

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	9
Introduction	13
Prologue	15
<i>1</i> Life	19
<i>2</i> Curse	29
<i>3</i> Salvation	41
<i>4</i> Judgment	53
<i>5</i> Blood	65
<i>6</i> Law	77
<i>7</i> Atonement	89

<i>8</i> Priest	101
<i>9</i> Blessing	113
<i>10</i> Courage	125
<i>11</i> Giving	137
<i>12</i> Evil	149
<i>13</i> Covenant	161
<i>14</i> Deliverer	173
<i>15</i> Redeemer	185
<i>16</i> King	197
<i>17</i> Throne	209
<i>18</i> Prophet	223
<i>19</i> Temple	235
<i>20</i> Worship	247
<i>21</i> Sin	261
<i>22</i> Righteousness	273
<i>23</i> Joy	285
Study Guide	299



1

Life

GENESIS 1:1–2:25

*Who is God
and why does
it matter?*

*Who am I and
why am I here?*

Life

GENESIS 1:1-2:25



DISCOVER

how God is directly involved in every home, job, and marriage.



LEARN

why your life has unique value and how you cannot know yourself until you know God.



WORSHIP

as you consider the good gifts God has poured into your life.

IMAGINE yourself at a theater for the first performance of a new play. The curtain goes up, but the stage is empty. Then the author walks on and introduces himself to the audience. He tells you who he is, why he wrote the play, and what it is about. The author does not present an argument for his own existence. When he walks onto the stage, he simply introduces himself and begins to speak about himself and his work.

THE AUTHOR TAKES THE STAGE

The Bible begins with God walking onto the stage and introducing Himself.

In the beginning God...(GENESIS 1:1)

This is His story, and so right at the beginning God introduces Himself to us. As we follow the Bible story, we will discover more about who He is and what He has done, but the first thing God wants us to know is that He is here. He also wants us to know what He has done.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (1:1)

The Author wants us to know that what we are about to see is entirely His work. This is of great importance because the Creator has the rights of the owner. We live in a world of trademarks, registered service marks, and patents. If I say, “Have it your way,” you will immediately think about Burger King. If I say, “Just do it,” you immediately think about Nike. The slogan is owned by its creators.

A creator always has the rights of ownership, and God owns all that He has made. If your life were an accident arising from millennia of human history, then you would be a free agent, accountable to nobody but yourself. But if you were created, then your Creator has the full rights of ownership over your life. One or the other of these things must be true, but both of them cannot be true. Either

1. you are an accident of history and therefore completely at liberty to do whatever you please with your life—to indulge it or trash it or end it—and if that is the case your life is ultimately meaningless; or,
2. you are a created being, and if that is the case, your Creator has absolute rights of ownership over your life.

God introduces Himself as our Creator and therefore our owner. You are not your own. Your life is a trust given to you from God. You are not worthless or aimless; God chose to bring you into being. He did it on purpose, and you will discover that purpose as you get to know the One who created you.

UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

If we do not know our Creator, we will not understand ourselves. When people start believing that they are meaningless accidents, human life becomes cheap. And if human life is cheap, it becomes disposable when it is inconvenient. First the unborn, then the handicapped, then the elderly or others who are a drain on the economy become nuisances and even expendable. Then come those who are the “wrong color,” the “wrong race,” or the “wrong religion.”

The most monstrous evils of our time have been built on the assumption that human life is an accident. The future direction of our society will in large part be determined by whether we choose to believe that we are accidents of history or the special creation of almighty God.

When we open the Bible, we are confronted by God. He is the Creator, and He has the absolute rights of ownership over all things.

After God tells us who He is, He explains two things that He wants us to know about ourselves: (1) We are made in His image, and (2) we are absolutely dependent on Him.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image.” (1:26)

Did you notice the plural pronoun there? God says, “Let *us* make man.” This is a fascinating hint about the nature of God to be revealed more fully later.

After five days of creation, the crowning moment has come. It is almost as if God has a conversation with Himself. “Let’s do it! Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness.” An image is a reflection, and so God is telling us that He made us in such a way that we would be able to reflect something of His own nature and glory.

“Man” is used as a generic term here; it includes male and female. We are specifically told “God created man in his own image, . . . male and female he created them” (v. 27).

