



Leaves From the Tree

Studies from God's Word

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



GENESIS 1 - 6

Genesis 1

1:1 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

One of the most important things all people must learn is taught from the very first verse of the Bible. There is here both a declaration and an implication. God declares that before all other things He alone existed. I think that it is profitable to stop and just think for a few minutes about what that describes for us. There were no stars in the sky. There was no sky. There was no earth or sun. No human beings, no angels, no demons, or any other thing yet existed. Then, out of nothing except Himself, God created all things. The conclusion we should draw regarding Him is that He is great beyond comparison, wise beyond comprehension, and powerful beyond imagination.

The implication from this simple declaration that in the beginning God created all things is that everything exists by and for His purpose. Nothing that exists brought itself into existence. Therefore nothing can determine its own purpose for existence. Human beings spend entire lifetimes wondering about their life purpose and questioning the meaning of their existence.

Many come to the end of their lives having never discovered the answer to life's most important questions, "What is this all about and why am I here?" Yet, the answer, not just a guess or supposition, but the answer to those questions was here in Genesis 1:1 all along.

What is this all about? The heavens and the earth are all about His eternal purpose! Why am I here? I am here for His purpose not some purpose that I have decided gives my life some kind of meaning and significance. I only exist because of Him, therefore I exist for His purpose, not my own. My life purpose is fulfilled to the extent that I discover from Him, what I am to do with my life here in this world that He made. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."
(Romans 11:36)

1:3-5 - "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day."

God's work of creation begins with His Word. Throughout this chapter when God creates a new thing He speaks and it is created as He spoke it. This connection between the Word of God and the creation of God is critical for us to understand, not just as a history lesson of how God made things in the beginning, but to establish an understanding of how God still works today.

This description of the original creation of this present universe in which we live is the actual way that God created, but it also symbolizes God's work in our lives. Paul intentionally referred to this verse when he described the spiritual work of God in the New Creation as He causes a person to be born again. "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (II Corinthians 4:6)

The parallel Paul draws is between the first creation of the universe and the new creation of a believer. Both were in darkness before God spoke His Word of creation. For the original creation the Word was a simple "Let there be light!", or more literally, "Light be!" For the new creation which every true believer experiences, the Word of creation is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The power to create a new thing is in the Word of God spoken.

In the same way, God continues to change areas and aspects of our lives as believers by speaking His Word into our hearts. Think for a moment about any area of your life that you know needs to change. How will it change? Where will you find the power to change? The power to transform is in the Word of God.

As we read His Word together this year, keep in mind that in every chapter we read, there is contained in it the power to transform our lives. The written Word is still the Word of God and God's creative power is invested in His Word. The Word of God is life changing.

1:14-18 - "Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good."

There is a principle in these verses that influenced our interpretation of the book of Revelation as we saw in our recent reading. The principle is that God's creation has both a practical function and a symbolic function. God introduces this concept in these verses in reference to the sun, moon and stars. No one would argue that the sun, moon and stars have no practical function in the universe. The sun for instance, as these verses affirm, gives needed light to the earth which both warms the planet and causes the plants to grow through photosynthesis. All of that is a huge practical benefit.

What is not as widely understood is that God designed the sun to also serve His spiritual teaching purpose as a symbol, or "sign." This passage included in chapter one is a clue that God is going to use the sun, moon, and stars throughout the rest of His written Word as prophetic symbols. We saw that all three were important symbols in Revelation.

A simple study using a concordance to list the mentions of sun, moon, and stars throughout the Bible will turn up dozens of places where they serve as symbols. This does not mean that every time they are mentioned that it is always symbolic, but that we should always at least consider the possible symbolic connection. In what sense do they serve as symbols? In this passage God gives us a hint of how He will use them later in the Bible. Here they are identified as being made to "govern the day and the night." We should notice that later in Genesis 1 that human beings are also made to govern or rule. The sun, moon and stars often are used by God to symbolize human rulers.

One of the first examples of this is found later in Genesis in the life of Joseph. He had a dream in which he saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. This was a prophetic symbol of his father, mother, and eleven brothers bowing before his future greater authority as the ruler over Egypt.

1:26-27 - "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

We are meant to pay attention, not just to the various things created in the six days of the creation week here in Genesis 1, but we are also meant to notice the order of their creation. There are important principles of God's purpose revealed in that order. In this case, we see that the creation of humanity is the last thing created by God before He rested.

The order of the creation of mankind is significant. There are only two possible conclusions to draw from when humans were created. One possibility is that humans were created last because of all that God created they are least important. The other possibility is that humans were created last because they are the most important of all of the creations of God. Which point do you think we are to draw from this order?

Mankind was saved for last creation by God on purpose. Our creation could be compared to the grand finale of a symphony. The entire week of creation builds up to this final, greatest act of creation. We represent the greatest of the creations of God because of the awesome purpose He attaches to us.

