

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

by Cougan Collins

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Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life.

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*I dedicate this book to my loving wife,
Erica,
and my two beautiful daughters.*



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INTRODUCTION

Many times the best place to begin to learn about God's love, mercy, and grace is by going back to the beginning. The book of Genesis is rich with information that will increase our understanding of God and make our faith in Him stronger.

The book of Genesis is much more than a record of God creating the universe and a history of mankind. It reveals how much God loves us and it shows us how He interacted with His creation from the beginning of time. Even when Adam and Eve failed to obey God, He showed mercy on mankind and began the process to save us through His Son Jesus.

In this 13-part study, we will examine the book of Genesis from beginning to end. Many details are missed when we simply read the book of Genesis. This study will bring out many of these details, and it teaches many valuable lessons that will help us grow stronger in the faith.

While we are under the authority of the New Testament, we must not neglect the Scripture in the Old Testament. As Paul said, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," Romans 15:4. Without the book of Genesis or the other books in the Old Testament, the New Testament would not make much sense because the New Testament quotes the Old Testament many times. In addition, without knowing the prophecies about the coming Messiah, there would be little proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

My hope is that these 13 lessons will increase your knowledge and faith in God and will make you a more productive servant of God.

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ADAM & EVE How One Bite Affected Mankind Lesson 1

Adam and Eve are the most well known couple in the Bible. We wish we knew more about their lives, but what we do know teaches us many spiritual lessons.

After God created the universe and every living thing on the face of the earth, His last creative work was humans. Adam was the first man to walk on the face of the earth (1 Corinthians 15:45), but he was not like the animals or any other created thing because he and his wife were made in the image of God. Read Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7.

Adam was created from the dust of the earth, and Eve was created out of man (Genesis 2:21-24). The name Adam means *man or mankind*, and the name Eve means *life* because she is the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20). At first, Eve was called Woman, and she did not receive the name Eve until after she ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:20). I believe it is significant that woman was created from the side of man instead of from his head or his foot because she was not his ruler or his slave; she was his companion (Genesis 3:18). From the beginning of time, God's original design for marriage was one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:4-6).

God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and He placed Adam in this beautiful paradise. The exact location of the garden is unknown, but we have a general idea of its location based on the four rivers associated with it (Genesis 2:11-14):

1. Pishon River (location unknown).
2. Gihon River (location unknown).
3. Hiddekel River also known as the Tigris River (runs parallel to the Euphrates River).
4. Euphrates River (Runs parallel to the Tigris River).

The first two rivers do not help us, but the latter two tell us that Eden was located around these two rivers because our text says, "Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads" (Genesis 2:10). One possible reason we do not know the exact location of the garden is that the flood of Noah's day could have dramatically changed the landscape including how the rivers ran together. In the garden, God planted everything Adam and Eve would need, and He made everything beautiful to the eye (Genesis 2:9). In the

Adam & Eve

middle of the garden was the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).

Even though God provided everything they needed to survive and live forever, He still wanted man to work (Genesis 2:15). God never intended for us to sit around and do nothing while we enjoy His blessings. Paul said, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Adam and Eve did not receive a free ride in their life and neither do we. Besides tending and keeping the garden, Adam was given the responsibility of naming all the animals (Genesis 2:19-20), having children with Eve, subduing the earth, and dominating all living creatures (Genesis 1:28). Since Adam had all these responsibilities and he and Eve were capable of having children, it tells us they were created fully-grown and had some pre-existing knowledge.

We also learn that God placed a restriction on them:

Genesis 2:16 - And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

All they had to avoid was the one tree. If they ate from it, death would be the consequence. We have no idea how long they enjoyed the beautiful paradise God gave them, but at some point, the bliss of paradise came to a screeching halt. Read Genesis 3:1-7.