This image of God is what distinguishes people from the animals. The animals were made by God, but none of them was made like God. That is why no man or woman should ever be treated as an animal or behave as an animal. The difference between man and the animal kingdom is of enormous significance.

Early on in the Bible story, we will discover the devil taking on the form of an animal. At the center of the Bible story, we will find God taking on the form of a man. The Son of God is the image of God, and so when He took flesh, it was in the form of a man, because man was made in the image of God.

Men and women who believe that they are simply developed animals have missed the most fundamental thing that God says about them. We are made in the image of God!

THE KISS OF LIFE

Man is made in the image of God, but he must always remember that he is not God. In fact, man is rather fragile. God made the first man from the dust of the ground, so we should not be surprised if there are similarities to the animals at a biological level. But there is more to man than chemical or biological life.

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (2:7)

God formed a corpse, and a skeletal frame lay lifeless on the ground. Then God breathed His own breath into this biodegradable corpse. He gave man the kiss of life, and the lifeless corpse became a living, self-conscious being.

God is always doing what He did that day. “He [God] . . . gives all men life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25). God sustains you one breath at a time. So if you want to sin against God intentionally, try to do it without breathing! It would be a sad thing to draw breath from God and use the energy of that breath to grieve His heart.

Here is the second key to knowing and understanding yourself: You are absolutely dependent upon God. If you can grasp those two truths—you are made in His image and dependent on Him—you will discover a great dignity and at the same time a profound humility.

God gave Adam four special gifts that made his life wonderfully rich. They were God's presence, a place, a purpose, and a partner.

TAKING A WALK WITH GOD

God is Spirit. That means that God is invisible to the human eye. Yet right at the beginning of the Bible we read about “the *sound* of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (3:8; italics added).

God revealed Himself in a beautiful garden called Eden. We call each revelation a *theophany*, and that means an appearance of God in visible form. The Old Testament has many examples of this, and they are very important. In the earliest theophanies, God did for Adam and Eve in a visible way what He does for all His people in an invisible way.

God is eternal and invisible, and He wants to establish a relationship with the man and the woman so that they may know Him and enjoy Him. Later in the Bible story, we will see that God became a man, so it should not seem strange that in the Old Testament He should appear in a visible form. These theophanies show us the intense desire in the heart of God to establish fellowship with man.

It is almost as if the Son of God could not wait to come. He burst out of heaven, entering human time and space, and came to earth so that He could walk with the first man and woman in the garden.

Notice that “they *heard* the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden.” They heard the cracking of twigs and the rustling of leaves. They walked with the Son of God in Eden as surely as Peter, James, and John would walk with the Son of God in Galilee.

Adam and Eve walked with God. They asked questions and enjoyed conversation. Can you begin to imagine what this would be like? God was interested in what Adam had done in the day. He was listening to whatever was on Eve's mind. God spoke with them. The man and the woman were walking in fellowship with God.

We will see in the next chapter that this fellowship between God and man was broken, and that it has remained broken throughout the generations of human history.

Christ came into the world to restore that broken relationship and to make it possible for man to walk with God again.

That is the whole story of the Bible. Jesus Christ gives us access to the Father. We cannot see God, but when we come to Him with faith and in the name of Jesus Christ, His presence is as real as it was when He appeared in visible form to Adam. Think about that next time you pray.

A PLACE CALLED HOME

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (2:8)

It is difficult to be precise about the location of Eden, but it is important to grasp that it is a real place. We are told that it was in the east. The book of Genesis was part of the revelation God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai, so we are talking about a location east of Sinai. We are also told about four rivers (2:10–14), the Pishon and the Gihon (which are not known to us), the Tigris and the Euphrates, which run through modern Iraq. We cannot be certain about the garden's location, but it is clear that the LORD planted one somewhere in this area. (See the map "A Garden in the East.")