We are identified as made in God's image and likeness! God says this about no other thing that He created. This alone gives human beings, every human being, supreme value above any other thing in the world. It also answers the third question every person born into this world eventually asks. After asking "What is this all about?" and "Why am I here?" as I mentioned above, people ask, "Who am I?" Here is the answer. Who we are is defined entirely by our connection to God. Our meaning is found in our purpose to bear God's image and likeness. No other answer to that question will satisfy.

Genesis 2

2:2-3 - "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

While for most Christians, it is no longer the divisive controversy it was to earlier generations, there remains some disagreement over which day is most proper for worship.

This passage very clearly identifies the seventh day as the day of rest following the pattern that the Lord Himself established by His own rest at the end of the creation week. On the week's calendar, Saturday is clearly the seventh day, so why is it that most Christians worship on Sunday, rather than Saturday, and is it Biblically allowable?

Throughout the Old Testament the seventh day pattern was followed by the people of God. The Law of Moses even commanded the seventh day and there were serious consequences under the Law for working on the seventh day.

In the New Testament a shift of days for the purpose of the gathering of the church to worship occurred. This shift to the first day of the week rather than the seventh day for the worship of the church was intentional and spiritually appropriate. The seventh day served in the Old Covenant to emphasize the conclusion of God's creative work in the original creation. In the New Covenant we encounter a new spiritual creation in addition to the old natural creation.

The new creation reflects the resurrection of Christ from the dead as the beginning point of a new creation that has no end. Since Christ rose from the dead early Sunday morning on the first day of a "new" week, immediately following the end of the "old" week, the church from the beginning recognized the symbolic importance of moving our day of worship from the day symbolizing the end of the old creation to the day symbolizing the beginning of the new creation.

2:15 - "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."

God placed Adam in the garden and gave him two primary responsibilities. In this simple description I see a pattern that extends to each one of our lives and still speaks to us about God's purpose for our lives.

First, God custom designs a set of life circumstances for each one of us. He "plants" each of us where we belong to fulfill our purpose. Second, from the beginning our purpose in life is tied to our God assigned responsibilities. True fulfillment is found in identifying and embracing the responsibilities God has assigned to you. We are designed to bear responsibility. Our lives are meaningful when we are handling the responsibilities God has given to us and empty when we are not. People who avoid, shirk, or run from their responsibilities are the most frustrated people in the world.

At the same time, filling our lives with responsibilities God has not given to us or more than He has assigned only burdens us beyond what we can actually bear.

The specific responsibilities God gave to Adam are also symbolically helpful for us. His two jobs toward the garden were to cultivate and keep it. The order of these responsibilities is purposeful. To cultivate implies that Adam was to take what God had given him and improve it by work. He was made responsible to improve the garden that God had given him. This translates to our lives in various areas of God's provision.

If God has given you a marriage, then you are called to cultivate it. If He has given you a children, a job, a church, friendships, etc., then we are to work to improve each one of those areas of our life garden and bring greater fruitfulness into each aspect of our life. Adam's second responsibility was to keep the garden. The word translated "keep" is literally to "hedge about." It means to guard something valuable by setting boundaries around it.

The increased fruitfulness resulting from his work on the garden creates a value to the garden that must be guarded against intruders and any thing that would undermine or steal its fruit. Living in this world there will always be threats to our marriage, family, church, job, friendships, etc., that we must vigilantly guard against.

2:18 - "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him. Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."

Adam was made directly by God and without flaw. Yet, following his creation, God evaluated Adam's life situation and recognized a lack in his circumstances that needed to be addressed.

The problem was that Adam was alone. Now, He was not completely alone. God was with Adam, and of course God was not what we would call a poor companion. Yet, there was something in God's design of Adam that another like him was necessary to meet the desire for relationship built into Adam. There were also animals that could provide Adam some measure of companionship, yet, the animals were not able to fill that particular relationship gap. Only one like Adam would be able to fill that gap. This, of course, led to the creation of Eve.

Before she is named following her creation, her role is identified for us in this passage. This role was not determined by Adam (in spite of the claim that many make that this role is culturally imposed on women by men). This role precedes any culture or tradition. The role actually precedes Eve herself.

The spiritual concept here is that the Lord had her role in mind before He even created her. In a sense she was made to fill the role He ordained for her. The role is found in the phrase "a helper suitable for him." There is a classic confusion to clear up about this based on the old King James translation of this phrase. It was translated then as a "help meet for him". The word "meet" was old English for suitable, but it was combined in an unintended single word that has become kind of a Christian tradition in the term "helpmeet" and some have changed that further to "helpmate". The concept God communicated in this passage is actually that Eve was designed to be a helper that was fitted by Him to help Adam in every way.