Some find it difficult to believe that a serpent could talk to Eve, and they conclude it is a myth, or that the serpent is used as an allegory. However, there is nothing in the text indicating the snake is being used symbolic of a tempter or anything else. Also, Paul confirms this is not a myth:

2 Corinthians 11:3 - But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

John says the devil was the “serpent of old” (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). The devil was doing what he does best, manipulating and lying, which is why he is called the father of lies (John 8:44). We do not know the specifics of how the devil was doing all this or how much power he had, but we know he was active during the Old Testament times because we see him at work in the book of Job (Job 1 – 2). Based on Job’s account, his power was limited because he had to get permission to do certain things to Job.

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Christians must never underestimate the persuasive nature of the devil. Paul says he can appear to be an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). We learn from his encounter with Jesus in the desert that he never gives up because Luke wrote: “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). Like a hungry lion, he will stay out of sight as he waits for us to be at our weakest moment. When that moment comes, he will attack us and try to devour us, but we are not defenseless. As Peter says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). When we resist him steadfast in the faith, he will flee from our sight (James 4:7).

There are three basic ways the devil can tempt someone to sin, and they are outlined in 1 John:

1 John 2:16 - For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Sometimes the devil only has to use one of these to cause someone to fall, but when it is important to him, he will use all three. He used all three on Eve. The lust of the flesh was her desire to taste the fruit. The lust of the eyes was her desire to look at the beauty of the fruit. The pride of life was her desire to have the knowledge of God. All three of these pulled her into the devil’s snare (2 Timothy 2:26).

We do not know how long Eve stared at the forbidden tree, but the ole devil knew what he was doing. He told his first lie and planted doubt in the mind of Eve. We can see how crafty the devil is because he quoted God, but he twisted what He said ever so slightly to make her believe she would not die but become like God.

God gave Eve a free will, and it was time for her to make her choice. She could obey God or listen to the serpent. Unfortunately, she chose to defy God, and she ate from the forbidden tree and gave some to Adam as well. Just like Eve, Adam had the freedom to choose, but he also chose to defy God. Husbands and wives are supposed to help each other remain faithful to God, but Eve chose to tempt Adam and both became guilty of sin. They had the power and the ability to keep from sinning, but they allowed the temptation of the forbidden tree to cause them to sin. Our temptations only become a sin when we give into them. As James says:

James 1:13 - Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own

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desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

To keep from sinning, we must stop the process of temptation that leads to sin. We can do this by changing our desires to God's desires, staying away from those things that tempt us, and by keeping the whole armor of God on always, which gives us our strongest defense against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Once Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened. Before that moment, they perceived their nakedness as an infant or a toddler would, but now, they perceived things in a different light. They became aware of their nakedness, which caused them to clothe themselves because they were ashamed. I am sure they hoped for something grander from the knowledge they received from the forbidden fruit, but they were sorely disappointed. The devil is good at making the benefits of sin seem much grander than they are, and he is good at making promises he cannot keep.

We need to keep the devil's character in mind the next time we convince ourselves it is acceptable to commit "small sins" to taste a forbidden pleasure because "small sins," as we perceive them, will still separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23). Nearly every sin we commit originates from selfishness, which is the reason Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Jesus put us first in His life, and we must return the favor by being humble and unselfish if we want to be His disciples. Read Genesis 3:8-13.



We do not know how often God visited the garden, but on this visit, neither Adam nor Eve was there to greet Him. Before they sinned, they stood before God without any shame, but now they were hiding. Similarly, we cannot stand before God nor can we look forward to Jesus' return if we are stained with sin. God knew what they had done because the only way they would be ashamed of their nakedness is by eating from the forbidden tree. When God asked Adam if he ate from it, he did not deny it, but he blamed Eve. When he asked Eve about it, she did not deny eating from the tree either, but she blamed the serpent.

It is easy to blame others for the poor choices we make. For example, if we are caught cheating on a test we might say, "Everyone else was cheating." If we curse someone or beat them up, we might say, "They deserved it because..." Blaming others for our own sin is our way of justifying it, which is what Adam and Eve

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were doing. However, neither their excuses nor our excuses will change the reality that we sin by our own choice. When the judgment day comes, we will all give an account for our own actions (2 Corinthians 5:10). Read God's response in Genesis 3:14-15.