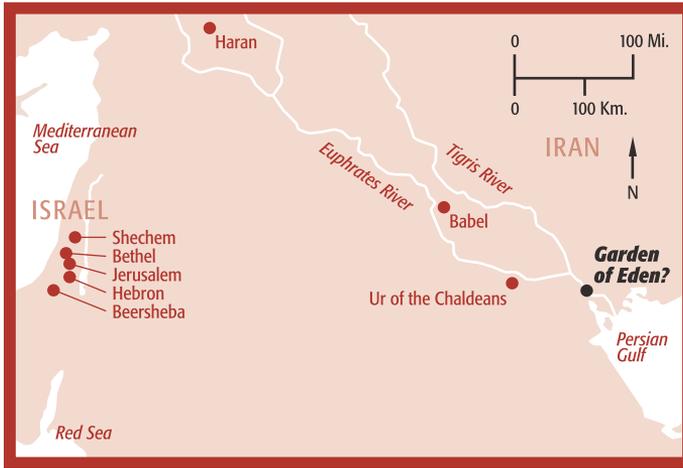
The significant thing is that the LORD put the man there. God appeared to Adam in a theophany and placed him in this garden. It is possible that God created Adam outside the garden and then brought him to Eden, saying, "This is the place I have prepared for you!" God created a particular place where Adam would know and enjoy the blessing of God.

I find it helpful to remember that God does the same thing for us. He has determined the exact places for all of us to live (see Acts 17:26). Try to imagine God walking with you into your home and saying, "This is where I want you to be." Or, imagine Christ walking with you into the church and saying, "This is the place I have prepared for you to grow." None of us is where we are by accident. When we know, as Adam did, that God has placed us where we are, we will find strength in the most difficult times.

THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. (2:19)

A GARDEN IN THE EAST



In Genesis 1, God gave names to the day and night. Now Adam was invited to participate in God’s work of naming things. Science is all about giving things names. The scientist observes, reflects on what he sees, and then describes it. That was the first work that God gave Adam to do.

Right from the beginning Adam was occupied with work. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15).

Work is a good gift from God. It existed before sin entered the world, and it will continue after sin has been cleared out. The entrance of sin into the world has affected our work and introduced frustration into it, but the first thing to say about work is that it is a good gift from God.

Notice that God brought the animals to Adam. God took a personal interest in Adam’s daily work. That’s worth thinking about at your desk, on the shop floor, in the school, or by the kitchen sink. God cares about your daily work and wants to be a part of it.

A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ...The LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. (2:18, 22; emphasis added)

Once again the Lord appeared to Adam, and He said, “Adam, I have someone I want you to meet.” I have no doubt that Adam’s jaw dropped wide open. He certainly seemed pretty pleased! He said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23).

Notice, the LORD Himself brought the two together. The first wedding service was conducted by almighty God. Try to picture it in your mind: The Lord God takes her hand and puts it into his hand, and says, “Here is the partner I have made for you!”

We will see in the next chapter that this marriage had more than its fair share of troubles. When Eve was tempted, Adam became a passive observer who did nothing to help his wife when she needed him to stand with her. Then we find both of them trying to avoid their responsibilities and pass on the blame for their troubles. But whatever their problems in the future, neither of them could ever have doubted that the reason they were together was that they had been *joined by God*.

There will be times in every marriage when a husband and wife need to come back to this. Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman by God. As the Scripture says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (2:24).

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God. When two people marry, God does in an invisible way what He did for Adam and Eve in a visible way. If you are married, try to picture God taking your hand and the hand of your spouse, and joining them together. As He does that, God says, “Be partners together, love each other, and forgive each other. Go through life together.” If you are married, this is what God has done, and when you know God has joined you and your spouse together, it will help you to weather the most difficult times.

If you are looking for a marriage partner, remember that God brought the woman to Adam. The pressure of trying to find the right person can be intense. God brought Eve to Adam. You can trust God to bring the right person to you, or bring you to the right person. I am not suggesting that you should be passive, but I am suggesting that there is no need to panic. You can trust the Lord God with every area of your life.

Can you see the overwhelming goodness of God, who lavishes good gifts on the man and the woman? The Creator gives the first man a place, a purpose, and a partner, and together they share the joy of His visible presence. It was literally heaven on earth.

SPOTLIGHT ON CHRIST

In the next chapter we will see that sin brings strain into the marriage, frustration into the workplace, and leads to the first couple being evicted from their home and losing the joy of the presence of God. But even then, God will not remain at a distance from man.

Christ came into the world. The Son of God who walked with Adam in the garden took the form of a man and was born in human likeness. And when He came, the presence of God was made visible among us. He came to heal and restore what was spoiled and broken by sin. He said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

UNLOCKED

God wants you to know that He is the Creator and therefore has the right of ownership over all things, including you. God also wants you to know that He has made you in His image and that for this reason you have unique dignity and worth.

