

Today, we start a special ten-week exploration of God's Word, the Bible. Each week we will look at a real, historical Biblical event, to learn what it teaches us about God's Son, Jesus Christ. He is God's great plan of salvation. Jesus is the beginning, center, and end of human history. As we hear and learn through these words, we'll better understand **our** lives and our place in the world in which we live.

So, let's begin at... the beginning. The very first verse in the Bible reads, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

The Bible says God brought the heavens and the earth into existence out of nothing using the power of His spoken word alone. For example, in Genesis 1:3 we read: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." Genesis chapter one goes on to tell us how God formed the sky, made the dry land appear, and filled the heavens with the sun, moon, and stars, then filled the earth with trees and vegetation, animals of all kinds, and, last but certainly not least, mankind.

'So,' you may be wondering, 'where is Jesus Christ in all of this?' The Apostle John has just the answer for that in the opening verses of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Jesus, the Word, is God. He is the eternal Son of God. John calls Jesus the Word because God uses His voice, His spoken Word, to bring everything into existence. So, Jesus truly **is** there at the very beginning, creating the heavens and the earth and everything in them side by side with His Father.

But take a look at our world today. What a mess! Not only are there natural disasters like floods and droughts, fires and earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes, but there's also crime and war, illnesses and accidents, and worst of all... death. Where did all these horrible things come from? Did God make creation that way? And what, if anything, is God doing about it? Well first, let's back up and take a look at how things were right **after** God made the heavens and the earth.

On the sixth day, after making everything, God stepped back to examine His handiwork: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The bad things we see all around us only began to happen when the first humans, Adam and Eve, made a tragic choice. We hear

about it in the third chapter of Genesis: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1).

At this point, the Bible does not specify who this serpent is. But other parts of God’s Word make it clear, especially the twelfth chapter of the last Book, Revelation: “That ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Who is the devil? God created him as a holy angel. More than that, he was an archangel, a ruler of angels—something like a four-star general. And just like Adam and Eve, he was holy when God created him. Sadly, this angel turned away from God and became the author of all the evil and suffering that fills the earth—even that which afflicts the animals and plants around us. The Bible does not describe **how** he fell into sin, but Satan persuaded a great number of other angels to join his unholy rebellion against their Creator.

Since his fall, Satan and his fallen angels have been enemies of God and His people. It was this devil who entered the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent hoping to lead our first human mother and father to join his rebellion against the Creator.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 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.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1b–5).

Here the devil is directly contradicting God’s word. God said, “You will surely die.” The serpent said, “You will **NOT** surely die.” To whom should Eve listen? To God who created her, or to the serpent, a creature over which God had given her dominion? The answer is really quite obvious—but that temptation was so appealing. She could gain a wisdom God had held back from her.

Moses, the prophet who later wrote down the words of Genesis, recorded the thoughts that passed through Eve’s mind as she looked at the forbidden fruit, “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, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (v. 6).

St. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:14, has an interesting thing to say about Adam's role in all of this: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."

Think carefully about that. Eve was deceived. She believed the serpent was telling her the truth. But Adam saw through the deception. He knew it was all a lie. He knew the tree would not make them wise and the day they ate of it they would surely die. Why in the world would Adam eat that fruit? Why didn't he step forward and put the serpent in its place? Why didn't he spring into action to protect Eve and all of us, his unborn children? No, he stood by and silently watched Eve grab that fruit. Then, even worse, he took a bite of the fruit too.

Can you relate to that? I can. Sometimes we are deceived into doing something we shouldn't do—even though God tells us not to. Other times we can clearly see what we should do, but we do the wrong thing anyway.

The effect of Adam and Eve's sin was immediate: "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (v. 7). Have you felt that searing guilt before? The deep burning shame and you wish you could somehow turn back the clock?

Our human nature was drastically changed by Adam and Eve's fall. We lost the image of God and now carry within us the sinful image of Satan. It is that sinful selfishness that gives rise to all the distrust, fear, hatred, crime, and war with our brothers and sisters in the human family. Even worse, we are powerless to turn toward God or to love Him. In fact, we are dead to God and hostile enemies toward Him.

Does that seem unfair—for you to be condemned as a sinner thousands of years before you were even born? Why should you suffer for what Adam and Eve did way back at the beginning? Because we are all interconnected in this human family. None of us can ever be truly independent from everyone else. Think about a car accident that can happen on any given day during rush hour in the Twin Cities. Hundreds, even thousands of drivers are delayed because of a single accident. Every sin you, or I, or any other sinner commits ripples outward and affects everyone else.

God's solution? He would have been just and right if He had decided to discard His creation. But God loved you and me and each descendant of Adam and Eve too much to throw it all away. As the song says, "This is My Father's World," and He stood up for it. He reclaimed it and was determined to fix it. So, God came walking through His garden in the cool of the day to seek and find His lost children: "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the

garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (v. 8).

The feeling of exposure and nakedness Adam and Eve had **first** felt was nothing compared to the **terror** that gripped them **now**. In vain, they tried to hide from Him: “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (v. 9). Adam answered, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (vv. 10–11)

Here was the opportune time for Adam to make his confession. Instead, he made an excuse and said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (v.12) Then God turned to Eve, “What is this that you have done?” And she followed Adam’s example and came up with her own excuse, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (v.13)

Then God turned to Satan, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (v. 15).

In that moment, despite Adam and Eve’s sin the Lord God announced His great plan to save humanity and restore His damaged creation. His eternal Son would join the human family, become one of Eve’s descendants, and as true God and true man, He would crush the serpent’s head.

Satan received a mortal blow when Jesus Christ hung from the cross. Jesus suffered horribly as He was punished for Adam and Eve’s sins and the sins of all humans, including you and me. He died and was buried. But He rose again on the third day. Since that day nearly two thousand years ago, Satan is writhing, thrashing about, in his death throes. He’s still dangerous, but He’s defeated and dying.

Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, and their idyllic life was gone. They would have to labor and toil to raise their food. The ground would no longer yield its strength to mankind, which we experience when our labor is difficult, frustrating, and exhausting. At the same time, we age. Our bodies grow frail, get sick, wear out, and eventually, we die. Bad things happen in this world, but it won’t be that way forever.

God’s mighty Son, Jesus Christ, is coming back on the Last Day to throw Satan and all his angels into hell forever —along with every human who has rejected God’s plan of salvation. Jesus Christ will restore His broken creation and make all things new again. And He will transform us completely—body, mind, heart, and soul, so we will be **good**, just, loving, holy, and pure. We will

be responsible, loving and accepting of every other believer—cherishing the gifts and talents God has given to everyone without malice, envy, or jealousy of any kind. And best of all, we will bask forever in the glory of God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ, Who is the beginning, center, and the end of all human history. Amen.