We should anticipate that this role designed for Eve in relationship to Adam has more than a practical concern tied to it. The relationship of Adam and Eve is purposefully pointing forward toward the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church.

The church was designed by God to be Christ's helper. We are fitted to Him. His life purpose defines our life purpose. We exist for no greater reason than to come along side Him and work with Him in the fulfillment of His mission.

2:21-23 - "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Following the concept of the Adam and Eve / Christ and the church connection, the description of the creation of Eve from Adam is awesome to consider. The deep sleep of Adam is a type pointing forward to the cross and the "sleep of death" that Christ experienced for us. God the Father created the church from Christ's side just as He created Eve from Adam's side.

"but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe." (John 19:33-35)

Question from Genesis 1

Question: When God created man...he was MAN only, one human, but containing also the female (male and female He created them).

Why does he first say he created HIM then say He created THEM...why didn't He say just one or the other both times?

Answer: The Lord did it like this and described it like this on purpose as you might suspect. From a practical standpoint, God first made Adam, and then out of Adam's rib He formed Eve.

The reason Adam's creation occurred first and is mentioned first is to establish a pattern of greater authority (I Timothy 2:12-14). So the description in chapter one is the same as saying, "God created Adam in His own image, in the image of God He created him, Adam and Eve He created them."

It is the perfect way to introduce the creation of the man while emphasizing that the woman was created second to and out of the man. From a spiritual perspective, the way it is described properly emphasizes both the similarity between Adam and Eve, while preserving the intentional distinction between them.

The greater issue at stake in the creation account of mankind is that for God's eternal purpose, Adam serves as a type or symbol of Christ and Eve serves as a type or symbol of the church (Ephesians 5:22-32). This is why of all the creatures that God created, it was only for humans that the female of the species was created out of the body of the male. It portrays for us that the church is created from Christ.

Genesis 3

3:6 - "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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

This verse gives us the beginning point of all of the problems in the world today. It seems at this moment to be fairly small and insignificant compared to all of the evil these simple choices and actions unleashed.

A good illustration of what happens here is found in Greek mythology with the story of Pandora's Box. When Pandora opened the box all of the evil contained in the box was unleashed into the world. This passage is the account of what theologians have labeled the Fall of Man. It captures the moment of the first sin in this perfect world that God had created.

An important distinction should be drawn here too. It is clear from the account here that Eve was the first person to take the fruit from the forbidden tree and eat it, and that Adam was the second person to eat it. Nevertheless, the Scriptures identify Adam as the one responsible for the Fall. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--" (Romans 5:12).

The reason that Adam is held ultimately responsible for the Fall and not Eve, is on two important principles of God's Word. First, Adam was the one originally given responsibility by God and placed in charge of the Garden. God specifically commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16). Second, we later learn that Eve was completely deceived by the serpent's lies when she ate from the tree, while Adam was not deceived and yet chose to eat. "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." (I Timothy 2:14)

In the Genesis account here, we should notice that Adam was with Eve during her conversation with the serpent and watched her eat the fruit without protest. Then, even worse, when he saw she did not drop dead after eating the fruit, he took some of the fruit she offered him and he choose to disobey the Lord and eat it himself.

Another important aspect of this passage that becomes a pattern affecting all of our lives is the description of the inner working of temptation and sin. We are given a glimpse of the internal perspective of Eve as she was considering whether to eat.

The three specific thoughts that occurred to her are actually the three basic temptations to the three basic sins a person can commit. In one sense we can say that all sin is the same because any sin violates God's standard. We should also understand though that there are basic categories of sin and temptation.

We learn here, and find it confirmed later in God's Word, that there are only three basic sins. Those sins are identified for us in this verse. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." (1 John 2:16) Every sin a person may commit is a form of one of these three basic sins. Eve was tempted in all three categories at once.

The three things she saw that tempted her to eat from the tree correspond exactly to these three categories of sin. When Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness to pass the test of the devil's three temptations He faced and defeated these exact same three temptations. These are the same three categories of temptation that we face on a daily basis.

3:12-13 - "The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Adam and Eve have sinned. The Lord has tracked them down in the garden as they were attempting to hide from His presence. Who does the Lord confront first? He confronts Adam, because Adam is most responsible for what has happened. Adam's response, and then Eve's response after Adam are the first examples in history of a pattern with which we are all familiar, and in which we have all indulged on our own behalf.

When the Lord confronts Adam, the response Adam should have made would have been along these lines, "Lord, I alone am responsible for what has happened here. I was the one You commanded to not eat from the tree. I knew it was wrong when the serpent tried to convince Eve to eat. I should have stepped in and stopped her from eating, but I stood by and did nothing. It is my fault that all of this has happened!"