At the very beginning of human history, God made it possible for our first parents to know Him and enjoy Him. He will do whatever it takes to make this possible. God appeared to them and walked with them.

God poured out His blessing into their lives. He brought the man and his wife together. He led them to their home and gave them their work. He provided all that they needed and shared in their life. What God did for them, He continues to do for all His people. The only difference is that we don't see Him do it. We walk by faith and not by sight.

PAUSE FOR PRAYER

Thank You for the gift of prayer in which I may know Your presence as truly as Adam did in the garden. Thank You that through Your Word You speak to me as clearly as You spoke with Eve.

Thank You for the blessings You have poured into my life. I recognize Your hand in my home, my work, and my relationships. I also see how sin can spoil each of these good gifts, and steal the joy of what you have given. Pour out your blessing in a fresh way on my home, in my work, in my relationships, and in my personal walk with You. Help me to bring all these things under Your Lordship and Your control. Amen.



2

Curse

GENESIS 3:1–24

*If God made
everything good,
why is the world
as it is today?*

2 Curse

GENESIS 3:1–24



DISCOVER

the two greatest problems that confront every person born into this world.



LEARN

your enemy's top strategies and how you can defend against them.



WORSHIP

as you see how Jesus Christ stands up to your enemy and opens the way back into the presence of God.

IMAGINE life in Eden, the place God gave the first man and woman. Adam's work is fulfilling and fascinating. He enjoys the companionship of his wife and the company of God. When he is hungry, he reaches up and picks his food from the trees. His whole life is one of blessing and joy. That's the picture at the end of Genesis 2.

By the end of Genesis 3, everything has changed, and Adam finds himself struggling to make a life in a very different world. The man and the woman are now outside the place where God blessed them. They are excluded from this paradise called Eden, with no way back. They are away from the Tree of Life and find themselves in a wilderness where all kinds of wild animals threaten, and where they must work to get their food. They experience pain and fear and guilt, and when the evening comes, they no longer see God. Something has gone terribly wrong. Genesis 3 tells us the story.

When we feel ill and visit the doctor, we are usually looking for two things. The first is an accurate diagnosis, and the second is an appropriate prescription. Any doctor who gives prescriptions without diagnosis is to be avoided. This principle holds good in every area of life. If we don't understand the source of sickness, then we will not be able to recognize the cure. Diagnosis is where we must begin.

RECRUITING FOR THE REBELLION

The first carrier of the sickness that infected Adam and Eve is known by various names, most commonly as Satan, the devil, or the father of lies. He is the enemy of God and of mankind.

Satan wants to communicate with the woman, and so he must find some visible form in which to come. Remember that spirits are invisible to us. Satan had no entrance to the man or the woman at this point, so he approaches them through a part of the animal creation. He comes as an alluring serpent.

The Bible never gives us a full explanation of the origin of evil. It does not tell us how a being in the presence of God could find rebellion against God attractive. But it does indicate that the devil was at first an angel of light.

Angels are spirits who are in the presence of God in heaven. When “God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), angels were part of that invisible creation in heaven.

As one of those angels, the devil became inflated with pride in his own position and tried to usurp the position of God (see Isaiah 14:12–14). Why he should have done this is not revealed to us.

Satan’s rebellion was unsuccessful and led to his being excluded from the presence of God and cast down to the earth. So right from the beginning of human history, there was an enemy bent on destroying the work of God.

This enemy came to the woman in an attempt to recruit the human race into his rebellion. His first aim was to introduce the man and the woman to the experience of evil.

READING YOUR OPPONENT’S PLAYS

A good basketball team will spend hours working on their plays. They will also study the opposition’s plays so that they can work out an effective defense against them. Satan used all his best plays in his first game in the garden. Once we learn these plays we will be able to detect them and defend against them.

The First Play: Confusion

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (v. 1)

Satan’s first play is to pose a question. God had given one simple instruction to the man and the woman, and Satan’s first action is to question it. If Satan could undermine the clarity of the Word of God and generate enough confusion about it, then it would be much easier for the man and the woman to disregard the Lord’s command.

