

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
Reading the Bible in One Year	299

/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.