Do we see Adam offer any acknowledgment of his responsibility like this? No, instead we see the first example of blame shifting. All Adam admits is that he did eat from the tree. He implies by his response though that the reason he ate was because of the woman. Adam attempts to buffer his own accountability by placing the woman squarely between himself and the Lord. It really is her fault, not mine, is the implication of his answer.

Then compounding that attempt to shift the blame to Eve, Adam actually implies that the Lord Himself is to blame for what he did in eating. It was "The woman whom You gave to be with me..." The insinuation Adam makes is that if the Lord had not given him the woman, none of this would have happened.

Adam is not alone in this cowardly way of avoiding responsibility. When Adam shifts the spotlight of accountability from himself to Eve, she immediately picks up on Adam's blame shifting trick and follows his example. She shifts the blame from herself to the serpent. Her response is in essence the classic, "The devil made me do it."

Of course, the devil has his own responsibility here and in every other temptation, but Satan has never once in all of human history caused any person to sin. No one will be able to say on the day of judgment that they are innocent because their sin is all the fault of the devil.

What Adam and Eve had not yet learned here, but we should understand, is that the Lord is never fooled by any attempt to shift blame to another. He knows exactly who is responsible for what. It is far better to simply own up to what we have done when we sin and swallow the bitter pill of full responsibility for our own transgressions.

3:15 - "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

This is a key verse in understanding the bigger picture of how God planned to one day fix what Adam broke. This is part of the conversation between the Lord and the serpent (Satan). The Lord declares the first of all of the prophecies of the Bible here. This, like most prophecies is focused on the future coming of the special person identified later as the Messiah.

In this first prophecy of the Messiah we learn of two key elements of His coming. One, He is identified as "her seed." This is intentionally out of the ordinary and meant to catch our attention. Biblically and physically the woman has no seed.

This is a prophetic hint about the unusual nature of the Messiah's human nature. It anticipates what we understand as the Virgin Birth. Jesus was not born from the seed of any man. The second important element of the Messiah's coming highlighted here has to do with His mission. He will bruise the serpent on the head and in doing so, will Himself be bruised on the heel.

The image drawn here by the Lord is of the Messiah stepping on the head of the serpent and in the process being bitten by the serpent. This anticipates the cross of Christ. Jesus crushed the head of the serpent, but was Himself hurt at the moment of His great victory!

We should see from this first prophecy that the plan of God to send Jesus was not a much later afterthought in the mind of the Lord. The coming of Jesus into the world to resolve the problem Adam caused was the plan of God from the very beginning of history.

3:24 - "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life."

As the Lord drove Adam out of the garden (implying that Adam did not leave readily or willingly) He stationed cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life. The idea here is that there was an entry point or doorway back into the garden.

Since Adam did not want to leave the garden, the Lord anticipated Adam attempting to sneak back into the garden later. The Lord established an special angelic guardian, not to guard Adam, but to guard the tree of life from Adam. In a sense, the history of all of the religions of the world from this point forward are a history of man's attempt to regain the garden and the tree of life by sneaking in some way of their own making.

The tree of life representing salvation is on the inside of the garden and man is on the outside and desperate to reach the tree that is beyond his reach. God will not allow Adam or any of his descendants to sneak in and take from the tree of life. There is a way to the tree, but it is the way God has ordained and any other attempt will meet with the cherubim armed with the flaming sword.

This image of the cherubim carries forward through the Bible and this theme established here continues as part of the story of salvation. The next appearance of this image is found in the construction of the tabernacle, and then again later in the construction of the temple. In both versions of God's house the structure constructed represents (pointing backward in history) the garden of Eden.

The tree of life corresponds to the ark of the covenant found in the Holy of Holies, the innermost room of those structures. In both cases, God commanded a great curtain to be woven to separate the ark of the covenant from the people.

On that curtain, representations of cherubim were to be woven into it. It was to be a reminder that the way to eternal life was guarded by these guardian angels. No one in history is free to walk back into the garden and eat from the tree of life on their own. The reason they cannot is because of their sin. Only when God's Messiah has provided the solution to our sin are we given access to the tree of life through Him!

Question from Genesis 2

Question: 2:9 - God is the giver/creator of life, why is there a tree of life? What was its purpose?

Answer: God made the tree of life, along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and planted them in the garden as both symbols and tests. The tree of life is one of the first great symbols in history and the Bible of God Himself. It also served as the first great test for man along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Remember God had given this permission to Adam and Eve, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

The Lord had granted them access to any tree of the garden except one. That meant they were free to eat from the tree of life, but instead they chose the one tree that was forbidden to them.

The test functioned more effectively by giving them the choice of symbolic trees to eat from rather than saying "You can choose Me, or you can choose to know things you should not know." God often communicates to us through similar symbols to make His points more vivid to our understanding.