It is very interesting that when Satan launched his assault against Christ in the wilderness, this was again the enemy’s first play. “*If you are the Son of God, tell these*

stones to become bread” (Matthew 4:3; italics added). The enemy was attempting to bring confusion into the mind of Christ! He wanted to create uncertainty about Christ’s identity, and of course he failed completely.

Whenever Satan tempts you to sin, his first strategy will be to create confusion. He will try to lower your defenses by suggesting to your mind that maybe what you want to do is not really forbidden by God, or at least that the Bible is not clear about the matter.

The Second Play: Presumption

“You will not surely die.” (v. 4)

God had made it clear that sin would result in death (2:17), but Satan suggests to the woman that the consequences of sin have been greatly exaggerated. In effect, the tempter says, “Eve, come on. You can’t seriously believe that just a simple act of disobedience is going to lead to something as drastic as death!”

It’s not hard to see where this strategy is heading. He wants the woman to presume on the grace of God. “After all, God loves you,” he is saying, “so how could He allow anything bad to happen to you?”

Notice that Satan also used this second play against our Lord Jesus Christ. In the second temptation, Satan took Christ to the highest point of the temple, and he said: “If you are the Son of God...throw yourself down” (Matthew 4:6). He tried to suggest to Christ that if He were indeed the Son of God, He could act in any way He chose, including throwing Himself off tall buildings, and nothing bad would happen to Him.

“If You are God’s Son,” Satan was suggesting, “You are in a position where You can do anything You like! So here is a suggestion. Why don’t You do something other people wouldn’t dream of doing. Throw Yourself from the pinnacle of the temple. You know You don’t need to worry about doing it, because You are the Son of God.”

This is the temptation of presumption, and it is the enemy’s second great strategy. When Satan tempts you to sin, he will lower your defenses with this suggestion. “The consequences won’t be *that* bad. You can do this, and nothing bad will happen to you.”

The Third Play: Ambition

“God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (v. 5)

The man and the woman had been made in the image of God, but Satan suggests that they could now go one better. After all, why would they want to have God telling them what to do? Would it not be better if they could decide what is good and what is evil for themselves?

Satan knows how much we like that suggestion. Man is made in the image of God, but he is not content with that. Time after time, man wants to be God. Satan's third strategy is to appeal to man's ambition.

As you might have predicted, Satan also tried this third play against the Lord Jesus Christ. He showed Christ the kingdoms of the earth and said, "All this I will give you...if you will bow down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Satan was saying, "Think of what you can become, and don't let obedience to God get in the way."

This is one of the enemy's most subtle strategies. His primary and futile objective is to overthrow the authority of God. He loves to suggest that we should take the place of God, not because he thinks well of us but because of his deep hatred for God. He appeals to our pride when he suggests that we do not need God to tell us what is good and what is evil. His message is still the same. "You decide what is right for you!"

The fact that Satan used the same strategies in the Garden of Eden and in his assault on Christ should give us fair warning that these are the plays that he will most likely try to use against us.

The apostle Paul declared that "we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Since we already know his primary offensive tactics, it will not be difficult to organize our defense. We must take the Word of God seriously. We must listen to what He says, refusing to twist the meaning of His Word to make it more convenient. We must recognize that sin always brings its consequences and that when God speaks about judgment, He is not making idle threats. We must let God be God. What God has declared good is good, and what God has declared evil is evil.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL

Earlier (Genesis 2:16–17) God had given Adam a law for life in Eden: "The LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'" God's first law was, like all His commandments, a wonderful expression of His love. God had made everything good, and so "good" was the only thing that Adam knew. But it was not the only thing in the universe. Evil was already at work. It had already found expression in Satan's rebellion.

When God told Adam that he must not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, it was as if He had said, “Adam, you need to understand that there is a terrible reality in the universe, and I want to protect you from it. It’s called evil. You do not know anything about it, but it already exists. I do not want you ever to experience it. So whatever you do, don’t eat from this tree!”

But later Adam and Eve felt that they would like to have this knowledge of evil. Perhaps they felt they were lacking something. Perhaps curiosity drew them to this forbidden knowledge. Satan worked with the grain of curiosity, and it was not long before both Adam and Eve were convinced that this was what they wanted. The knowledge of evil!

So the first couple did what God told them not to do. They got the knowledge of evil. And we have all lived with it ever since.

