

The Story of Redemption



God Reaching Out to Restore **COMMUNITY**
through the cross of Jesus Christ



Is This the World God Intended?
Part 1: Creation

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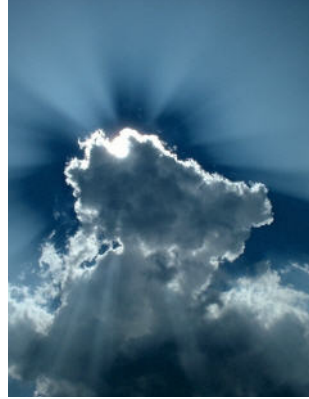
Is This the World God Intended?

Part 1: Creation

When we are seeking God, there are many questions that come to mind. Some of these questions include:

- Who is God, and what is he like?
- Why do we exist?
- If there is a God, why does my life and the world seem so messed up?
- Does God have a plan for my life?

In the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, these questions are addressed. The first three chapters tell the story of God and his creation.



1. In the Beginning.

The Bible begins with the following words:

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness be called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day (Gen. 1:1-5).

Many people use ideas like evolution or the Big Bang Theory to explain how we came to be on this earth. But do these ideas really explain where this world came from? The answer would appear to be no. Evolution begins with an earth, a sea, and a ready-made soup of amino acids, the necessary building blocks for life. The Big Bang Theory begins with space and a super-heated ball of mass and energy. Both evolution and the Big Bang Theory assume creation. They do not tell how the universe—the earth, the sea, space, etc.—originally came into existence.

Does the Big Bang Theory or evolution explain the ultimate origin of the universe?

Ultimately, we have to come to one of two conclusions. The first option is to say that the universe has always existed. But if the universe had always been in existence, wouldn't everything eventually run out of energy? The sun and the stars cannot last forever. Surely they would burn out, and then all life would die. Obviously, that has not happened. The other option is that the universe was created. If this is true, then there must be a creator. The Bible says this creator was God, who created the universe and all that is in it.

You may still have questions about the origins of the universe, but let's examine the biblical account and see if it offers a satisfactory explanation for life today.

According to the Genesis account, God created:

- The land and the seas (Gen. 1:9-10).
- The plants and the trees (Gen. 1:11).
- The sun and the moon (Gen. 1:14-18).
- The creatures of the sea and the birds (Gen. 1:20-21).
- The animals (Gen. 1:24-25).

God created all of this over the course of six days, and each time he created something, "God saw that it was good."



When God created the world, "it was good."

2. God Created Humanity.

On the sixth day, God would create something that he would say was "very good." That something was humanity:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

The first male and female of course were named Adam and Eve.

Why did God create humans? He created them because God is a loving God, and he wanted a people to love. God had no obligation to create, but he did so freely out of his good nature. In addition, when he created Adam and Eve, he gave them many great gifts:

- *God made them in his image (Gen. 1:28).* This means that God originally created humanity to be like him—holy, good, and loving. As such, every human being is valuable to God and is worthy of honor and respect.
- *God gave them dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28-30).* This dominion also included all of the plants and animals that the earth contained.
- *God put them in the Garden of Eden.* In the Garden, God provided them with all of their needs.
- *They lived in close community with God and each other (Gen. 3:8).* Because of their innocence, there was nothing that interfered with their relationship with God or each other (symbolized by their nakedness). God walked and talked with them in the Garden, and they together shared in his presence. Thus, there was love, peace, and joy in this beautiful community.

This was God's original intention for us, and this was how it was in the beginning.

How does the world today compare to what is pictured in the Garden of Eden?

3. Their Relationship With God and Each Other Was Destroyed.

God gave Adam and Eve all of these wonderful gifts, and he only had one prohibition.

Adam and Eve sinned by failing to trust God.

¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Was this command really so difficult to keep, considering that Adam and Eve had everything they needed? Surely not, and yet they would sin (fail to do God’s will) and disobey this simple command. In this disobedience they would be helped by Satan, who had taken the form of a serpent:

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“⁴ You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “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” (Gen. 3:1-5).

Eve believed the serpent’s lies, and she ate the fruit. Then she gave the fruit to Adam, who also ate of it. And on that day they did die, just as God promised. They died spiritually, because their sin and disobedience severed their pure and innocent relationship to God. They realized that they were naked, and they were ashamed, symbolic of the shame that sin brings upon us all. Now when God walked in the garden, rather than being filled with joy when they saw him, they were afraid and tried to hide (Gen. 3:8-10).



When God asked Adam if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he said, “The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (3:12). Adam now blamed Eve--the woman he had previously called “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.” Sin had destroyed their relationship with both God and each other. Community was lost that day in the Garden.

Community was lost that day in the Garden of Eden.

Have you ever tried to run from God? How did it feel?

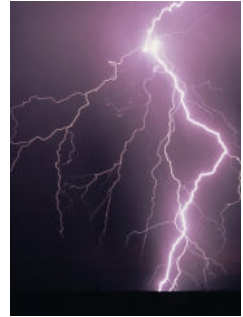
How does sin affect our relationships today?

