

INTRODUCTION TO G E N E S I S

Title

The English title, Genesis, comes from the Greek translation (Septuagint, LXX) meaning “origins”; whereas, the Hebrew title is derived from the Bible’s very first word, translated “in the beginning.” Genesis serves to introduce the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT) and the entire Bible. The

influence of Genesis in Scripture is demonstrated by its being quoted over 35 times in the NT and hundreds of allusions appearing in both Testaments. The story line of salvation that begins in Gen. 3 is not completed until Rev. 21–22, where the eternal kingdom of redeemed believers is gloriously pictured.

Author and Date

While 1) the author does not identify himself in Genesis and 2) Genesis ends almost three centuries before Moses was born, both the OT (Ex. 17:14; Num. 33:2; Josh. 8:31; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11, 13; Mal. 4:4) and the NT (Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; 24:27, 44; John 5:46; 7:22; Acts 15:1; Rom. 10:19; 1 Cor. 9:9; 2 Cor. 3:15) ascribe this compo-

sition to Moses, who is the fitting author in light of his educational background (cf. Acts 7:22). No compelling reasons have been forthcoming to challenge Mosaic authorship. Genesis was written after the exodus (c. 1445 B.C.), but before Moses’ death (c. 1405 B.C.). For a brief biographical sketch of Moses read Ex. 1–6.

Background and Setting

The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past. God then, by willful act and divine word, spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt, which he fashioned in his image to become Adam. God made mankind the crowning point of his creation, i.e., his companions who would enjoy fellowship with him and bring glory to his name.

The historical background for the early events in Genesis is clearly Mesopotamian. While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the

historical moment for which this book was written, Israel first heard Genesis sometime prior to crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (c. 1405 B.C.).

Genesis has three distinct, sequential geographical settings: 1) Mesopotamia (chs. 1–11); 2) the Promised Land (chs. 12–36); and 3) Egypt (chs. 37–50). The time frames of these three segments are: 1) Creation to c. 2090 B.C.; 2) 2090–1897 B.C.; and 3) 1897–1804 B.C. Genesis covers more time than the remaining books of the Bible combined.

Historical and Theological Themes

In this book of beginnings, God revealed himself and a worldview to Israel that contrasted, at times sharply, with the worldview of Israel’s neighbors. The author made no attempt to defend the existence of God or to present a systematic discussion of his person and works. Rather, Israel’s God dis-

tinguished himself clearly from the alleged gods of her neighbors. Theological foundations are revealed that include God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, man, sin, redemption, covenant, promise, Satan and angels, kingdom, revelation, Israel, judgment, and blessing.

Genesis 1–11 (primeval history) reveals the origins of the universe, i.e., the beginnings of time and space and many of the firsts in human experience, such as marriage, family, the fall, sin, redemption, judgment, and nations. Genesis 12–50 (patriarchal history) explained to Israel how they came into existence as a family whose ancestry could be traced to Eber (hence the “Hebrews”; Gen. 10:24–25) and even more remotely to Shem, the son of Noah (hence the “Semites”; Gen. 10:21). God’s people came to understand not only their ancestry and family history, but also the origins of their institutions, customs, languages, and different cultures, especially basic human experiences such as sin and death.

Because they were preparing to enter Canaan and dispossess the Canaanite inhabitants of their homes and properties, God revealed their enemies’ background. In addition, they needed to understand the actual basis of the war they were about to declare in light of the immorality of killing, consistent with the other four books that Moses was writing (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Ultimately, the Jewish nation would understand a selected portion of preceding world history and the inaugural background of Israel as a basis by which they would live in their new beginnings under Joshua’s leadership in the land that had previously been promised to their original patriarchal forefather, Abraham.

Genesis 12:1–3 established a primary focus on God’s promises to Abraham. This narrowed their view from the entire world of peoples in Gen. 1–11 to one small nation, Israel, through whom God would progressively accomplish his redemptive plan. This underscored Israel’s mission to be “a light for

the nations” (Isa. 42:6). God promised land, descendants (seed), and blessing. This threefold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–20). The rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises.

On a larger scale, Gen. 1–11 set forth a singular message about the character and works of God. In the sequence of accounts that make up these chapters of Scripture, a pattern emerges that reveals God’s abundant grace as he responded to the willful disobedience of mankind. Without exception, in each account God increased the manifestation of his grace. But also without exception, man responded in greater sinful rebellion. In biblical words, the more sin abounded the more did God’s grace abound (cf. Rom. 5:20).

One final theme of both theological and historical significance sets Genesis apart from other books of Scripture, in that the first book of Scripture corresponds closely with the final book. In the book of Revelation, the paradise that was lost in Genesis will be regained. The apostle John clearly presented the events recorded in his book as future resolutions to the problems which began as a result of the curse in Gen. 3. His focus is upon the effects of the fall in the undoing of creation and the manner in which God rids his creation of the curse effect. In John’s own words, “No longer will there be anything accursed” (Rev. 22:3). Not surprisingly, in the final chapter of God’s word, believers will find themselves back in the Garden of Eden, the eternal paradise of God, eating from the tree of life (Rev. 22:1–14). At that time, they will partake, wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14).

