

The view from above is majestic!

Smith helps you find the right altitude to take in the big-picture landscape of God's story. Even if you've never opened the Bible, this short flight will introduce you to God's Word and leave you marveling at how it all fits together.

Interested in the whole book?  
Select your preferred book seller:

[MOODY PUBLISHERS](#) [AMAZON](#) [APPLE BOOKS](#) [BARNES & NOBLE](#) [GOOGLE PLAY](#) [CHRISTIANBOOK.COM](#) [WALMART](#) [TARGET](#) 

# CONTENTS

Introduction 7

## **Part 1: Five People in the Old Testament**

1. Adam 11
2. Abraham 19
3. Moses 27
4. David 35
5. Ezra 43

## **Part 2: Five Events in the Life of Jesus**

6. Born 51
7. Tempted 59
8. Crucified 67
9. Risen 73
10. Ascended 81

## **Part 3: Five Gifts for Every Believer**

11. The Holy Spirit 89
12. Faith 97
13. Forgiveness 105
14. The Church 113
15. Heaven 119

Acknowledgments 125

# 1

# ADAM

**THE BIBLE BEGINS** by telling us that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). God made the sun, the moon, and the stars. Then He made the plants, fish, birds, and animals. But God's masterpiece was still to come.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26)

The Hebrew word translated "man" here is *adam*. That's where the first man got his name. Adam was made in the image of God, and what was true of him is true of you. You are made in the image of God. An image is a reflection. God made you in such a way that you reflect something of His nature and glory. That means your life has unique dignity and worth.

God made Adam by forming a corpse from the dust of the ground. Then He breathed into it, and Adam became a living being

(Genesis 2:7). From this we learn, first, that our minds and bodies are fragile, and second, that our lives are a gift from God, and that we are always dependent on Him.

God filled Adam's life with wonderful gifts. He planted a garden and gave it to Adam as his home (Genesis 2:8). He gave Adam the fulfilling work of naming the animals and participated in Adam's work by bringing the animals to him (Genesis 2:19). But God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. He created Eve and then "brought her to the man," and she became his wife (Genesis 2:22).

Home, work, and marriage are good gifts from God. *Home* is where God sets you down. No home is perfect, but the best place to flourish is the place God has prepared for you.

*Work* is what God gives you to do. God's work brings order out of chaos; He creates what is beautiful; He protects and provides for all that He has made. And when you do these things in your work, you reflect the work of God.

*Marriage* is God's gift of union with another person. The first marriage had its share of troubles, but whatever their problems, Adam and Eve could never have doubted that they had been joined together by God.

But the greatest gift of God to Adam and Eve was the gift of His friendship. God is invisible, but He appeared in the garden in a visible form because He wanted Adam and Eve to know Him (Genesis 3:8). These appearances show the intense desire in the heart of God that we should know Him, not only as our Creator, but also as our friend.

He [God] drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:24)

Driven from the garden, Adam and Eve found themselves in a very different world in which pain, conflict, frustration, and death were woven into their experience. They were excluded from paradise, and there was no way back. But before they were sent out, God gave the first man and woman hope through a curse and a promise.

### **The promise of a deliverer**






Before driving Adam from the garden, God cursed the serpent. “Cursed are you . . .” (Genesis 3:14). In pronouncing this curse, God was consigning evil to destruction. Evil will not stand. It will be destroyed.

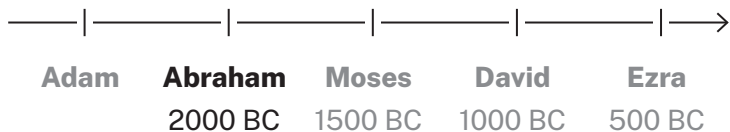
Then God turned to Adam and said, “Cursed . . .” Adam must have held his breath. God had cursed the serpent, and now it seemed He was about to curse Adam too. But instead of saying to Adam, “Cursed are you,” God said, “Cursed is the ground because of you” (Genesis 3:17). What did the ground do wrong?

The cursing of the ground tells us something very wonderful about God. He will always deal with sin and destroy it. But God can deflect His judgment away from us, creating room for us to be reconciled to Him.

God has promised that someone born of a woman will triumph over evil.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

-  What is your first reaction to hearing that we are made in the image of God?
-  What do you think you would like most about living in the garden of Eden? Why did you choose that?
-  Does it surprise you to hear that God wants us to know Him? Why or why not?
-  What is your reaction to the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience? Why do you think you reacted that way?
-  After hearing God's explanation of why our world is so troubled, what kind of deliverer do you think our world needs? What would this deliverer need to do?



After Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden, the human family grew, and as it did, evil and violence increased.