4. There Was Punishment for Sin.

While God is a loving God, he is also holy and just. Because he is holy, he cannot tolerate sin. Because he is just, he must hand out punishment for sin. He does not enjoy this task, any more than a parent enjoys punishing a disobedient child. And yet, he cannot allow rebellion to go unchecked.

After listening to Adam blame Eve for his sin, and Eve blame the serpent for her sin, God dealt out the following punishments.

- *The serpent would crawl on his belly (Gen. 3:14-15).* There would also be hostility between him and the woman, symbolic of the struggle between humans and Satan.
- *The woman would have greater pains in childbearing (Gen. 3:16).* In addition, her desire would be for her husband, and he would now rule over her.
- *The man would have to work much harder to get food out of the ground (Gen. 3:17-19).* The ground itself was cursed, and it would no longer easily produce food. Instead, the ground would be filled with thorns and thistles.
- *Adam and Eve could no longer stay in the Garden (Gen. 3:22-24).* God “drove the man out,” and he placed cherubim (angels) and a flaming sword on the east side of the Garden to guard the entrance.



The world was changed dramatically by sin.

Understanding the consequences of sin can help us answer some of life’s toughest questions, including:

God never intended a world with cancer, violence, and death.

Why is there death and disease in the world?
Why do storms and natural disasters sometimes take people’s lives?
Why do we see divorce, dishonesty, and murder in the world?

Some of these things happen because the world was dramatically changed when sin entered into the world. The curse of the ground was merely symbolic of the larger consequences of sin. At that time, chaotic forces were unleashed into the world, including death, cancer, earthquakes and tornadoes.

Some of these things happen because God has given us, like Adam and Eve, the freedom to obey or disobey him. Freewill cannot exist without the possibility that it may be abused. Many today use their freedom to hurt other people.

This is the world in which we find ourselves—but this is not the world that God originally intended. God never intended a world with cancer, violence, or death. These are the enemies of God, and one day they will no longer exist.

How does understanding God’s original intent for creation help us in wanting to follow God?

5. God Still Cared for His Creation.

Despite Adam and Eve's sin, God never stopped loving and caring for them. Two things point towards his continuing love and care. First, although God drove them out of the Garden, he "made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). By clothing them, God covered up the shame that had resulted from their sin and nakedness. The clothing that he gave them also helped protect them from the weather. Thus, God did not abandon Adam and Eve. Instead, he continued to provide for them.

Second, God had a plan to restore his relationship with humanity. God said that one of the woman's offspring would "crush" the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Christians view this prophecy as being fulfilled in many ways through Jesus Christ, who would deal Satan a crushing blow by destroying the power of sin through his death on the cross.

What is the story of redemption? *The story* is the story of how God has worked throughout history to accomplish his plan of redemption. *Redemption* is blessing or freedom that has been bought with a price. The price that was required to redeem us and bring us back into community was the death of Jesus, the Son of God.



God sent his Son to purchase our redemption and restore community with him and the rest of humanity.

This redemption makes possible many blessings, including:

- *Forgiveness of sins.*
- *Elimination of the tendency and desire to sin.*
- *Elimination of death and disease.*
- *Elimination of pain and suffering.*
- *Restoration of the world to the peace, beauty, and harmony of the Garden of Eden.*
- *Restoration of close community with God and one another through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.*

Do these blessings sound attractive to you? Do you want to live in this kind of world and be this kind of person? Do you want to grow closer to God and form lifelong, authentic relationships with other people? Then continue on in this study as we learn more about God's wonderful plan of redemption.

God has reached out to us to heal the brokenness of life. Through his Son, he can restore the community which we so long for in our lives.

In the next part of the story, we will learn more about the type of God that God is as the *Story of Redemption* unfolds.

QUESTIONS:

Fill in the blank.

1. When God created the heavens and the earth, he saw that it was “_____.”
2. When God created humanity, he said that it was “_____.”
3. God created us because he is a _____ God.
4. After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they realized that they were naked and they felt _____.
5. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin because he is a _____ and _____ God.
6. The offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head is _____.
7. God showed that he still cared for Adam and Eve even after he drove them out of the Garden by making _____ for them.

Multiple Choice.

8. _____ Which of the following explains where the universe ultimately came from:
a. God b. Evolution c. the Big Bang Theory
9. _____ God gave all of the following wonderful gifts to humanity *except* _____.
a. Dominion over all of the earth, and the plants and animals contained therein.
b. The tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
c. A close relationship with God, with him walking and talking with them.

True/False.

10. _____ Every human being is valuable and worthy of honor and respect because he or she is created in the image of God.
11. _____ The serpent scared Eve and forced her to eat of the forbidden fruit.
12. _____ God originally created the world with cancer, war, and death in mind.
13. _____ Death and disease are some of the consequences of sin.
14. _____ Redemption is blessing or freedom bought at a price.

For questions and/or to receive part 2 in the *Story of Redemption*, contact:



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