

GENESIS 2 & 3

WEEK 5



Historical Context & Background

Genesis is the first book of Scripture, and so it doesn't have much context biblically. It sets the context. This passage of Scripture is the context for the entire story of Scripture. It introduces where the world came from and what went wrong.

However, Christians understand that Christ is the centerpiece of all creation's story, so reading Genesis in light of Jesus' death and resurrection is the correct way to read it. The most important contextual question would be, "What questions does this text answer for the people it was revealed to?" And the answers—there is ONE God, that he is good, and that he loves us—are striking because the surrounding pagan cultures viewed their gods, and consequently themselves, quite differently.



Related Passages

John 10 — Jesus life to the full

Matthew 19 — Jesus on marriage

John 20 — Jesus breathing new life

Matthew 7:15-23 — Life about God isn't life with God

Romans 5:12-21 - Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ



Key Terms

Man: Adam's name probably comes from the Hebrew for "ground," adamah, and indeed the word adam means "man" in Hebrew.

One Flesh: This refers to sex, but also speaks to a more than physical bond present in sex. First, the one flesh produced by sex is children. But it also does mean a real unification and binding (see 1 Cor. 6). Jesus also ratifies this image of marriage in Matthew 19:4-6.

Serpent: Although we commonly think of the serpent as Satan, he actually isn't identified as such in the text. However, in Revelation the ancient serpent is identified as the Devil, which Christian tradition has taken to mean the serpent in Genesis.



Key Themes

Creation: The first thing to notice here is this is the 2nd creation account. The first—Genesis 1—is verse, poetry, and this one is narrative. This is odd, and many call it contradictory to have two different accounts. But we have to ask about the people to whom this revelation was first given. Questions which would have come into their minds were: How did we get here? Why am I here? How did the world end up so messed up? If we ask the wrong questions about Scripture, we will get the wrong answers. It might be tempting to take a deep dive into discussions about evolution. But it's not the point of the passage, and it is not where Scripture will come alive in the souls of your students. However, please do NOT just shut down questions about the history or science of creation. Faith isn't ignorance, and Christians aren't ostriches.

An aspect of creation that this passage *is* deeply concerned with is embodiment, and this is *good*. Man is made from the dust, returns to dust. An essential part of who we are is matter. This is why Jews and Christians are so insistent on the goodness of the body and its physical resurrection. It is interesting to note that man is given life through the breath of God. The only other time this occurs in Scripture is when Jesus breathes on his disciples in the upper room (John 20:22), signaling a new creation.

Life & Death: The opposition of these two forces is a (if not the) predominant theme in Scripture. Notice all of the life/death imagery in these passages: breath of life, living being, growth of garden, tree of life, forbidden fruit brings death, etc. It pops up everywhere, and not just in Genesis. Paul calls Death the final enemy (1 Cor. 15:36); Christ came to remove the fear of death by defeating the master of death (Heb. 2:14-18); knowing God is eternal life (John 17:3). Genesis introduces the problem with the world: death. We're enslaved to it, we serve it, and we serve the one who has the keys of death. That's the problem. Most importantly, Jesus came to die, so that we could have life. Jesus himself says this, says this is why he came (John 10:10). The most famous verse in Scripture, John 3:16, *is* this concept.

The Fall and Life About God: Genesis 3 is the fall. We fell from a state of communion with God to a state of separation from God. Genesis obviously uses a physical image (for obviously God is omnipresent and a spirit) to communicate that—God being physically in the garden and we're physically exiled. When we look back at how they fell, we see some interesting reasons. The serpent lies, the fruit looked pleasing, they desired wisdom, etc. But what we really see here is the transition of life with God in Genesis 2, to a life *about* (i.e. life after "*with*") God in Genesis 3. The serpent and Eve have a conversation about God, what he wants, what he expects, etc. When Adam and Eve realized they were naked they tried to hide from God. Now that their life was only about God, they couldn't stand to be with Him. This is a pastoral point your students need to come to understand. Just because you're life about God doesn't mean you're with him. Jesus says as much in Matthew 7. Many students have seen this, people super involved in CSF or church and all of the sudden abandoning it all. About God isn't with God.