Interpretive Challenges

Grasping the individual messages of Genesis that make up the larger plan and purpose of the book presents no small challenge since both the individual accounts and the book’s overall message offer important lessons to faith and works. Genesis presents

creation by divine fiat, *ex nihilo*, i.e., “out of nothing.” Three traumatic events of epic proportions, namely the fall, the universal flood, and the dispersion of nations are presented as historical backdrop in order to understand world history. From Abraham

on, the pattern is to focus on God's redemption and blessing.

The customs of Genesis often differ considerably from those of our modern day. They must be explained against their ancient Near Eastern background. Each

custom must be treated according to the immediate context of the passage before any attempt is made to explain it based on customs recorded in extrabiblical sources or even elsewhere in Scripture.

Outline

Genesis by content is comprised of two basic sections: 1) Primitive history (Gen. 1–11) and 2) Patriarchal history (Gen. 12–50). Primitive history records four major events: 1) Creation (Gen. 1–2); 2) the fall (Gen. 3–5); 3) the flood (Gen. 6–9); and 4) the dispersion (Gen. 10–11). Patriarchal history spotlights four great men: 1) Abraham (Gen.

12:1–25:8); 2) Isaac (Gen. 21:1–35:29); 3) Jacob (Gen. 25:21–50:14); and 4) Joseph (Gen. 30:22–50:26).

The literary structure of Genesis is built on the frequently recurring phrase “the book of the generations of” and is the basis for the following outline.

Outline

- I. The Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)
- II. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
 - A. Adam and Eve in Eden (2:4–25)
 - B. The Fall and Its Outcomes (ch. 3)
 - C. Murder of a Brother (4:1–24)
 - D. Hope in the Descendants of Seth (4:25–26)
- III. The Generations of Adam (5:1–6:8)
 - A. Genealogy—Seth to Noah (ch. 5)
 - B. Rampant Sin Prior to the Flood (6:1–8)
- IV. The Generations of Noah (6:9–9:29)
 - A. Preparation for the Flood (6:9–7:9)
 - B. The Flood and Deliverance (7:10–8:19)
 - C. God's Noahic Covenant (8:20–9:17)
 - D. The History of Noah's Descendants (9:18–29)
- V. The Generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1–11:9)
 - A. The Nations (ch. 10)
 - B. Dispersion of the Nations (11:1–9)
- VI. The Generations of Shem: Genealogy of Shem to Terah (11:10–26)
- VII. The Generations of Terah (11:27–25:11)
 - A. Genealogy (11:27–32)
 - B. The Abrahamic Covenant: His Land and People (12:1–22:19)
 1. Journey to the Promised Land (12:1–9)
 2. Redemption from Egypt (12:10–20)
 3. Division of the land (ch. 13)
 4. Victory over the kings (ch. 14)
 5. The covenant ratified (ch. 15)
 6. Rejection of Hagar and Ishmael (ch. 16)
 7. The covenant confirmed (ch. 17)
 8. Birth of Isaac foretold (18:1–15)
 9. Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:38)

10. Philistine encounter (ch. 20)
11. Isaac's birth (ch. 21)
12. Abraham's act of faith with Isaac (22:1–19)
- C. Abraham's Promised Seed (22:20–25:11)
 1. Rebekah's background (22:20–24)
 2. Death of Sarah (ch. 23)
 3. Isaac's marriage to Rebekah (ch. 24)
 4. Isaac the only heir (25:1–6)
 5. Death of Abraham (25:7–11)
- VIII. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12–18)
- IX. The Generations of Isaac (25:19–35:29)
 - A. Competition Between Esau and Jacob (25:19–34)
 - B. Covenant Blessings to Isaac (ch. 26)
 - C. Jacob's Deception for the Blessing (27:1–40)
 - D. Blessing on Jacob in a Foreign Land (27:41–32:32)
 1. Jacob sent to Laban (27:41–28:9)
 2. Angel at Bethel (28:10–22)
 3. Disagreements with Laban (29:1–30)
 4. Promised seed (29:31–30:24)
 5. Departure from Aram (30:25–31:55)
 6. Angels at Mahanaim and Peniel (ch. 32)
 - E. Esau's Reunion and Reconciliation with Jacob (33:1–17)
 - F. Events and Deaths from Shechem to Mamre (33:18–35:29)
- X. The Generations of Esau (36:1–37:1)
- XI. The Generations of Jacob (37:2–50:26)
 - A. Joseph's Dreams (37:2–11)
 - B. Family Tragedy (37:12–38:30)
 - C. Vice Regency over Egypt (chs. 39–41)
 - D. Reunion with Family (chs. 42–45)
 - E. Transition to Exodus (chs. 46–50)
 1. Journey to Egypt (46:1–27)
 2. Occupation in Goshen (46:28–47:31)
 3. Blessings on the twelve tribes (48:1–49:28)
 4. Death and burial of Jacob in Canaan (49:29–50:14)
 5. Death of Joseph in Egypt (50:15–26)

GENESIS

The Creation of the World

1 In the ^abeginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was ^bwithout form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³And God said, ^c“Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and

the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, ^d“Let there be an expanse¹ in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made² the expanse and ^eseparated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were ^fabove the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven.³ And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

¹Or a canopy; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 ²Or fashioned; also verse 16 ³Or Sky; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1

