

“The Fall” (Genesis: In The Beginning – Pt. 2)
(Genesis 3:1-8)

- **The Greatest Story**

- This fall we’re looking at the amazing book of **Genesis**. If you want to understand your Bible, if you want to understand the Gospel, if you want to understand *your life*, this is *required reading*! Last week was “The Creation,” this week it’s “**The Fall**,” get ready for an epic journey! *Let’s pray.*
- Does anyone know what this is? (**Pic 1**) It’s called the BibleViz project, made in 2007—it’s a visual representation of all the cross-references in the Bible. Wherever a verse is linked to another verse by a word, character, or theme, this image maps it: nearly *64,000* connections in 1,189 chapters. New technology has found even more, a staggering *340,000* connections across Scripture! (As a side-note: look at the similarities in our **Sermon Graphic**—this wasn’t planned *at all*, but we don’t believe in coincidences—as always, great job, Barry!)
- A book today with this level of intricacy would be called a *literary masterpiece*, a work of genius! But consider this: The Bible was composed over 1,600 years, with over 40 human authors, written in 3 languages, on 3 continents, all from a tiny nation that was constantly oppressed by other empires. This isn’t just a work of genius, *it’s supernatural!* When you begin to see the Bible as one big Story pointing to Jesus, with all these connections, you’re going to see it come alive! In the first 3 chapters, you find the major themes that are traced throughout Genesis, and you get all the threads of the Gospel that continue through the whole Bible. One thing we’ll repeat throughout this series is: **This story is our story**. Another is: **It’s all connected**.
- If you read closely, you’ll see we have not one, but *two* Creation stories. Just like the Gospels give 4 unique but complementary accounts of Jesus, we get 2 unique Creation stories. Gen. 1 is the “Google Earth” view: it shows who God is and how He brought *chaos* into *order*. Genesis 2-3 is a “boots on the ground” perspective that focuses more on humanity. It also shows how we ended up with the world as we know it—how we got from *order* to *chaos*, how *such a good creation* from *such a good God* became *such a broken place*. Of course, that sets the stage for God to do *even greater things*, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves: open up to Ch. 2.
- We’re going to break down the core the elements of this story: the *setting*, the *characters*, and the *plot*. This message is going to be a little different than we’re used to: I want us to

open up our Bibles and soak up all Gen. 2-3 have to offer, so we're covering a *lot*, you're going to have to stay on your toes! But as we go, just remember: *this story is our story*. Keep asking, *what does this say about God and about me?* You'll find things in this story you've never seen before.

- **The Setting: A Garden of Delight**

- Are you ready? First, *the Setting*: **"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."** (Gen. 2:4) The introduction tells us, *this is going to be a story about heaven and earth*. Then it says: **"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed."** (We'll get to him soon) **"The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."** (Gen. 2:8-9)
- In Hebrew, Eden means *delight* or *pleasure*. Get this: God plants the first humans in *the Garden of Delight!* This is a place where God is going to walk face-to-face with His people, a place where Heaven and Earth overlap, nothing in between. The next verses go out of their way to describe the geography, these rivers that flow into lands that would become the cradles of civilization. It's all painting a picture of *extravagant abundance*, all coming from God's *generosity*. The Bible says *this is what God meant for us*—it sounds almost too good to be true.
- Now, check out these threads: The Bible begins with a *Garden*, a *Tree of Life* and a *River of Life*—and in Revelation, it *ends* with *the same things!* Heaven and earth reunited. In fact, the word for "Paradise" in the N.T. comes from a word for "Garden"! In the O.T., the *Tabernacle* and *Temple* are designed to *remind the people of Eden!* This whole story is about a God who wants to *be with His people* and wants to *bless us*. That's the setting, now we get to *the characters*.

- **The Characters: A Creator, A Family, and An Enemy**

- Once again, God is the main character. In Gen. 1, we see the transcendent, cosmic perspective of God, *"In the Beginning."* The uncreated Creator who makes everything just by His Word. In Gen. 2, we see from the ground-level, God stoops down, "gets His hands dirty." **"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."** (Gen. 2:7) "Adam" the word for *human*, is made from "adama" the word for dirt. It's a very intimate

picture of creation: God forms the man out of the wet, muddy soil, and breathes life into his nostrils. You can't mold and breath into something *without getting real close*. The Great-I-Am *comes close*. Some have called it *God's kiss of life*. Picture the first human, as his first sensation, awakening to the breath of God on His face, staring into the eyes of his Maker. When the rest of the Bible talks about *seeking* and *longing for the Face of God*—it's recalling this *fundamental core human memory* of waking up to our Maker.

