This view reads Genesis 1 as a purely poetical/theological document with no scientific bearing whatsoever. The Hebrew creation poem is simply pointing to the unique character of God and, in particular, to the importance of Sabbath observance (7th day rest) in honor of this God.

What is essential to believe? Regardless of the view one takes, there are certain *essential teachings* in the creation narrative. The rest of Scripture builds on these important truths; therefore, none of them can be compromised in our interpretation of Genesis 1.

1. God is the eternally pre-existent Creator of all things visible and invisible.
2. God created all things intentionally, intelligently and purposefully.
3. God created humanity personally and uniquely. We alone bear God's image.
4. The image of God is reflected in *both* the creation of male and female.
5. Adam and Eve were the first, historical person's created "in the image of God."
6. God gave humanity full dominion over all aspects of life upon Earth.

For further study on the creation issue, I suggest that you start with books by Hugh Ross: *Navigating Genesis* (2014); *Genesis One* (2006); *More Than a Theory* (2009). His website is very useful: *Reasons to Believe* (www.reasons.org).