Chapter 1 ^{1a}Job 38:4-7; Ps. 33:6; 136:5; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; John 1:1-3; Acts 14:15; 17:24; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:10; 11:3; Rev. 4:11 ^{2b}Jer. 4:23 ^{3c}2 Cor. 4:6 ^{6d}Job 37:18; Ps. 136:5; Jer. 10:12; 51:15 ^{7e}Prov. 8:27-29 ^fPs. 148:4

1:1–2:3 This description of God creating heaven and earth is understood to be: 1) recent, i.e., thousands not millions of years ago; 2) *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing; and 3) special, i.e., in six consecutive 24-hour periods called “days” and further distinguished as such by this phrase, “there was evening and there was morning.” Scripture does not support a creation date earlier than about 10,000 years ago. **In the beginning.** While God exists eternally (Ps. 90:2), this marked the beginning of the universe in time and space. In explaining Israel’s identity and purpose to her on the plains of Moab, God wanted his people to know about the origin of the world in which they found themselves. **God.** Elohim is a general term for deity and a name for the True God, though used also at times for pagan gods (Gen. 31:30), angels (Ps. 8:5), men (Ps. 82:6), and judges (Ex. 21:6). Moses made no attempt to defend the existence of God, which is assumed, or explain what he was like in person and works, which is treated elsewhere (cf. Isa. 43:10, 13). Both are to be believed by faith (cf. Heb. 11:3, 6). **created.** This word is used here of God’s creative activity alone, although it occasionally is used elsewhere of matter that already existed (Isa. 65:18). Context demands in no uncertain terms that this was a creation without preexisting material (as does other Scripture: cf. Isa. 40:28; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; Jer. 10:16; Acts 17:24). **the heavens and the earth.** All of God’s creation is incorporated into this summary statement that includes all six, consecutive days of creation.

1:2 without form and void. This means “not finished in its shape and as yet uninhabited by creatures” (cf. Isa. 45:18, 19; Jer. 4:23). God would quickly (in six days) decorate his initial creation (Gen. 1:2–2:3). **deep.** Sometimes referred to as primordial waters, this is the term used to describe the earth’s water-covered surface before the dry land emerged (1:9–10). Jonah used this word to describe the watery abyss in which he found himself submerged (Jonah 2:5). **Spirit of God.** Not only did God the Holy Spirit participate in creation, but so did God the Son (cf. John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

1:3 God said. God effortlessly spoke light into existence (cf. Ps. 33:6; 148:5). This dispelled the darkness of Gen. 1:2. **light.** The greater and lesser lights (the sun and moon) were created later (1:14–19) on the fourth day. Here, God was the provider of light (2 Cor. 4:6) and will in eternity future be the source of light (cf. Rev. 21:23).

1:4 good. Good for the purposes it was intended to serve (cf. v. 31).

1:4–5 separated . . . called. After the initial creation, God continued to complete his universe. Once God separated certain things, he then named them. Separating and naming were acts of dominion and served as a pattern for man, who would also name a portion of God’s creation over which God gave him dominion (2:19–20).

1:5 first day. God established the pattern of creation in seven days, which constituted a complete week. “Day” can refer to: 1) the light portion of a 24-hour period (1:5, 14); 2) an extended period of time (2:4); or 3) the 24-hour period which basically refers to a full rotation of the earth on its axis, called evening and morning. This cannot mean an age, but only a day, reckoned by the Jews from sunset to sunset (1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). “Day” with numerical adjectives in Hebrew always refers to a 24-hour period. Comparing the order of the week in Ex. 20:8–11 with the creation week confirms this understanding of the time element. Such a cycle of light and dark means that the earth was rotating on its axis, so that there was a source of light on one side of the earth, though the sun was not yet created (Gen. 1:16).

1:6 expanse. The portion of God’s creation named “heavens,” that which man saw when he looked up, i.e., the atmospheric and stellar heaven.

1:7 under the expanse. Refers to subterranean reservoirs (cf. 7:11). **above the expanse.** This could possibly have been a canopy of water vapor that acted to make the earth like a hothouse, provided uniform temperature, inhibited mass air

⁹And God said, ^g“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth,¹ and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹And God said, ^h“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants² yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for ⁱsigns and for ^jseasons,³ and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God ^kmade the two great lights—the greater light to rule the

day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to ^lrule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds⁴ fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹So ^mGod created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, ⁿ“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their

¹Or *Land*; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 ²Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29 ³Or *appointed times* ⁴Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20

⁹Job 38:8–11; Ps. 33:7; 136:6; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5 ¹¹Ps. 104:14 ¹⁴Jer. 10:2; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:30, 31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25 ¹⁶Deut. 4:19; Ps. 136:7–9 ¹⁸Jer. 31:35 ²¹Ps. 104:25, 26 ²²Ch. 8:17; 9:1

movements, caused mist to fall, and filtered out ultraviolet rays, thus extending life.

1:9–10 dry land. This was caused by a tremendous, cataclysmic upheaval of the earth’s surface, and the rising and sinking of the land, which caused the waters to plunge into the low places, forming the seas, the continents and islands, the rivers and lakes (cf. Job 38:4–11; Ps. 104:6–9).

1:11–12 according to its kind. God set in motion a providential process whereby the vegetable kingdom could reproduce through seeds which would maintain each one’s unique characteristics. The same phrase is used to describe the perpetuating reproduction of animals within their created species (vv. 21, 24, 25), and indicates that evolution, which proposes reproduction across species lines, is a false explanation of origins.