- But the theme of intimacy continues with a twist: **"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"** (Gen 2:18) It's the *first time* in the whole story something is *not* good: God, *the Trinity*, made this Human in His image, so Adam is not made for isolation, but for *connection*. "Suitable helper" doesn't begin to capture the power of the Hebrew phrase: *Ezer Kenegdo* doesn't imply *supportive subordination*; every other time this word is used in the Bible, *it describes God's relationship to us!* God is giving Adam a *counterpart*, a *co-ruler*, a *life-saver*—humans are to be kings and queens of Eden. Eve comes from Adam's rib—not below him, not above, but side-by-side: they're inseparably linked, "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh"—and the first time Adam beholds her *he breaks into poetry!* **We were made for communion with God and one another, in a Garden of Delight.**
- So far so good! But which character are we forgetting? **"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made..."** (Gen. 3:1) The word "serpent," *nachash*, has triple meaning: as a noun it means *snake*, as a verb it means *to cast spells or whisper enchantments*, as an adjective it means *shining, luminescent*. That paints a pretty sinister picture of this character! Later in the O.T., it describes God's heavenly throne room with spiritual beings called "*Seraphim*"—they're described as "burning ones," they're also connected with *serpents*. It's wild, but the O.T. sees these throne room guardians as *luminous, multi-winged, serpentine entities*. So, *what, we might ask, is this creature doing, leaving his post in the throne room, to slither into God's garden paradise?* I'm sure we can connect *all the dots* from where we're standing—but Eve, where she was standing, unfortunately, did not.
- **The Plot: A Calling and A Rebellion**
 - Now we're ready for *the plot*, where the whole Bible pivots and we end up with this fallen world we know too well. So far, we've seen that humankind was made for Garden Paradise, for rich, heavenly communion, and a calling to rule with God in Creation. God gave one explicit command: **"And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to**

eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Gen. 2:16-17) The

Hebrew makes an exceedingly emphatic statement: “*you may surely eat*” and “*you will surely die*”—literally *eat, eat!* and *die, die!* It might sound funny to be *commanded* to eat, but if you’ve ever gone to Thanksgiving at mom’s or grandma’s, you know exactly what this is: *eat, eat!* What’s included in Genesis? *All the trees of the Garden—including the Tree of Life! “Feast your heart out—it’s not a suggestion, it’s a command!—and receive a daily dose of Eternal Life from my own Goodness!”* We don’t have to *earn* this Life, God just gives it, all grace, all the time! *This is what you were made for!* But it comes with a test: there’s one tree you must not eat, the knowledge of Good and Bad—you’re not ready, and if you grab it on your terms, *you will die. Enjoy the feast, but follow the command!*

- Now, the humans were *Arumim*, naked, and unashamed—but the Serpent was *Arum*, cunning, shrewd. For reasons we don’t understand until later in Scripture, he’s invading Paradise Garden to undermine God’s plan—and God in His sovereignty allows this test, because throughout the Bible He allows people to be tested to forge them into readiness for His divine call. We can presume that at the right time, God wanted Adam and Eve to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of this tree, exercising sound judgment in their rule—but to take the shortcut and grasp it on their own, apart from God, in rebellion—would be to cut themselves off from Life. It was essential that they live their lives in submission to the Maker, by His grace, in His will—that’s real freedom.
- But the Serpent *hisses* a cunning question that gets repeated through history: ***“Did God really say...?”*** and then a cunning lie, ***“You will not die...your eyes will be opened and you will become like God...”*** (Gen. 3:1-4) God provides this *lavish abundance, the entire Garden of Paradise, but the Serpent plants seeds of doubt and pride that cause humans to question God’s goodness and their own worth.* Eve accepts the lie, Adam just stands there, and they both do the thing God said would *absolutely bring death.* Instantly, everything changes: the first response to the first sin was that humans *felt shame, and they covered themselves, and they hid.*
- God comes and asks, ***“Where are you?”*** (Gen. 3:9) He knows, but He’s giving them the opportunity to self-disclose, and maybe even *repent*—instead, they *blame-shift.* Adam knew Eve as his *one-flesh life-saver.* Now in shame of exposure and fear of death, he tries to condemn her! *She made me do it!* Then she says, *the snake made me do it!* And do you know who says nothing once God comes? *The snake, he knows exactly what he*

did. So, God lays out the consequences in reverse order: first, the snake is cursed to crawl in the dirt (no more divine Throne Room) and he'll be at war with the woman's offspring. The woman will now experience the gift of bringing life into the world as a trial of suffering, and instead of standing side-by-side she'll be ruled over (the sad history of mankind). The man will no longer enjoy the Garden of Delight, instead he'll tend the cursed ground of toil, surviving by sweat and pain. They have to leave the Garden. It's justice, but also mercy. God won't have them living forever in this fallen state of fear and shame before God—that would turn paradise into hell on earth. Instead, cast outside, they will eventually return to the dirt after years of struggle.

- *Even in the judgement*, there's mercy, to prevent the eternal spread of evil. *Even in casting them out*, there's provision, where God covers their shame and vulnerability with clothing. *Even in the fall*, there's promise: God says to the Serpent, **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."** (Gen. 3:15) The Serpent Crusher *will come to save*, you can trace that *all the way to Jesus*.

- **To Be Continued...**

- This is the story of Genesis, this is the story of the Bible, and this story is our story. Our world is not as it should be—deep in our hearts we know, we groan with all creation for something to be different—because we were *made for Eden*, but we're living outside. We're all faced with the choice between Life and Death—to *rely on God's grace*, or to *reach for self-rule* on our own. We've all chosen poorly, we've all reached for that tree thinking it would give us life, only to find death. We all need the Serpent Crusher to rescue us, to be the true Adam we couldn't be. And in the fullness of time Jesus did come, to live the life we couldn't live and die the death we should have died. He hung on a tree, became a curse, so that we could be blessed, so He could bring us back to God's Paradise. If you put your faith in Him, this story *is* your story!
- There's much more to come, but today, will you contemplate your place in God's Story? **Do you need to turn and face your Maker? Do you need to repent? Do you need to silence the Deceiver? Do you need to give thanks for God's abundant grace? Do you need to remember who you really are and who God really is?** Let God's Word speak and follow it.