Genesis 4

4:2-5 - "Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell."

The two brothers Cain and Abel developed different "careers" as they grew into adulthood. Cain became a farmer while Abel became a shepherd. They approached the Lord to make an offering to the Lord from their labors.

Cain offered some of the fruit of the ground that he had grown in his farming. Abel offered the firstlings of his flock. As they made their offerings, the Lord had an unexpected response. The Lord has "regard" for Abel's offering, but He has no regard for Cain's offering. As a result, Cain becomes very angry and his downward spiral toward the eventual murder of his brother Abel begins. Christians have read this passage and speculated as to why one offering was accepted by the Lord and the other rejected.

One popular theory is that the Lord was concerned about the specific things offered by Cain and Abel. They theorize that Cain offered fruit from the cursed ground which was displeasing to the Lord, and that Abel offered a lamb which points forward symbolically to Christ and therefore the Lord was pleased.

This explanation seems to make some sense, but it depends on Cain and Abel knowing more information than they had apparently been given. There is no previous or subsequent passage in which the Lord says He does not want any offering of the fruit of the cursed ground. In fact, later in the Law of Moses, the Lord commands His people to bring for different offerings both lambs and firstfruits of their harvest. He does not reject offerings of the fruit of the ground.

The Lord has provided us with an answer to this mystery later in the Scriptures.

The reason why the Lord rejected Cain's offering and accepted Abel's offering had nothing to do with what they offered and everything to do with how they offered them. "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." (Hebrews 11:4)

Abel's offering was acceptable because he offered it by faith. Cain did not make his offer by faith. The difference is externally subtle, because both seem to be doing a similar activity. Internally, as they offered, there was a huge difference in their hearts.

Abel was focused upon the Lord as he made his offering and concerned with pleasing Him. Cain, as we see confirmed by his reaction after his offering was rejected, is primarily concerned with pleasing himself, not the Lord. His heart was not right before the Lord even as he made his offering. This principle still applies to us today.

When we bring our offerings to give back to the Lord, He looks first at how we are making our offering to Him.

4:5-7 - "but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

The Lord reveals through Cain's struggle the progression of the development of sin in a person's heart and life. Before this day, Cain was not spiritually healthy in his heart, but outwardly, sin was contained and his life was "normal." This situation with his offering being rejected by the Lord brought to the surface the issues in Cain's heart.

Once those issues came to the surface the question was what Cain would do in response to his own reaction. Would he recognize the spiritual danger of giving himself fully to his own fleshly reaction and turn in a better direction before it was too late? Or, would he give himself over to his fleshly inclinations and follow sin to its bitter end?

We see the Lord, in His graciousness, speaking to Cain at the moment of truth before he makes a final decision either direction. The Lord provides Cain with a way of escape through His warning. "No temptation has

overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." (I Corinthians 10:13).

The way of escape the Lord offered to Cain was in a strong exhortation to adopt a different perspective and attitude toward temptation and sin. Cain was struggling with a perspective common to people when they sin in which he saw himself as a victim of his circumstances.

God was urging him to not see himself as a victim of the circumstance, but instead as responsible for his own circumstance. He pictured sin to Cain as a predator seeking to devour him. Rather than meekly yielding to the predator as a victim, he called Cain to take control of the predator. By telling Cain that he "must master it" He was making Cain fully responsible for whether or not he chose to sin in his circumstance.

The story is the same for each of us. No matter how difficult our circumstances, we are never victimized to the point of the circumstance causing us to sin in response. We are always responsible to master our temptations rather than meekly yielding to them.

4:16-17 - "Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son."

This passage has stimulated questions from Christians in every generation, and also provided fodder for those who are seeking to undermine the credibility of the Bible. The issue is simply this; if Cain and Abel were the first two children of Adam and Eve, then where did Cain's wife come from?

Young believers ask about this with honest confusion, while the opponents of the Bible pounce on this like they have discovered some unanswerable gap in the story that "proves" that the Bible was not inspired by God. The truth is that the resolution to this issue is very simple and not nearly as mysterious as you might imagine at first glance.

Cain married another of the descendants of Adam and Eve. She might have been his sister, or she might have been a niece. We do not know for sure. The one thing we can be 100% certain of, is that she was descended from Adam. "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live

on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation," (Acts 17:26).

The Bible is consistent in its declarations that all human beings that have ever lived are directly descended from Adam.

The reason people are initially confused by the question of Cain's wife is that they assume that this all took place within a very short time period and that it was not possible for there to be other children born to Adam and Eve yet. There is nothing in the text that tells us how much time had elapsed before Cain took a wife, or that Adam and Eve had only had two children. Cain and Abel were the first children born to them, but they most likely had many other children after that. Their children grew up and also had many children.