1:11 yielding seed. The principle of reproduction that marks all life (cf. vv. 22, 24, 28).

1:14 lights. Cf. v. 16. For three days there had been light (v. 4) in the day as though there were a sun, and lesser light at night as though there were the moon and stars. God could have left it that way, but did not. He created the “lights, sun, moon, and stars,” not for light, but to serve as markers for signs, seasons, days, and years. **signs.** Certainly to include: 1) weather (Matt. 16:2–3); 2) testimony to God (Ps. 8; 19; Rom. 1:14–20; 3) divine judgment (Joel 2:30–31;

Matt. 24:29); and 4) navigation (Matt. 2:1–2). **seasons.** It is the earth’s movement in relation to the sun and moon that determines the seasons and the calendar.

1:15–18 two great lights . . . to separate the light from the darkness. It was God (not some other deity) who created the lights. Israel had originally come from Mesopotamia, where the celestial bodies were worshiped, and more recently from Egypt, where the sun was worshiped as a primary deity. God was revealing to them that the very stars, moons, and planets that Israel’s neighbors had worshiped were the products of his creation. Later, they became worshipers of the “host of heaven” (see *note on 2 Kings 17:16*), which led to their being taken captive out of the Promised Land.

1:20 living creatures. These creatures, including the extraordinarily large ones, included all sorts of fish and mammals, even dinosaurs (see *notes on Job 40:15–41:1*).

1:22 blessed. This is the first occurrence of the word “bless” in Scripture. God’s admonition to “be fruitful and multiply” was the substance of the blessing.

1:24–25 livestock . . . beasts. This probably represents all kinds of large, four-legged animals.

1:24 beasts of the earth. Different from and larger than the clan of cattle, this would include dinosaurs like Behemoth (Job 40:15ff).

kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, ^o“Let us make man¹ in our image, ^pafter our likeness. And ^qlet them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; ^rmale and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, ^s“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said,

“Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. ^tYou shall have them for food. ³⁰ And ^uto every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The Seventh Day, God Rests

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and ^vall the host of them. ² And ^xon the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

¹The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

²⁶o ch. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8 ^pch. 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; James 3:9 ^qch. 9:2; Ps. 8:6-8; James 3:7 ²⁷ch. 2:18, 21-23; 5:2; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6 ²⁸ch. 9:1, 7 ²⁹ch. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15; 145:15, 16 ³⁰Ps. 147:9 ³¹Eccles. 7:29; 1 Tim. 4:4 **Chapter 2** ¹Deut. 4:19; Ps. 33:6 ²Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17; Deut. 5:12-14; Heb. 4:4

1:26 us . . . our. The first clear indication of the trinity of God (cf. 3:22; 11:7). The very name of God, *Elohim* (1:1), is a plural form of *El*. **man.** The crowning point of creation, a living human, was made in God's image to rule creation. **our image.** This defined man's unique relation to God. Man is a living being capable of embodying God's communicable attributes (cf. 9:6; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; James 3:9). In his rational life, he was like God in that he could reason and had intellect, will, and emotion. In the moral sense, he was like God because he was good and sinless.

1:26–28 dominion over. This defined man's unique relation to creation. Man was God's representative in ruling over the creation. The command to rule separated him from the rest of living creation and defined his relationship as above the rest of creation (cf. Ps. 8:6–8).

1:27 male and female. Cf. Matt. 19:4 and Mark 10:6. While these two persons equally shared God's image and together exercised dominion over creation, they were by divine design physically diverse in order to accomplish God's mandate to multiply, i.e., neither one could reproduce offspring without the other.

1:28 blessed. This second blessing (cf. v. 22) involved reproduction and dominion. **Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.** God, having just created the universe, created his representative (dominion over) and representation (cf. image and likeness). Man would fill the earth and oversee its operation. “Subdue” does not suggest a wild and unruly condition for the creation because God himself pronounced it “good.” Rather, it speaks of a

productive ordering of the earth and its inhabitants to yield its riches and accomplish God's purposes.

1:29–30 for food . . . for food. Prior to the curse (3:14–19), both mankind and beasts were vegetarians.

1:31 very good. What had been pronounced good individually (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) was now called “very good” collectively. The words anticipated God's conclusion that it was “not good” for a man to be alone (2:18), which occurred on the sixth day.

2:1–3 These words affirm that God had completed his work. Four times it is said that he finished his work, and three times it is said that this included all his work. Present processes in the universe reflect God sustaining that completed creation, not more creation (cf. Heb. 1:3).