Of course there was a terrible hook behind this bait. Adam found that once he had this knowledge of evil he could not get rid of it. The knowledge of evil changed him. Evil gained a grip in his life—in Eve’s too—and it would be the same with all their children. Today it has a grip on us as well. You’ve been in its grip, and I have too. It’s our primary problem.

EXCLUDED FROM PARADISE

The LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. (v. 23)

So God drove the first couple out and placed cherubim—angels who represent His judgment and His holiness—at the entrance to the garden, along with a flaming sword flashing back and forth. Together they bar the way to the Tree of Life.

So man is now outside the place of God’s blessing. He no longer enjoys fellowship with God, and his life becomes a terrible struggle in a hostile place, where he is exposed to all kinds of danger from the wild animals, and there are thorns and thistles that had never been seen before (see v. 18).

The perfect marriage, which was a gift of God, became strained. Adam blamed Eve for the problems they were facing, and Eve must have noted that Adam had done nothing to help her during her struggle with the enemy.

Over time, the two of them would begin to notice lines and wrinkles on their skin. They would experience pain, and they would realize that this “death” that God had spoken about was a terrible reality that they could not avoid.

When the evening came, they must have wondered if God would come to them, but He never does. They are alienated from God and alone in the world. Paradise is lost and there is no way back.

NO WAY BACK

After God drove the man and woman out, He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life (v. 24). We are told that the flaming sword was flashing back and forth, so getting around it would have been impossible. (The flaming sword speaks of the judgment of God.)

This sight must have been terrifying for Adam. He was excluded from the place where he once knew fellowship with God, and there was no way back.

So here is the Bible's diagnosis: We are spiritually sick. We have a knowledge of evil, and we were excluded from the presence of God. We can't get free from this knowledge of evil, and we can't get back into God's paradise.

The man and the woman were no longer in paradise, a place where there was only good. Having chosen the knowledge of evil, they were now outside in a hostile environment where they had to work for a living and where they experienced pain, frustration, fear, and finally death. Since then, there has been no joy that is not in some way touched with the shadow of pain.

HOPE THAT BEGAN WITH A CURSE

That is the diagnosis, so what is the prescription? Hope began on the very day that man sinned and was expelled from the garden—and it began with a curse!

God said to the serpent, . . . "Cursed are you" (v. 14)

A curse is an "utterance of deity . . . consigning a person or thing to destruction," according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, sixth edition. So when God curses the serpent, He was announcing that evil would not stand. Satan would not have the last word. Adam and Eve must have been overjoyed at hearing this news.

We can thank God for His curse on evil. Without the curse, we would be stuck with the knowledge of evil forever. But this curse opens the door of hope for us.

If God did not consign evil to destruction, who else could? Throughout human history we have tried and failed. Our newspapers are still reporting another massacre, another atrocity, another dictator. We can't get free from it. But God says "cursed are you," and from that moment on, our enemy was consigned to ultimate destruction.

Then God pronounced a second curse. He turned to the man and began to speak. “Cursed...”

Adam must have held his breath. God had cursed the serpent, and now He was looking straight at Adam as He spoke that dreadful word “cursed.” Adam must have thought that He was going to be utterly destroyed, but he was in for a surprise. Instead of saying to Adam, “Cursed are you,” as the LORD did to the serpent, God said, “Cursed is the ground because of you” (v. 17).

A CURSE DEFLECTED

Here we discover one of the most important things that we need to know about God. God announces that He will destroy evil. At the same time, He deflects the curse away from Adam so that it falls on the ground and does not fall on the man directly.

God is just, and the curse must go somewhere, but God finds a way to direct the curse away from the man and the woman. At the right time, God would send His Son, and then direct the curse on our sin towards Him. That is what the Cross is all about. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’ ” (Galatians 3:13).

The man and the woman would live with the effects of the curse on the ground. They would experience frustration, toil, pain, drought, disease and death. Now they lived in a world that was under the curse and one day would be destroyed. But the curse did not fall on them directly. When they experienced the pain and disappointment of life in this fallen world, they were reminded of the curse on the ground. But as often as they thought about that, they must have been thankful that the curse was not on them. On the very day that they had sinned, they had discovered the grace and mercy of God.