At some point, Cain married one of his sisters, or one of the women of Adam's descendants. The additional question is often raised about the prohibition later in the Law about marrying close relatives. That became prohibited when the Lord said it was prohibited, and not before He declared it.

At this point in early human history, it was necessary and acceptable in order to populate the earth from one set of parents.

Questions from Genesis 3

Question: The man first heard the Lord in the garden after they sinned....is a man supposed to more readily hear from God...say in a husband wife relationship?

Answer: Actually, they both heard the Lord in the garden after they sinned. "They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden..." (Genesis 3:8). What is important to notice is that when the Lord spoke following their sin, He chose to speak first to Adam. "Then the LORD God called to the man..." (Genesis 3:9). To answer your question, I would have to say no, there is no indication that the husband is designed to more readily hear the from God if by that you mean his spiritual hearing is greater than the wife's. However, it is clear that when the Lord does speak to a marriage to bring correction that He will deal first with the husband because of the greater authority and responsibility the husband bears in the relationship.

Question: In meditating on these passages the question of what Adam's original sin (causing the fall) was. It seems to me that Adam placed Eve before God in the way he allowed her to eat and then decided to take from her and eat himself of the forbidden fruit. Is this not a violation of the first commandment (even though the law had not been given yet)? I have always thought of the original sin as being Adam eating the fruit. What are your thoughts?

Answer: What you are considering are the possible internal motivations and perspectives of Adam's heart as he sinned. The Lord does not share with us in the story what Adam was thinking so we are left to speculate. Your idea that Adam was putting Eve before the Lord in an idolatrous way is possible if his main motivation in the circumstance was that he just wanted to please her more than anything and that he chose to compromise the Lord's standard rather than disappointing her. However, another scenario is also possible. Adam could have been primarily thinking of pleasing himself and not Eve. Adam may have been curious to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but was afraid to try it because of God's warning. If this was the case, he may have allowed her to eat first when the serpent made his suggestion in order to "see what would happen" if she ate. Once she did not immediately die like God had warned, then Adam may have been emboldened to go ahead and taste it for himself. Either way, we can be certain his motive was sinful, because

the passage in I Timothy 2 declares that he was not deceived by the serpent as he ate.

Genesis 5

5:1-3 - "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth."

There is a very important theological connection in this passage. So far, the account of Adam's creation, testing, and fall into sin have been detailed for us. The question is to what extent has Adam's sin affected all who have descended from Adam.

To this day, many people (if not most) believe that while the human race has its issues and problems, that people are born into this world as basically good, and that they only turn bad if subjected to really bad family, cultural, or environmental influences. They believe that left to develop on their own, that children will tend to turn out good because by nature they are good. Is this the true spiritual condition of children born into this world?

Are children born spiritually "good" only to be influenced by an evil world around them? If this was the case, that all children are born essentially good, it would be difficult to account for the amount and degree of evil that is filling the world today.

We know that when Adam was created, that he was created good. When the Lord finished the last of His creation work, He observed it as a completed project and evaluated it. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31).

Since Adam was originally made in the image and likeness of God Who is good, Adam as God's image bearer was also good.

Adam's fall into sin also permanently affected him. Even Adam's spiritual capacity to bear the image of God was affected. He is still identified as an image bearer, but now that image in Adam has been marred by sin.

When we look at Adam after the fall we do not see a perfect reflection of God as we would have before his sin. However, the big issue is whether this consequence of the fall was limited to Adam and Eve, or whether it is somehow passed on to all of Adam's descendants, which would include every person that has ever lived. The key phrase that answers this question is, "he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image..."

While Adam was made in the pure unspoiled image of God, Seth is born like Adam's present condition. Seth is born like Adam is now, not as he was before the Fall. This is the spiritual condition of Seth from the moment he is born, not after he is later influenced by the world around him. Now, this does not minimize the importance of outside influence in the life of a child, but it does make clear that nature, rather than nurture is the beginning point of evil in human beings.

5:4-11 - "Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died. Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan. Then Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died."

People often read the account of the life spans described in this chapter and decide that it must be an exaggerated or possibly symbolic use of numbers. The reason they find it so hard to believe that this is describing real history is that it is so different from our own experience now.

I do believe that these numbers mentioned here are literal records of actual history as these men lived it. Trying to evaluate what happened then using our own experience as a starting point is a mistake due to the significant difference of the world at that time. The first thing to consider is that the Lord originally made the human body with the capacity to live forever, and that if Adam had not sinned he would have lived forever.

As strange as it sounds, death only entered the world through Adam's sin, and God's judgment in response to his sin. So, a much longer life span

than we are accustomed to is daunting compared to our present life span, but not compared to the original capacity of the human body.

The other factor we must consider is the great environmental difference in the world today compared to the world then. Later, when we read of the people following the great flood of Noah, we will see a diminishing average life span.