2:2 finished . . . rested. God certainly did not rest due to weariness; rather, establishing the pattern for man's work cycle, he only modeled the need for rest. Later, the Sabbath ordinance of Moses found its basis in the creation week (cf. Ex. 20:8–11). The Sabbath was God's sacred ordained day in the weekly cycle. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27) and Gen. 2:3 stated that God “made it holy” or set apart the Sabbath day because he rested in it. Later, it was set aside for a day of worship in the Mosaic law (see *note on Ex. 20:8*). Hebrews 4:4 distinguishes between physical rest and the redemptive rest to which it pointed. Colossians 2:16 makes it clear that the Mosaic “Sabbath” has no symbolic or ritual place in the New Covenant. The church began worshipping on the

The Creation of Man and Woman

⁴ ^yThese are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ When no ^zbush of the field¹ was yet in the land² and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man ^ato work the ground, ⁶ and a mist³ was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of ^bdust from the ground and ^cbreathed into his ^dnostrils the breath of life, and ^ethe man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a ^fgarden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made

¹ Or open country ² Or earth; also verse 6 ³ Or spring

to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. ⁹ The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, ^h and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of ⁱHavilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the ^jTigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man ^k and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree

⁴ch. 1:1 ⁵ch. 1:11, 12] ^ach. 3:23 ^bch. 3:19, 23; 18:27; Ps. 103:14; Eccles. 12:7; 1 Cor. 15:47 ^cch. 7:22; Job 33:4; Isa. 2:22 ^dJob 27:3 ^eCited 1 Cor. 15:45 ⁸ver. 15; ch. 13:10; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8; Joel 2:3 ⁹ch. 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14 ^hver. 17 ¹¹ch. 10:7, 29; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7 ¹⁴Dan. 10:4 ¹⁵ver. 8

first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Christ (Acts 20:7).

2:4–4:26 The history of the heavens and the earth (v. 4).

2:4–25 This section fills in the details of man’s creation on day six. How did Moses obtain this account, so different from the absurd fictions of the pagans? Not from any human source, for man was not in existence to witness it. Not from the light of reason, for though intellect can know the eternal power of the Godhead (Rom. 1:18–20) and that God made all things, it cannot know how. None but the Creator himself could give this data and, therefore, it is through faith that one understands that the worlds were formed by the word of God (Heb. 11:3).

2:6 mist . . . going up from the land. “Mist” should be translated “flow.” It indicates that water came up from beneath the ground as springs and spread over the whole earth in an uninterrupted cycle of water. After the fall, rain became the primary means of watering the earth and allowed for floods and droughts that did not exist originally. Rains also allowed for God to judge through floods and droughts.

2:7 formed. Many of the words used in this account of the creation of man picture a master craftsman at work shaping a work of art to which he gives life (1 Cor. 15:45). This adds detail to the statement of fact in Gen. 1:27 (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13). Cf. Psa. 139:14. Made from dirt, a man’s value is not in the physical components that form his body, but in the quality of life that forms his soul (see Job 33:4).

2:8 garden . . . Eden. The Babylonians called the lush green land from which water flowed *edenu*; today, the term “oasis” describes such a place. This was a magnificent garden paradise, unlike any the world has seen since, where God fellowshiped with those he created in his image. The exact location of Eden is unknown; if “in the east”

was used in relationship to where Moses was when he wrote, then it could have been in the area of Babylon, the Mesopotamian Valley.

2:9 tree of life. A real tree, with special properties to sustain eternal life. It was placed in the center of the garden, where it must have been observed by Adam, and its fruit perhaps eaten by him, thus sustaining his life (2:16). Such a tree, symbolic of eternal life, will be in the new heavens and new earth (see note on Rev. 22:2). **tree . . . knowledge.** Cf. Gen. 2:16; 3:1–6, 11, 22. It was perhaps given that title because it was a test of obedience by which our first parents were tried, whether they would be good or bad—obey God or disobey his command.

2:10 out of. That is to say “the source,” and likely refers to some great spring gushing up inside the garden from some subterranean reservoir. There was no rain at that time.

2:11 Pishon . . . Havilah. Locations are uncertain. This represents pre-flood geography, now dramatically altered.

2:12 bdellium. A gum resin. This refers more to appearance than color, i.e., it had the appearance of a pale resin.

2:13 Gihon . . . Cush. The river location is uncertain. Cush could be modern-day Ethiopia.

2:14 Tigris . . . Assyria. The post-flood Tigris River runs northwest to southeast of the city of Babylon through the Mesopotamian Valley. **Euphrates.** A river that runs parallel (northwest to southeast) to the Tigris and empties into the Persian Gulf after joining the Tigris.

2:15 work it and keep it. Work was an important and dignified part of representing the image of God and serving him, even before the fall. Cf. Rev. 22:3.

2:17 surely die. To “die” has the basic idea of separation. It can mean spiritual separation, physical separation, and/or eternal

of the knowledge of good and evil ^lyou shall not eat, for in the day that you eat ^lof it you ^mshall surely die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; ⁿI will make him a helper fit for ²him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed ³every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and ^pbrought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam ⁴there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a ^qdeep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the

man he made ⁵into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

“This at last is ^rbone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was ^staken out of Man.” ⁶

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

The Fall

3 Now ^uthe serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

¹Or when you eat ²Or corresponding to; also verse 20 ³Or And out of the ground the LORD God formed ⁴Or the man ⁵Hebrew built ⁶The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

17/ch. 3:1-3, 11, 17 ^mRom. 6:23; James 1:15 ¹⁸1 Cor. 11:9; 1 Tim. 2:13 ¹⁹ch. 1:20, 24 ^pPs. 8:6 ²¹ch. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12 ²³ch. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13; [Eph. 5:28-30] ²¹1 Cor. 11:8 ²⁴Cited Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31; [Ps. 45:10; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11] **Chapter 3** ¹Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2

separation. At the moment of their sin, Adam and Eve died spiritually, but because God was merciful they did not die physically until later (5:5). There is no reason given for this prohibition, other than it was a test (*see note on v. 9*). There was nothing magical about that tree, but eating from it after it had been forbidden by God would indeed give man the knowledge of evil—since evil can be defined as disobeying God. Man already had the knowledge of good.

