

# What does the Bible Say?

## Lesson 1: The Problem – From the beginning

The story of God and his relationship with mankind begins in the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. The story displays God's heart and original plan for his children. But something happens that seems to disrupt and even distort this plan. Yet, no power or will of man is stronger than God's power and will. God's plan was and always will be to restore his children to himself. We can be a part of God's plan today, and this study takes us to the beginning of that journey:

God created the sky and the earth. At first, <sup>2</sup>the earth was completely empty. There was nothing on the earth. Darkness covered the ocean, and God's Spirit moved over the water... <sup>9</sup>Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together so that the dry land will appear." And it happened.... <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth grow grass, plants that make grain, and fruit trees. The fruit trees will make fruit with seeds in it. And each plant will make its own kind of seed. Let these plants grow on the earth." And it happened... <sup>14</sup>Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky. These lights will separate the days from the nights..." <sup>24</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth produce many kinds of living things. Let there be many different kinds of animals..." <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Now let's make humans in our image and in our likeness. They will rule over all the fish in the sea and the birds in the air. They will rule over all the large animals and all the little things that crawl on the earth"... <sup>31</sup>God looked at everything he had made. And he saw that everything was very good. (Genesis 1, ERV)

From this passage, what do you learn about how God created our universe? What role did God's voice play in our creation? (vv. 9, 11, 24, 26)

How did God create man in a special way? (v. 26) Why do you think he did this? Why do you think he didn't create us just like the animals?

How does this express the kind of relationship God wants to have with man?

<sup>8</sup>Then the Lord God planted a garden in the East, in a place named Eden. He put the man he made in that garden. <sup>9</sup>Then the Lord God caused all the beautiful trees that were good for food to grow in the garden. In the middle of the garden, he put the tree of life and the tree that gives knowledge about good and evil.... <sup>16</sup>The Lord God gave [the man] this command: "You may eat from any tree in the garden. <sup>17</sup>But you must not eat from the tree that gives knowledge about good and evil. If you eat fruit from that tree, on that day you will certainly die!" (Genesis 2)

Why do you think God put man in a garden? What do you think this garden represented?

What command does God give this man? (v. 17) What do you think man might do with this knowledge?

What do we learn are the consequences for disobeying God? (v. 17)

From this passage, how do you think man's knowledge of good and evil could affect his physical *and* spiritual relationship with God?

Knowing that man is weak toward sin, why do you think God gave man a choice to eat or not eat from the tree? How does this reflect the kind of relationship God wants to have with the children he created? (Hint: The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 John 4:16). How are love and choice connected?)

<sup>18</sup>Then the Lord God said, "I see that it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make the companion he needs, one just right for him." ... <sup>24</sup>That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife. In this way two people become one. <sup>25</sup>The man and his wife were naked, but they were not ashamed. (Genesis 2)

The snake was the most clever of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. The snake spoke to the woman and said, "Woman, did God really tell you that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" <sup>2</sup>The woman answered the snake, "No, we can eat fruit from the trees in the garden. <sup>3</sup>But there is one tree we must not eat from. God told us, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not even touch that tree, or you will die.'" <sup>4</sup>But the snake said to the woman, "You will not die. <sup>5</sup>God knows that if you eat the fruit from that tree you will learn about good and evil, and then you will be like God!" (Genesis 3)

How did the serpent (a metaphor for Satan) lead the woman into eating the fruit that God had commanded the man not to eat? What tactics does he use? (vv. 3:1, 4)

How could Satan's voice change Adam and Eve's relationship with God? What is Satan's goal?

<sup>6</sup>The woman could see that the tree was beautiful, and the fruit looked so good to eat. She also liked the idea that it would make her wise. So, she took some of the fruit from the tree and ate it. Her husband was there with her, so she gave him some of the fruit, and he ate it... <sup>7</sup>Then it was as if their eyes opened... [and they] saw that they were naked. So, they got some fig leaves, sewed them together, and wore them for clothes. <sup>8</sup>Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3)

What lie(s) did Eve believe that led her to eat the fruit? (vv. 4-6) What thoughts do you think she may have had about herself that led her to eat the fruit?

In Genesis, God told Adam not to eat from this tree, so we can assume that Adam was the one who told Eve. Now Satan is telling Eve that what God and Adam said wasn't true! What thoughts do you think Eve may have had toward Adam and God?

What are some things that Eve and her husband desired more than obeying God?