After the flood people still lived significantly longer than today, but immediately, the life spans shorten drastically from before the flood. All indications point to a tremendous change in the world environment that affected the life expectancy of the human race. One dramatic difference post-flood from pre-flood was in the atmosphere.

There was a protective covering over all the earth before the flood identified as the waters above the expanse. "God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so." (Genesis 1:7). Some have described this as a vapor canopy. This canopy fell as rain in the flood and was not restored after the flood.

It would have caused a greenhouse effect on the earth before the flood and at the same time protected people from greater ultraviolet radiation. We now know that the ultraviolet exposure is a significant factor in the aging process on the skin for instance. So, yes, people who lived before the flood lived for amazing lengths of time.

5:22-24 - "Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Enoch is a special figure in the record of the early generations to follow Adam. We saw back in Genesis 4:26 that people had begun to call on the name of the Lord.

Yet, Enoch had a relationship with the Lord that set him apart from everyone in his time. That relationship is described for us in simple terms. "Enoch walked with God..." That implies that his relationship extended beyond an occasional acknowledgment of the existence of God or even honoring Him periodically in worship. It implies that Enoch and God shared a daily relationship.

Wherever Enoch went and whatever he did, God was with Him and Enoch lived out his life in that awareness of God's presence.

A detail that speaks to my heart is that he walked with God "three hundred years..." I have been walking with God now for 28 years this month. My heart's desire and hope is that if I live another 28 years that I will still be walking with Him then.

I believe it is possible to enjoy a long-term relationship with God without growing tired, burning out, losing interest, falling away, or in any other way growing apart from Him. Enoch's relationship with God over the course of three hundred years gives me hope for my own relationship with Him.

What was Enoch doing during those three hundred years? We know from one New Testament passage that he was the first in a long line of prophets of God. He was the first to proclaim the coming judgment of the flood against the ungodly. "It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:14-15)

The other fascinating aspect of Enoch's story is the unique ending. Enoch is one of only two men throughout the entire Old Testament that leave this world without dying. Elijah the prophet is the other. Both men come to an end of their life on earth, and rather than dying as all other people do, the Lord took them from the earth while still alive.

These two examples are prophetic previews of the experience that will be shared by every true believer that is alive on the earth on the day that the Lord Jesus returns in His Second Coming. Those believers will not die, but be "caught up" to meet the Lord. "Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Questions from Genesis 4:

Question: **Genesis** 4:26b says that, "At that time men began to call on (proclaim) the name of the LORD." Does that imply that there was now a greater understanding or revelation of God? Certainly they were worshiping God before that as evidenced by Abel's sacrifice.

Answer: Good question about an interesting verse. It does imply something new or additional took place at that time. It is difficult to determine though exactly what was new. One possibility is that prior to this time all human beings knew about God and when they referred to God they used the more generic term "Elohim" which is the equivalent of our word God. For our culture the word God means the supreme being, but it does not convey much detail beyond that. The word translated "Lord" here is Yahweh. It is the same name that the Lord later gives to Moses as His covenant name to Israel. The only problem with the interpretation that no people called on the name of Yahweh before this verse is that earlier in chapter 4:1, Eve proclaimed when she gave birth to Cain that she had done so with the help of Yahweh. The birth of Cain was a number of years prior to 4:26. Instead of strictly interpreting the meaning of this verse as this being the first time that any person called on Yahweh, I think it is describing for us a time of significant advancement in spiritual understanding of the Lord.

The Lord's pattern throughout history is one in which He causes leaps forward in spiritual understanding at specific times. Prior to these leaps forward, certain spiritual principles may be known, but not widely understood. For instance, in the period we call the Reformation, it had already been known to a few that justification was by faith, but during that time, the Lord caused the entire population to grasp the concept of it in a way that only a few understood until then. What may have happened in 4:26 is a new grasp of the revelation of God as Yahweh by most everyone in the world then, and not just one or two like Eve.

Genesis 6

6:1-4 - "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

This passage remains the source of controversy among Bible scholars to this day. The issue revolves around the interpretation of the phrase "sons of God" and the word "Nephilim" and what the connection between two is. There are three interpretations of the meaning of the sons of God. They are: 1) the godly descendants of Seth, 2) the ancient rulers of that time, 3) fallen angels. In the early generations of church history the predominant interpretation was that this passage described the unholy mixing of fallen angels and human women and their resulting offspring. In modern times, the first two interpretations have become more popular as many scholars struggled to find some natural explanation that fit the passage. Having studied this text and its background extensively, I am convinced that the third interpretation is the correct one. Both of the first two interpretations see the sons of God as human beings. This fails to take into account how the phrase "sons of God" is used in the Old Testament, and also fails to take into account how Nephilim would result from the union of humans. Below is a brief description of both issues.