2:18 not good. When God saw his creation as very good (1:31), he viewed it as being to that point the perfect outcome to his creative plan. However, in observing man's state as not good, he was commenting on his incompleteness before the end of the sixth day because the woman, Adam's counterpart, had not yet been created. The words of this verse emphasize man's need for a companion, a helper, and an equal. He was incomplete without someone to complement him in fulfilling the task of filling, multiplying, and taking dominion over the earth. This points to Adam's inadequacy, not Eve's insufficiency (cf. 1 Cor. 11:9). Woman was made by God to meet man's deficiency (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14).

2:19 This was not a new creation of animals. They were created before man on the fifth and sixth days (1:20–25). Here the **LORD God** was calling attention to the fact that he created them **out of the ground** as he did man, but man, who was a living soul in the image of God, was to name them, signifying his rule over them.

2:20 gave names to. Naming is an act of discerning something about the creature so as to appropriately identify it and also an act of leadership or authority over that which was named. There is no kinship with any animal since none was a fitting companion for Adam.

2:21 one of his ribs. This could also be “sides,” including surrounding flesh (“flesh of my flesh,” v. 23). Divine surgery by the Creator presented no problems. This would also imply the first act of healing in Scripture.

2:23 bone of my bones. Adam's poem focuses on naming the delight of his heart in this newly found companion. The man (*Hb. ish*) names her “woman” (*Hb. isha*) because she had her source in him (the root of the word “woman” is “soft”). She truly was made of bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:8. The English words man/woman sustain the same relationship as the Hebrew words, hinting at that original creation.

2:24 leave . . . hold fast to. The marital relationship was established as the first human institution. The responsibility to honor one's parents (Ex. 20:12) does not cease with leaving and the union of husband with wife (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7, 8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31), but does represent the inauguration of a new and primary responsibility. “Hold fast” carries the sense of a permanent or indissoluble union, so that divorce was not considered (cf. Gen. 3:16). “One flesh” speaks of a complete unity of parts making a whole, e.g., one cluster, many grapes (Num. 13:23) or one God in three persons (Deut. 6:4); thus this marital union was complete and whole with two people. This also implies their sexual completeness. One man and one woman constitute the pair to reproduce. The “one flesh” is primarily seen in the child born of that union, the one perfect result of the union of two. Cf. uses of this verse in Matt. 19:5, 6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31. Permanent monogamy was and continues to be God's design and law for marriage.

2:25 both naked . . . not ashamed. With no knowledge of evil before the fall, even nakedness was shameless and innocent. They found their complete gratification in the joy of their one union and their service to God. With no inward principle of evil to work on, the solicitation to sin had to come from without, and it did.

3:1 the serpent. The word means “snake.” The apostle John identified this creature as Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2) as did Paul (2 Cor. 11:3). The serpent, a manifestation of Satan, appears for the first time before the fall of man. The rebellion of Satan, therefore, had

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You¹ shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”⁴ “But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,² she took of its fruit^x and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her,^y and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened,

^aand they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool³ of the day, and the man and his wife^b hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”⁴ ¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, ^cbecause I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, ^d“The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the

¹In Hebrew you is plural in verses 1–5 ²Or to give insight ³Hebrew wind ⁴In Hebrew you is singular in verses 9 and 11

³ch. 2:17 ⁴ver. 13; John 8:44; [2 Cor. 11:3] ⁶*1 Tim. 2:14 ^yver. 12, 17; Hos. 6:7 ⁷zver. 5 ^ach. 2:25 ⁸b[Ps. 139:1–12; Jer. 23:23, 24] ¹⁰cver. 7; ch. 2:25 ¹²dch. 2:18; Job 31:33

occurred sometime after Gen. 1:31 (when everything in creation was good), but before 3:1. Cf. Ezek. 28:11–15 for a possible description of Satan’s dazzling beauty and Isa. 14:13–14 for Satan’s motivation to challenge God’s authority (cf. 1 John 3:8). Satan, being a fallen archangel and, thus, a supernatural spirit, had possessed the body of a snake in its pre-fall form (cf. Gen. 3:14 for post-fall form). **more crafty.** Deceitful; cf. Matt. 10:16. **to the woman.** She was the object of his attack, being the weaker one and needing the protection of her husband. He found her alone and unfortified by Adam’s experience and counsel. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:6. Though sinless, she was temptable and seducible. **Did God actually say . . . ?** In effect Satan said, “Is it true that he has restricted you from the delights of this place? This is not like one who is truly good and kind. There must be some mistake.” He insinuated doubt as to her understanding of God’s will, appearing as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) to lead her to the supposed true interpretation. She received him without fear or surprise, but as some credible messenger from heaven with the true understanding, because of his cunning.

3:2–3 In her answer, Eve extolled the great liberty that they had; they could eat all the fruit, with only one exception.

3:3 not . . . touch it. An addition to the original prohibition as recorded (cf. Gen. 2:17). Adam may have so instructed her for her protection.