God proclaims the punishment against the serpent and the devil himself. When we consider the punishment for the serpent, it implies the serpent could walk beforehand because it would not be much of a curse if the serpent was originally designed to crawl on his belly.

In verse 15, we have the first Messianic prophecy. God is saying there will always be a struggle between the devil and the woman. While her Seed could refer to all those born from her, God gets specific and tells us He is talking about Jesus because He said, "He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

This prophecy was not fulfilled until the first century. The devil thought he won a great victory when Jesus was put to death on the cross, which is how the devil bruised His heel. However, when Jesus arose from the dead, He struck a death-blow to the devil's head that he could never recover from because Jesus conquered death. Every person who obeys the gospel and remains faithful until death will also experience the same victory over death and the devil (1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Revelation 2:10). When Jesus returns for the final judgment day, He will cast the devil and all those who belong to him into the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10; 21:8).

While the devil managed to drive a wedge between man and God with the sin of Adam and Eve (Isaiah 59:2), God already had a plan in place to reconcile mankind through the sacrifice of His own Son (Romans 5:8-11). Not only does Adam and Eve's example show us how sinful man can be, it demonstrates God's love, mercy, and grace. Next, God tells the woman her punishment. Read Genesis 3:16.

Eve would experience greater pain in pregnancy and childbirth. Since she took the lead in being deceived and tempted her husband, he would rule over her, which is one reason women are to be in subjection to their husbands, and men are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the home and the church. As Paul said:

1 Timothy 2:12 - **And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.** ¹³ **For Adam was formed first, then Eve.** ¹⁴ **And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

Paul is not teaching that women are second-rate or that their husbands can abuse

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them. Instead, wives are to be in subjection to their husbands just as man is in subjection to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 11:3). When husbands and wives love each other and treat each other as the Scriptures teach, their marriage will be beautiful and peaceful. When men and women respect the roles God has given us, we will be blessed.

Next, God tells Adam his punishment. Read Genesis 3:17-24. Adam would no longer enjoy the ease of taking care of the garden prepared by God. Now he would have to work hard to grow things while battling against thorns and thistles because he and his wife were banished from paradise. God put cherubim with a flaming sword in place to keep them from entering the garden again. Since they would not be able to eat from the tree of life, they would not be able to live forever.



Before God drove them out of the garden, He clothed them with animal skin. The reason He did this is unknown, but some speculate that He was giving them proper clothing that would last and was more suitable for the new environment they would have to work in.

We learn two things from verse 22. First, more than one person makes up the Godhead because God said, “man has become like one of Us” (plural). Second, the devil did not completely lie to Eve because once they ate the forbidden fruit, they did become like God in that they could perceive good and evil. However, he did lie about them not dying.

We know little about what happen to them after they were cast out of the garden, but we do know that they had children. I am sure every time Adam broke a sweat tilling the ground and Eve suffered through her pregnancy and delivery, they were reminded of their terrible choice to sin against God. As God promised, Adam eventually returned to the dust he came from when he died at the age 930 (Genesis 5:5).

In conclusion, we have learned many great lessons from the first couple of chapters the Bible. We have seen how God provides for mankind, yet He expects him to take care of what has been given to him. We have seen how sneaky the devil is, his tactics, and how he can be defeated. If we choose to disobey God, there will be consequences to our sin because God means what He says. Finally, we learned that God had a plan of salvation ready for us, which came through His Son, and we can take comfort in knowing we have a God that loves us and wants us to make it to heaven (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

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Questions:

1. What is the major difference between man and animal?
2. What two rivers give us a general idea of the location of the Garden of Eden?
3. How do we know the story of Adam and Eve is not a myth?
4. What three ways can the devil tempt someone?
5. When does a temptation become a sin?
6. What is the first Messianic prophecy of the Bible?
7. Discuss the punishments received by the serpent, Eve, and Adam.
8. In what way did Adam and Eve become like God after eating the forbidden fruit?