At the end of Genesis 3, there was a curse on the devil (v. 14) and a curse on the ground (v. 17). God will not allow the devil to remain as he is or this world to remain as it is. Like a computer disk with a virus, God will wipe it clean. He will reformat it and make a new heaven and a new earth that is free from this virus of sin, which has attached itself to God’s creation. God has subjected “the creation... to frustration,” but He has also planned a day when “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

THE ONGOING BATTLE

So the LORD God said 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.” (v. 14–15)

“Enmity” sums up the relentless battle against evil that has gone on through the generations of human history. Man is always trying to get rid of evil, but is constantly frustrated as he finds it breaking out in another tragedy, another horror, another dictator, another massacre. Man simply cannot get free from this “knowledge of evil.”

But God promises that there will be an offspring of the woman. Someone will come into the human line. This person is not described as an offspring of the man but an offspring of the woman. When He comes, He will engage in a great struggle against the evil one.

THE DECISIVE VICTORY

A deliverer will come. He will inflict a fatal blow to the head of the enemy. He will crush the head of the enemy, and in the process, the enemy will bite the heel that crushed him. That is a wonderful picture. Imagine standing on the head of a venomous snake. In the same moment, he bites you and inflicts a wound, but then that wounded foot bears down on him and brings his destruction.

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ did come into the world. He did not face the enemy in the tranquil beauty of a perfect garden where all the food is provided, but in a barren wilderness, where after forty days of fasting He was weak, hungry, and exhausted. Satan tried all his strategies in a vain attempt to introduce Jesus to the knowledge of evil. But when all his efforts failed, the devil was left with no option but to withdraw in defeat and hope to fight another day.

Three years later, Christ went to the cross, where He suffered and died. Through His death He inflicted a deadly wound to the enemy and opened the way for men and women to be delivered from the power of the evil one (see Colossians 2:15).

*Oh wisest love that flesh and blood
which did in Adam fail,
should fight again against the foe,
should fight and should prevail.*

—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
“PRAISE TO THE HOLIEST IN THE HEIGHT”

SPOUNGING ON CHRIST

If man is ever to get back into the garden, he needs not only to get free from the power of evil, but also to get past the flaming sword and the cherubim, who represent the judgment of a holy God.

Try to imagine yourself standing with Adam and Eve and many others outside the paradise of God, looking back at the cherubim and the terrifying sword of judgment. As you look, someone comes out of the presence of God. He comes to where we are and stands with us. Then He advances towards the flaming sword. We cringe as we look. The flaming sword is flashing back and forth, and we can see what will happen to Him when He gets there. But He keeps walking forward, steadily, relentlessly.

The sword strikes Him and kills Him. It breaks His body, but in breaking His body, the sword itself is broken. The sword that killed Him lies shattered on the ground. By His death, the way back to the presence and blessing of God is opened.

When Christ died, the heavy curtain that hung in the Jerusalem temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51). The curtain symbolized exclusion from the presence of God. Images of cherubim were stitched into the material of the curtain. So when it was torn, the cherubim were separated.

Could God have given any more powerful illustration of what Christ accomplished in His death? The cherubim were separated. The judgment fell on Him and the penalty was paid for all His people. A new and living way into the place of the blessing of God was opened.

UNLOCKED

We can only begin to make sense of our world when we understand that man has chosen the knowledge of evil and is excluded from paradise. We keep hoping that we will be able to shake free from the power of evil, but it is in us and we cannot get free. We also feel that we can make this world into something like paradise, but we can't.

But God has not abandoned us. He sent His Son into this fallen world and into our ongoing battle with evil. Christ stood His ground against the enemy and triumphed where Adam failed. He faced all the same temptations but with an entirely different outcome.

Then He went to the cross, and through His death broke the power of the enemy. Thus He opened a way past the judgment of God and back into His presence and blessing.

PAUSE FOR PRAYER

Almighty Father,

I bow before You and recognize that my deepest need is to be delivered from evil and to find a way past Your judgment. I admit that these things are beyond my power.

Thank You that You have not left me in this condition, but You have sent Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank You that evil could not attach itself to Him. Thank You that He has triumphed over my enemy. Thank You that the sword of judgment that would have been held over me was broken on Him and that He has opened the way for me to come back to You through His death on the cross. Confessing my need, and believing in what He has done, I come. Amen.