3:4–5 not surely die. Satan, emboldened by her openness to him, spoke this direct lie. This lie actually led her and Adam to spiritual death (separation from God). So, Satan is called a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). His lies always promise great benefits (as in Gen. 3:5). Eve experienced this result—she and Adam did know good and evil; but by personal corruption, they did not know as God knows in perfect holiness.

3:6 good . . . delight . . . to be desired. She decided that Satan was telling the truth and she had misunderstood God, but she didn’t know what she was doing. It was not overt rebellion against God, but seduction and deception to make her believe her act was the

right thing to do (cf. v. 13). The NT confirms that Eve was deceived (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:9). **he ate.** A direct transgression without deception (see note on 1 Tim. 2:13–14).

3:7 opened . . . knew . . . sewed. The innocence noted in 2:25 had been replaced by guilt and shame (3:8–10), and from then on they had to rely on their conscience to distinguish between good and their newly acquired capacity to see and know evil.

3:8 God appeared, as before, in tones of goodness and kindness, walking in some visible form (perhaps Shekinah light as he later appeared in Ex. 33:18–23; 34:5–8, 29; 40:34–38). He came not in fury, but in the same condescending way he had walked with Adam and Eve before.

3:9 Where are you? The question was God’s way of bringing man to explain why he was hiding, rather than expressing ignorance about man’s location. Shame, remorse, confusion, guilt, and fear all led to their clandestine behavior. There was no place to hide; there never is. See Ps. 139:1–12.

3:10 the sound of you. The sound of v. 8, which probably was God calling for Adam and Eve. Adam responded with the language of fear and sorrow, but not confession.

3:11 Adam’s sin was evidenced by his new knowledge of the evil of nakedness, but God still waited for Adam to confess to what God knew they had done. The basic reluctance of sinful people to admit their iniquity is here established. Repentance is still the issue. When sinners refuse to repent, they suffer judgment; when they do repent, they receive forgiveness.

3:12 The woman whom you gave. Adam pitifully put the responsibility on God for giving him Eve. That only magnified the tragedy in that Adam had knowingly transgressed God’s prohibition, but still would not be open and confess his sin, taking full responsibility for his action, which was not made under deception (1 Tim. 2:14).

3:13 The serpent deceived me. The woman’s desperate effort to pass the blame to the serpent, which was partially true (1 Tim.

woman, “What is this that you have done?”
The woman said, ^e“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and ^fdust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^l and
^gher offspring;
^hhe shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”

¹⁶To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
ⁱin pain you shall bring forth children.

^jYour desire shall be contrary to² your husband,
but he shall ^krule over you.”

¹⁷And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
^lof which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’

^mcursed is the ground because of you;
ⁿin pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
^ofor you are dust,
and ^pto dust you shall return.”

¹Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis ²Or *shall be toward* (see 4:7)

¹³ver. 4; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14 ¹⁴Isa. 65:25; Mic. 7:17 ¹⁵Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:3; Matt. 1:23, 25; Luke 1:34, 35; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:15 ^hRom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 20:1-3, 10 ¹⁶[John 16:21]/ch. 4:7; Song 7:10 ¹⁷1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5, 6 ¹⁷ch. 2:17 ¹⁸ch. 5:29; [Rom. 8:20-22] ¹⁹Eccles. 2:22, 23 ¹⁹ch. 2:7; Ps. 103:14 ¹⁹Job 34:15; Ps. 104:29; Eccles. 3:20; 12:7; Rom. 5:12

2:14), did not absolve her of the responsibility for her distrust and disobedience toward God.

3:14 to the serpent. The cattle and all the rest of creation were cursed (see Rom. 8:20–23; cf. Jer. 12:4) as a result of Adam and Eve’s eating, but the serpent was uniquely cursed by being made to slither on its belly. It probably had legs before this curse. Now snakes represent all that is odious, disgusting, and low. They are branded with infamy and avoided with fear. Cf. Isa. 65:25 and Mic. 7:17.

3:15 After cursing the physical serpent, God turned to the spiritual serpent, the lying seducer, Satan, and cursed him. **bruise your head . . . bruise his heel.** This “first gospel” is prophetic of the struggle and its outcome between “your offspring” (Satan and unbelievers, who are called the devil’s children in John 8:44) and her offspring (Christ, a descendant of Eve, and those in him), which began in the garden. In the midst of the curse passage, a message of hope shone forth—the woman’s offspring called “he” is Christ, who will one day defeat the Serpent. Satan could only “bruise” Christ’s heel (cause him to suffer), while Christ will bruise Satan’s head (destroy him with a fatal blow). Paul, in a passage strongly reminiscent of Gen. 3, encouraged the believers in Rome, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom. 16:20). Believers should recognize that they participate in the crushing of Satan because, along with their savior and because of his finished work on the cross, they also are of the woman’s seed. For more on the destruction of Satan, see Heb. 2:14–15 and Rev. 20:10.

3:16 pain in childbearing. This is a constant reminder that a

woman gave birth to sin in the human race and passes it on to all her children. She can be delivered from this curse by raising godly children, as indicated in 1 Tim. 2:15 (see *note there*). **Your desire . . . he shall rule.** Just as the woman and her seed will engage in a war with the serpent, i.e., Satan and his seed (Gen. 3:15), because of sin and the curse, the man and the woman will face struggles in their own relationship. Sin has turned the harmonious system of God-ordained roles into distasteful struggles of self-will. Lifelong companions, husbands and wives, will need God’s help in getting along as a result. The woman’s desire will be to lord it over her husband, but the husband will rule by divine design (Eph. 5:22–25). This interpretation of the curse is based upon the identical Hebrew words and grammar being used in Gen. 4:7 (see *note there*) to show the conflict man will have with sin as it seeks to rule him.