Human rebellion against God continued and increased in the generations that followed, and God saw that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

God restrained evil by sending a flood, and by confusing human language. But then God stepped into human history and revealed Himself to a man called Abraham.

# 2

# ABRAHAM

**ABRAHAM WAS BORN** about 2,000 years before Jesus and grew up in Mesopotamia, in modern day Iraq. One day God appeared to Abraham as He had appeared to Adam and Eve in the garden.

“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.” (Acts 7:2)

You might think that a man to whom God would appear in visible form must have been especially holy. Precisely the opposite was the case. Abraham worshiped idols (Joshua 24:2). So, God took the initiative and made Himself known to Abraham. It is almost as if God had said, “If I wait for these human beings to seek me, they will never come. I will seek them, I will find them, and I will bless them.” God was looking for Abraham long before Abraham was looking for God, and God seeks us before we seek Him.



## A promise given

When God appeared to Abraham, He gave a marvelous promise.

“I will bless you . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:2, 3)

The promise to Abraham is a promise for us and for every member of the human family. The Old Testament focuses on the line of Abraham, not because the rest of the world doesn't matter, but because the rest of the world does matter, and God's plan is to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham.

Notice again the abundant goodness of God. We have turned away from God and put our own gods or our own choices in the place that belongs to Him. Evil has multiplied across the human family as generations have rebelled against God, and yet God's desire is to bless not just some but all the families of the earth.

But how would God's blessing come?

God promised that His blessing would come through Abraham's offspring (Genesis 22:18). But Abraham was an old man, and he had no descendant, so how could this promise be fulfilled?

Years passed and Abraham waited. His wife, Sarah, laughed when God promised her a child (Genesis 18:12). But God is always true to His word, and sure enough, in her old age Sarah gave birth to Isaac (Genesis 21:2–3). Every child is precious, but after waiting so long for a child on whom so much would depend, Isaac was Abraham and Sarah's greatest treasure.

## A promise fulfilled

God's promise to bless all people would be fulfilled at an unimaginable cost, and that cost is illustrated by the harrowing story of how God tested Abraham.

He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22:2)

Abraham never questioned the need for a sacrifice. He seems to have understood that if God's blessing was to reach the nations of the world, some great sacrifice would be needed.

Try and put yourself in Abraham's shoes. What would you have done?

Abraham must have wrestled with what God told him to do. "God has called me to make the ultimate sacrifice, but how can I give up my son? God's plan is to bring blessing to all people, but how can that happen if I don't do what He says? God's promise is to bless the world through my offspring, but how can the promise be fulfilled if Isaac dies? And what in the world would I say to Sarah?"

Whatever battles Abraham went through, he chose to obey God.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for

a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. (Genesis 22:6–8)

Isaac was in the prime of his life. He carried the wood on his shoulders, and he could easily have overpowered Abraham, if he had wanted to. But Isaac didn't do that. He was willing to lay down his life. So, what you have here is a father willing to give up his son, and a son who is willing to give himself. And they were *one* in this, so that blessing would come to the world.

When they arrived at the top of the mountain, Abraham built an altar.

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham! . . . Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him.” (Genesis 22:10–12)

God tested Abraham, but He would not allow Abraham to give up his son. God provided the sacrifice, as Abraham said He would.

Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. (Genesis 22:13)






The ram was a *substitute* for Isaac. Isaac's life was spared because the ram took his place on the altar. The life of a ram was of far less

value than the life of Isaac, but God accepted a lesser sacrifice for the time being because one day a greater sacrifice would be made. Abraham must have wondered, *What will it cost for God's blessing to come to the world? What sacrifice could be greater than the sacrifice of my son?*

We are meant to respond to this story in two ways: First, I hope you will feel a sense of recoiling in horror at the thought of anyone sacrificing his own son. That is what you are meant to feel.

Second, I hope you will gaze in wonder at the reality to which this story points. God did what He would not allow Abraham to do. He gave His Son, and His Son gave Himself. God's promise to bring blessing to all the families of the earth came through His Son Jesus, and it came at unimaginable cost to both the Father and the Son.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

-  What is your first reaction to hearing that God seeks us before we seek Him?
-  Are you more inclined to think that God is for you or against you? Why?
-  What signs of God's blessing can you see in your life?
-  Why do you think Abraham obeyed God? What do you think you would have done?
-  Have you ever felt that God was testing you? How did you respond?

Interested in the whole book?  
Select your preferred book seller:

**MOODY PUBLISHERS** 

**AMAZON** 

**APPLE BOOKS** 

**BARNES & NOBLE** 

**GOOGLE PLAY** 

**CHRISTIANBOOK.COM** 

**WALMART** 

**TARGET** 