Protoevangelium: This fancy word just means first good news. It's a prophecy that attests to the gospel. After Adam and Eve fall, God does two incredibly interesting things (for the Christian

looking back). First, he gives this promise to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Christians obviously see this as a prophecy of Christ, and Paul references it in Romans 16:20. Christ will crush death, but he’ll do so paradoxically by dying, having his heel struck. Then “God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (3:21). This is the first shedding of blood in all of Scripture, and God himself did it to cover Adam and Eve. This is likewise imagery directly carried into the New Testament, where Christians are told to clothe themselves in Christ (Romans 13:14)

! Three Main Points

1. Christ is present all through this passage. Find him.
2. This is the first conversation *about* God. Previously humanity had been *with* God.
3. Death is the problem. Christ came so you could have life to the full.

☞ Quotes & Illustrations

“As man I deliberately transgressed the divine commandment, when the devil, enticing me with the hope of divinity, dragged me down ... Because of this, God became perfect man, taking on everything that belongs to human nature. This flesh proved poison to the serpent, destroying him utterly by the power of the Divinity within it; but to human nature it proved a remedy restoring it to its original grace by that same power of the Divinity within it. For just as the devil poured out his venom of sin in the tree of knowledge and corrupted human nature once it had tasted it, so when he wished to devour the flesh of the Master he was himself destroyed by the power of the Divinity within it.”

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

? Discussion Questions

- Why do you think God inspired this story to be included in Scripture?
- What do we learn about God in this passage? What do we learn about people in this passage?
- How is this piece of Scripture read through the lens of Jesus’ life and teachings?
- Where do you see this connect with other sections of Scripture? How does this passage shape the way we read all of Scripture?
- Think about the original recipients of the Genesis revelation. What were they like? What were their questions? Were their questions different from the questions we might ask knowing 21st Century science?
- How did the serpent appeal to Adam and Eve? How did he convince them? How does the enemy use the same strategies in your life?

- Is it fair that we share in the fall despite not being there? What part(s) of the fall do we share in?
- God curses the serpent and gives two promises. What does it mean that the serpent's head will be crushed? What does it mean that the serpent will strike his heel?
- Did the serpent lie, or did God, when they talked about death being the result of eating of the tree? How has death entered our lives?
- Where else in Scripture do you see trees talked about? Are these related? What's the significance of using tree imagery?
- "Sweat of the brow" is an idiom about anxiety. What anxiety plagues your life, and how does it keep you from life with God?
- What do you think the creation of Adam and Eve tells us about how men and women are meant to relate to each other?
- Based on these chapters, what was the good life for a person supposed to look like?
- Do you think Adam and Eve were perfect in the garden? If so, how did they fall? If not, why weren't they?
- Did God want humans to be ignorant by forbidding them knowledge of good and evil? Was God really afraid of them gaining some knowledge or power, as the snake insinuates? If not, what was his motivation?
- Is the desire to be like God a bad desire? Shouldn't we want to be like him? What aspect of that might actually be bad?
- Are we called to keep the sabbath holy (2:2)? How?

Application & Practice

Sabbath: This week intentionally do all of your homework before Sunday. Spend Sunday not doing anything school related (or work related if possible). Also spend 1 day without your phone this week as a technology sabbath.

Care for the land: Buy a small plant or two and take care of it this year. If you want to get really crazy, buy some herbs and use them when you make food.

Connect with the Past: Connect with ancient Christians' experience of sin in their lives. Read St. Augustine's famous account of stealing pears (*Confessions* book 2, sections 9-16). It's a short read, only a few pages.

Read: Reflect on Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "Thee, God, I come from, to thee go" (on next page)

Going Deeper

N. T. Wright on how Israel mirrors Adam & Eve - a video from BioLogos
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffWo7nzL66o>

Tim Keller sermon on the promise of hope after the fall (aka *protoevangelium*)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q6EgfodCDk>

Bishop Robert Barron sermon on "The Fall"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3u4kYuSTHA>

"Thee, God, I come from, to thee go"

*Thee, God, I come from, to thee go
All day long I like fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.
What I know of thee I bless,
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being and as seeing
Something of thy holiness.
Once I turned from thee and hid,
Bound on what thou hadst forbid;
Sow the wind I would; I sinned:
I repent of what I did.
Bad I am, but yet thy child.
Father, be thou reconciled.
Spare thou me, since I see
With thy might that thou art mild.
I have life before me still
And thy purpose to fulfil;
Yea a debt to pay thee yet:
Help me, sir, and so I will.
But thou bidst, and just thou art,
Me shew mercy from my heart
Towards my brother, every other
Man my mate and counterpart.*



GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS
(1844-1889)