3:17 Because you have listened. The reason given for the curse on the ground and human death is that man turned his back on the voice of God, to follow his wife in eating that from which God had ordered him to abstain. The woman sinned because she acted independently of her husband, disdainful of his leadership, counsel, and protection. The man sinned because he abandoned his leadership and followed the wishes of his wife. In both cases, God’s intended roles were reversed.

3:17–18 cursed is the ground because of you. God cursed the object of man’s labor and made it reluctantly, yet richly, yield his food through hard work.

3:19 return to the ground. I.e., to die (cf. 2:7). Man, by sin,

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.¹ ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, ^q“Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand ^rand take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden ^sto work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the ^tcherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten² a man with the help of the LORD.”

¹ Eve sounds like the Hebrew for *life-giver* and resembles the word for *living* ² Cain sounds like the Hebrew for *gotten* ³ Hebrew *will there not be a lifting up [of your face]?* ⁴ Or *is toward* ⁵ Hebrew; Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate add *Let us go out to the field*

²²ver. 5 ^rch. 2:9 ²³ch. 2:5 ²⁴Ps. 18:10; 104:4; Heb. 1:7; [Ex. 25:18-22; Ezek. 28:11-16] **Chapter 4** ³Lev. 2:12; Num. 18:12 ⁴Ex. 13:12; Num. 18:17; Prov. 3:9 ^{Heb.} 11:4 ⁵[Prov. 21:27] ⁷Eccles. 8:12, 13; Isa. 3:10, 11; Rom. 2:6-11 ^cch. 3:16 ⁸Matt. 23:35; Heb. 12:24; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11 ⁹John 8:44

became mortal. Although he did not die the moment he ate (by God's mercy), he was changed immediately and became liable to all the sufferings and miseries of life, to death, and to the pains of hell forever. Adam lived 930 years (5:5).

3:21 garments of skins. The first physical deaths should have been the man and his wife, but it was an animal—a shadow of the reality that God would someday kill a substitute to redeem sinners.

3:22 like one of us. See note on 1:26. This was spoken out of compassion for the man and woman, who only in limited ways were like the Trinity, knowing good and evil—not by holy omniscience, but by personal experience (cf. Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13; Rev. 4:8).

3:22–23 and live forever. See note on 2:9. God told man that he would surely die if he ate of the forbidden tree. But God's concern may also have been that man not live forever in his pitifully cursed condition. Taken in the broader context of Scripture, driving the man and his wife out of the garden was an act of merciful grace to prevent them from being sustained forever by the tree of life.

3:24 cherubim. Later in Israel's history, two cherubim or angelic figures guarded the ark of the covenant and the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:18–22), where God communed with his people. **flaming sword.** An unexplainable phenomenon, perhaps associated directly with the cherubim or the flaming, fiery Shekinah presence of God himself.

4:1 knew Eve his wife. The act of sexual intercourse was considered the only means by which God himself gave children. He was acknowledged as the sovereign giver of all life.

4:2 again, she bore. Some think the boys may have been twins, since no time element intervenes between vv. 1–2. **keeper of sheep . . . worker of the ground.** Both occupations were

² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of ^uthe fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of ^vthe firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD ^whad regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but ^xfor Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? ³ And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. ² Its desire is contrary to ⁴ you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. ⁵ And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and ^akilled him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, ^b“I do not know; am

respectable; in fact, most people subsisted through a combination of both. God's focus was not on their vocation, but on the nature of their respective offerings.

4:3 fruit of the ground. Produce in general.

4:4 firstborn . . . fat. The best animals.

4:4–5 Abel's offering was acceptable (cf. Heb. 11:4), not just because it was an animal, nor just because it was the very best of what he had, nor even that it was the culmination of a zealous heart for God; but, because it was in every way obediently given according to what God must have revealed (though not recorded in Genesis). Cain, disdaining the divine instruction, just brought what he wanted to bring: some of his crop.

4:5–6 angry. Rather than being repentant for his sinful disobedience, he was hostile toward God, whom he could not kill, and jealous of his brother, whom he could kill (cf. 1 John 3:12; Jude 11).

4:7 do well . . . be accepted. God reminded Cain that if he had obeyed God and offered the animal sacrifices God had required, his sacrifices would have been acceptable. It wasn't personal preference on God's part, or disdain for Cain's vocation, or the quality of his produce that caused God to reject his sacrifice. **sin is crouching at the door.** God told Cain that if he chose not to obey his commands, ever-present sin, crouched and waiting to pounce like a lion, would fulfill its desire to overpower him (cf. 3:16).

4:8 The first murder in Scripture (cf. Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb. 12:24). Cain rejected the wisdom spoken to him by God himself, rejected doing well, refused to repent, and thus crouching sin pounced and turned him into a killer. Cf. 1 John 3:10–12.

4:9 am I my brother's keeper? Cain's sarcasm was a play on words, based on the fact that Abel was the “keeper” of sheep. Lying