How did Adam and Eve react to their sin? Why do you think they did this? What do you think God would have wanted them to do? (vv. 7-8)

Why do you think God allowed Satan to speak to his children and influence them? What does this say about God's confidence in his own power? What does God desire for his children?

<sup>21</sup> The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. <sup>22</sup> The Lord God said, "Look, the man has become like us—he knows about good and evil. And now the man might take the fruit from the tree of life. If the man eats that fruit, he will live forever." <sup>23</sup> So the Lord God forced the man out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground he was made from... <sup>24</sup> Then he put Cherub angels and a sword of fire at the entrance of the garden to protect it. The sword flashed around and around, guarding the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3)

How does God respond to Adam and Eve's nakedness? (v. 21) How do you think he created this garment? Why do you think he did this, and what do we learn about God?

Why does God expel Adam and Eve from the garden? (v. 22) What would have happened if God had not done this? What impact would this have on our world today?

<sup>14</sup> So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity [hatred] between you and the woman, and between your offspring [or seed] and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3, NIV).

What does God want us to understand about Satan? How should we view him? How does he view us?

If we read on, Adam and Eve are punished as well for this sin because in God's love, he's also just. God curses the ground that Adam will work and make childbearing difficult for Eve. Throughout the Bible God uses punishment and consequences for sin to show his children what will happen if they continue. Even though this hurts, it's still love because God doesn't want us to ruin our lives. But throughout the Old Testament, we see that man continues to sin against God again and again, despite these consequences. Is there hope? There is! If we look back to Genesis 3:15, God speaks about a specific person who will be the offspring or descendent of Eve: "*he* will crush your [Satan's] head, and you will strike *his* heel" [emphasis added]. This person or "seed" is mentioned again in this passage:

<sup>12</sup> "The **seed** will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people. <sup>13</sup> Just as you, Judah and Israel, have been a curse among the nations, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong...<sup>23</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that **God is with you**.'" (Zechariah 8)

Here we learn that God will send a seed, or offspring of hope for his children. Who is this seed? (See footnote.)

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:23 says, "'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us') [from Isaiah 7:14]. Romans 6:23 also says, "<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Genesis 3:15, God says that he will use this seed to crush Satan's head. What other hope will this seed bring? (Zechariah 8)

From these promises, what do we learn about God? His nature? His heart for his children?

The Old Testament tells the story of God's chosen people, known as Israel, a Jewish nation of people who followed "Yahweh," the Jewish name for God. The story reveals man's inability to stay in a righteous relationship with God and his on-going tendency to disobey God's laws and even rebel against God. We see that man is completely powerless to save himself or restore himself to God. Yet the stories continue to display God's deep love, mercy, and longing for his children to know him and be close to him. At the height of Israel's disobedience, God spoke this through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>14</sup> "Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband..."<sup>19</sup> "I myself said, "'How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me." (Jeremiah 3)

Here God calls himself a husband and a father to us. What is nature of these relationships? Using these metaphors, describe in more detail the relationship God wants us to have with us.

In the Old Testament, we see God's hope to bring his children out of a land that was once cursed into a new Promised Land called Israel. This land is a reminder of the secure and pleasant garden God once planned for his children. In Jerusalem, Israel God establishes a physical temple where the people come and worship: "<sup>16</sup> I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there" (II Chronicles 7), just like it was in the garden. But since the temple was holy, only the priests could enter the most holy place inside, and a curtain separated the holy place from the people. This curtain represents how sin separated God's children from their heavenly Father. As long as this curtain existed, the people remained separated.

Eventually, God's own people and other enemies of God corrupted this temple and destroyed it completely. The Promised Land too became a place of corruption because of the peoples' sins. In other words, this Promised Land and physical temple were not the eternal place where God would live with his children. They were only representations or symbols for a future place where God would one day live with the ones who love him. Keep studying to learn more!

What does this study make you think about? How does it make you feel? How do you want to respond to what you learned today?

Homework:

- Write up to 3 lies that you might be believing about yourself and up to 3 lies that you might be believing about God. Did these lies come from a person, an experience, or something else? Ask the Holy Spirit or a friend to help you identify lies, if you need help.
- Look through the handout [Identity in Christ](#) and [Promises of God](#)<sup>2</sup>, and find words of God that speak the truth about who he is and how he sees and feels about you.

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<sup>2</sup> For handouts, see "Healing Handouts" at <https://www.connectthenations.com/transform>.