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CHAPTER 1 — GENESIS 2 & 3

The
GARDEN



— **DISCOVER** —

who you are and why your life matters to God.

— **LEARN** —

why this world is not as God made it.

— **WORSHIP** —

because Jesus has opened the way back into God's blessing.

THE first thing Adam knew, he was staring into the face of God.

God had formed his body from the dust of the ground, but it lay there lifeless, like a corpse until God breathed into it. Then Adam became a living being (Genesis 2:7), and in his first moment of conscious existence, he knew that his life had come from God.

God is invisible, but right from the beginning of the Bible story, He has been reaching out to make Himself known. That's why He made Himself visible to Adam. We call this a "theophany," an appearance of God in visible form. It was God's way of creating a relationship.

God introduces Himself as our Creator and therefore our owner. He made you in His image (1:26), and you are of unique value to Him. God chose to bring you into being. He did that on purpose, and you will discover that purpose as you get to know the One who created you.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Bible tells us that “the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden” (2:8, 15).

We cannot be certain about the garden’s location, but it is important to grasp that it was a real place. It was located near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (2:10–14), which run through modern Iraq.

God prepared a place for Adam, and God put him there. He does the same thing for us. The Bible says that God has determined the exact places for all of us to live (Acts 17:26).

The place where God puts you will not be perfect. Even Eden was exposed to the possibility of evil. But there is no better place to be than where God has set you down. You are not where you are by accident but by the plan and the purpose of God.

God gave Adam the responsibility of naming the animals and caring for the garden (2:19). Work is a good gift from God, and God took pleasure in what Adam was doing. It may be hard for you to imagine that God would enjoy the

documents you prepare, the components you assemble, or the home you create . . . but He does.

A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

The LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. (2:22; EMPHASIS ADDED)

I'd love to have seen the expression on Adam's face! God appeared to Adam and 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).

God brought them together. Try to picture that 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!"

When two people marry, God does in an invisible way what He did for Adam and Eve in the garden. If you are married, try to picture God taking your hand and the hand of your spouse and joining them together. When you know God has joined you together, it will help you weather the most difficult times.

A LOVING COMMAND

God came into the Garden of Eden as a visitor, making Himself known and cultivating a relationship with the man and the woman. He did not impose Himself on them but gave them the opportunity of choosing a relationship of faith and obedience with Him.

God gave Adam a single command that was, like all His commandments, a wonderful expression of His love. “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (2:17).

God had made everything good, and so “good” was the only thing that Adam knew. The purpose of God’s command was to keep him from evil.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

The Bible does not give us a full explanation of the origin of evil, but it does tell us where it started. Alongside the visible world that we know, God made an invisible creation in heaven and filled it with angels.

The devil was one of these angels. He became inflated with pride and tried to usurp the position of God (see Isaiah

14:12–14). His 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. His first aim was to introduce the man and the woman to the knowledge of evil.

RECRUITING FOR THE REBELLION

Satan came into the garden with the aim of recruiting the human race into his rebellion against God. Spirits are invisible to us, and so when Satan wanted to communicate with the first man and woman, he came in the form of an alluring serpent. He presented himself as a friend and began to question the single commandment God had given.

“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). If Satan could create confusion in Eve’s mind about what God had said, he would be well on the way to gaining power over her.

Then Satan suggested that God had exaggerated the consequences of sin. “You will not surely die” (v. 4). In effect, he said, “How could you possibly believe that a single act of disobedience would lead to something as drastic as death?”

But his third suggestion was the one that tipped the scales for Eve, and her husband. “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,” he said (v. 5).

Adam and Eve decided that they wanted this knowledge of evil. They disobeyed God’s single command and they got what they wanted. We have all lived with it ever since.

HOPE IN A CURSE!

*The LORD God said to the serpent, . . .
“Cursed are you.” (3:14)*

When a person or thing is “cursed,” it is consigned to destruction. So when God cursed the serpent, He was announcing that evil would not stand. When God spoke about a Deliverer who would crush the serpent’s head, Adam and Eve must have been overjoyed (v. 15).

A CURSE DEFLECTED

To Adam he said, . . . “Cursed . . .” (3:17)

Adam must have held his breath. God had cursed the serpent, and now He was looking straight at Adam as He spoke that ominous word again.

Adam must have thought that he would 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” (3:17).

God deflected the curse away from Adam so that it fell on the ground and not on him directly. God kept His judgment away from Adam, creating room for future reconciliation. On the day he sinned, Adam discovered the grace and mercy of God. The curse that should have been on him went to another place.

OUT OF EDEN

Our first parents were banished from Eden (3:23), where they had known the blessing and presence of God. Life became a struggle in a hostile place, where they were exposed to all kinds of danger from wild animals.

Over time, they would notice lines and wrinkles in their skin. They would experience pain and discover that the “death” God had spoken about was a terrible reality that they could not avoid.

God placed cherubim—angels representing His judgment and holiness—at the entrance to the garden, along with a

flaming sword flashing back and forth, barring the way to the Tree of Life. It must have been a terrifying sight.

THE SHATTERED SWORD

Try to imagine yourself standing with Adam and Eve outside Eden, looking back at the angels and the flashing sword of judgment. There's no way back for you into the presence of God. If you tried, the sword would cut you down.

But as you look, someone comes out from the presence of God and stands beside you. Then He turns and advances toward the flaming sword. You cringe as you look. The sword is flashing back and forth, and you can see what will happen to Him when He gets there. But He keeps walking forward, steadily, and 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.

That's what happened when Jesus died. The judgment that keeps us out of God's presence struck Him. It was spent and

exhausted on Him. The sword of God's judgment broke itself on Him, and so the way back into God's blessing is wide open for all who will come.



Pause for Prayer

Almighty God,

I acknowledge You are my Creator and owner. I thank You that You have made me in Your image. I want to come to know You better.

I recognize that You are the only One who can deliver from the power of evil. I see that the world needs to be delivered from evil, and I acknowledge that I need to be delivered from its power in my own life, too.

Thank You that Jesus Christ has come into the world so that evil will not stand. Thank You that, by His death, He opened the way back into Your blessing and into Your presence for all who will come. May I be one of these people.

In Jesus' name, amen.



Questions for Discussion

1. What have you inherited from your parents for which you are thankful?
2. What difference does it make if you were created by God or are a product of evolutionary forces? What are the implications of each?
3. Can you remember a situation where you felt guilty and genuinely were? How did you deal with your feelings of guilt?
4. God desires each of us to regain the life our first parents enjoyed in the garden. What would have to happen to make that possible?

THE STORY CONTINUES . . .

GOD continued to give good gifts to our first parents, but outside of Eden, their struggle with evil intensified. When Eve held her first son, Cain, she must have hoped that he would be the deliverer God had promised. But he killed his brother and became the world's first murderer. As the generations advanced, evil multiplied and people knew little about the living God.

But God would not abandon the human race. He appeared to a man called Abraham, promising to bless him and, through him, people from every nation on earth (Genesis 12:1–3). From that point on, the Bible follows the story of Abraham's descendants.

At the height of a famine in Canaan, Abraham's grandson Jacob moved with his family to Egypt. The migration saved their lives, and over the next four hundred years, the people God had promised to bless grew from a large family to a nation of almost two million people.

As they grew in number, the Hebrews were oppressed and became slaves. God raised up Moses and, despite the determined resistance of Pharaoh, delivered them from Egypt. God brought them into the desert at Sinai and made a covenant with them. They would be His people and the Lord would be their God. Then God gave them the Law . . .