The key phrase sons of God is used in the New Testament to describe human beings, who, through the new birth are now considered to be part of God's family. However, in the Old Testament that phrase is never applied to human beings because Christ had not yet come and provided the way of salvation. Instead, the phrase is only used in describing angels. This passage in Job 38:4-7 describing the scene at creation when the angels of God observed as God created the earth uses this exact phrase referring to the angels. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

The word Nephilim is translated as giants. The union of the sons of God and the daughters of men produced giants that became "the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." A union of humans does not explain the birth of giants. The union of angels and humans does offer a reasonable explanation. Their offspring became what the world's ancient myths and legends sprang from. All of the ancient cultures have versions of "mythology" describing the union of "gods" with human women that produced the great heroes of the ancient world. Probably the most famous of these stories is Hercules. For those who are not familiar, Hercules was the offspring of the union of Zeus (the chief of the Greek gods) and a human woman. While the details of these "myths" were modified in each culture, the core story that gave rise to the myths was based in fact and actual ancient history.

6:5 - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This verse is the tragic culmination in the progression of the Fall of Man that began the day Adam ate from the tree God had forbidden in the garden. The sin of Adam was not just an unfortunate and exceptional bad choice. Mankind did not recover itself following Adam's sin and begin an evolution of humanity becoming more noble and virtuous over time. In the hundreds of years between the garden and the flood, humanity had digressed spiritually, not progressed. Man's created purpose was originally to bear God's image and likeness in the earth. Now, as God observes His crowning creation of humanity He sees only a greater and greater corruption of that original design. It was not just a growing pattern of bad behavior, but with good hearts buried down deep in the hearts of men. The hearts of all mankind are seen here as reaching the depths of perversion of God's design. The key words, "every" and "only" and "continually" emphasize the extent, degree and habitual nature of sin in the hearts of all men. What we are meant to understand from this is that this is not an exaggeration of the heart condition of the human race. It is not an exceptionally bad moment in history, but that today people are far better than they were then.

Jeremiah diagnoses the same common spiritual condition of the human heart. "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) The problem of the human heart is too deep and too extensive for anyone to fix or cure. No human efforts at changing for the better are sufficient to change this condition. The only cure for such a sick heart is a heart transplant. The old heart is beyond

hope. A new heart is the only hope. Since this heart is not physical, but spiritual, only God can perform this operation which we call salvation.

6:6-7 - "The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

As the Lord observes the progression of wickedness in mankind, He is affected by what He sees. Keeping in mind the awesome original purpose of God for man to be His image bearer and contrasting that with how perverse humanity had become will help us understand God's response to what He sees. The phrase describing the Lord's reaction to what He observes is "grieved in His heart." God is affected by this in His heart! We can easily fail to comprehend that God has a heart and that He has very strong feelings. Our ability to feel things in our hearts is derived from Him and our being created in His likeness. Have you ever experienced anything that was so evil, so wrong, that it wounded your heart and hurt worse than any physical pain could? What God experienced would be similar to us having a child who we loved with all of our heart. If we surrounded that child with good things, taught him with great parental concern the right principles for life, spent time with them and only ever treated them right, only to have that child grow up and spurn us, our teaching, and the good things we had provided; then what impact would that have on our hearts. This is not a capricious, petulant reaction of Lord wanting to cause the same pain to the humans that had hurt Him. This is an absolutely holy, righteous and loving God responding in the one way that was necessary in light of the how wicked humanity had become.

6:8-9 - "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God."

In the midst of this wicked generation, we are introduced to one lone shining exception. Noah is a righteous and blameless man in his time. Now, we know that Noah was not a perfect man, and as we will see later after the flood, when he has a serious personal failure. Yet, Noah here is identified by the Lord Himself as righteous and blameless. In his spiritual purity as well as his special ark building assignment from God, Noah serves as the next great Old Testament type of Christ. A type is a symbolic spiritual connection between a person, event or thing of the Old Testament and Christ or His work in the New Testament. The type pictures some key

element of the person or work of Christ and represents it as a foreshadow. The types point forward to the fulfillment of God's plan in Christ in some significant way.

Here Noah is a type of Christ. In order to fulfill the plan of salvation, Christ had to live His entire life on earth without once ever sinning. His righteousness is the qualification for His role as Savior. Noah, pointing forward to Christ becomes in the flood the "savior" of mankind. The only humans to survive the flood did so because of Noah. Those who were saved from the flood were only saved because of their relationship to Noah as part of His family. In the same way, only those in right relationship to God through Christ will be made part of God's family and eternally saved. As God's ordained way of salvation, Noah builds an ark. This points forward to Christ's declaration "...I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matthew 16:18). Only those who are in Christ's church will be saved from the judgment of God on the final day.