

# **The Book of Genesis** **– A Summary**

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## Introductory Remarks for the Study of Genesis

A. Genesis, like all of Scripture, is the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

2 Tim. 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

John 10:35 “...and the scripture cannot be broken.”

B. Genesis is not treated in Scripture as a separate book by itself. It is simply treated as a part of the law of Moses (the Pentateuch).

Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-47; Acts 15:21

C. Genesis, like all of Scripture, has the purpose of making us wise unto salvation.

2 Tim. 3:15 “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

## The Outline of Genesis

**Introduction:** The account of creation 1:1-2:3

**Theme:** The beginning history of God’s saving work for mankind

**Parts:**

A. The beginning history of God’s saving work among all of mankind

1. The history of heaven and earth: 2:4 - 4:26
2. The history of Adam: 5:1 - 6:8
3. The history of Noah: 6:9 - 9:29
4. The history of the sons of Noah: 10:1 - 11:9
5. The history of Shem: 11:10 - 11:26

B. The beginning history of God’s saving work among the patriarchs

1. The history of Terah: 11:27 - 25:11
2. The history of Ishmael: 25:12 - 18
3. The history of Isaac: 25:19 - 35:29
4. The history of Esau: 36:1 - 37:1
5. The history of Jacob: 37:2 - 50:26

The word used in Hebrew is toledoth. This word is used ten times in a special way by Moses in Genesis as divisions of the material which he is presenting. Nine of these toledoth are named after a person. In each of these cases the toledoth does not tell us of the birth or origin of the person after whom it is named. It tells us of what happened to him, what developed from him, and always with reference to God’s plan of salvation. Thus toledoth - history. The other history, the very first one, is that of heaven and earth.

A question may arise. If these are really Moses’ own divisions of his material, why do his divisions not begin and end with the chapters of the book? Here we must remember that our chapter and verse divisions were not an original inspired part of the Scriptures. The chapter divisions were not added to the Bible until the 13th century after Christ by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. Our verse divisions were made

in the 16th century by Roger Stevens.

### **Additional Explanation of the outline of Genesis**

A. The first set of five histories covers 2:4 - 11:26

Here we are told how God's saving activity was directed upon the human race as a whole.

1. The whole human race as it existed, first of all, in the descendants of Adam.
2. The whole human race as it existed, after the flood, in the descendants of Noah's three sons.

B. The second set of five histories cover 11:27-50:26

These are the histories of Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob. These histories tell us of God's saving activity in training the three patriarchs of his special Old Testament people.

### **A Brief Unfolding of the parts of the outline of Genesis**

#### **The History of Heaven and Earth: 2:4-4:26**

This covers the paradise account of chapter 2, the account of the fall and of the first promise of the Savior in chapter 3, and the account of Cain and Abel and of the Cainites and Sethites in chapter 4.

The extraordinary development experienced by heaven and earth in this history is this that man, the very crown of God's creation, was drawn into sin. Thereby man brought death and eternal damnation upon the whole human race. As a result also the whole creature world, inseparably bound up with man, was placed by God under the curse of death and corruption (Rom. 8:19-22).

It was to this sad development of heaven and earth that God responded as the Lord (Jehovah), i.e., as the God of free and faithful saving love. He gave mankind the first promise of the Savior (Gen. 3:15). The paradise account prepares us for the account of man's fall and of God's faithful saving grace. Chapter 4 is the initial fulfillment of God's promise to establish enmity between Satan's seed and the woman's seed. Unbelieving Cain killed his believing brother Abel. Abel was the first martyr, dying because of his faith. Cf. Matthew 23:33-35; 1 John 3:10-13. The Cainites forsook God and His gospel grace and lived for this world. Seth was born to take the place of Abel. Through his descendants the Lord established the public preaching of His saving grace (Gen. 4:25-26).

#### **The History of Adam: 5:1-6:8**

This history gives us the ancestors of the Savior from Adam through Seth to Noah. All the individuals mentioned are clearly listed as such ancestors of Christ in Luke 3:36-38. This is history (Heb. 11:5; Jude 14.15).

At the same time this history tells us how gradually even the Sethites married unbelieving wives, despised the gospel, and fell away from the Lord. They joined the descendants of Cain in a life of self-glorification, violence, and worldliness. God now announced impending judgment. Noah alone found grace to remain in faith.

#### **The History of Noah: 6:9-9:29**

This history tells us how the Lord preserved the Sethite Noah and his family of eight souls in the ark, while He carried out a judgment of universal destruction through the flood waters.

This judgment was indeed a show of His holy wrath upon the sin and hardened unbelief of the world of that day. At the same time this judgment of the flood was a deliverance for God's believing children, the eight souls in the ark. This deliverance was in the interest of the fulfillment of the promise of a Savior for mankind. After the flood the Lord through Noah prophesied that the true knowledge of God as the God of free and

faithful grace, and also the knowledge of God's plan of salvation would be preserved through Shem.

### The History of the Sons of Noah: 10:1-11:9

This history tells us how the descendants of the sons of Noah were spread out over the earth in different peoples, nations, and languages. This table of nations emphasizes the unity of the human race. This message of human unity was vital for Israel, and is vital for us. Not all nations are treated with equal fullness. Those with whom Israel, God's chosen people, had many contacts are spoken of with greater detail.

The human race as it descended from the sons of Noah again pushed the gospel promise aside. They again sought to work out their own welfare for time and eternity instead of clinging to God's promise of salvation in a common humble faith (the account of the Tower of Babel). They again tried to make a name for themselves instead of glorifying the name of the Lord as the God of free and faithful saving grace.

### The History of Shem: 10:10-11:26

This short history of only 16 verses gives us the forefathers of the Savior from Shem down to Terah, the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This again is history. We again find these same names in the genealogy of the third chapter of Luke (34b-36). This is a genealogy. We cannot establish with certainty that all the links in the genealogy are listed, since other genealogies in the Bible do not list every member, though the direct line is carried through. In the genealogy of Matthew 1:8 several kings of the royal line of David are not mentioned, though known from the book of Kings. Note that in Luke 3:36 the name of Cainan, not found in Genesis 11, is included. Thus we cannot use the genealogy with certainty to establish a chronology.

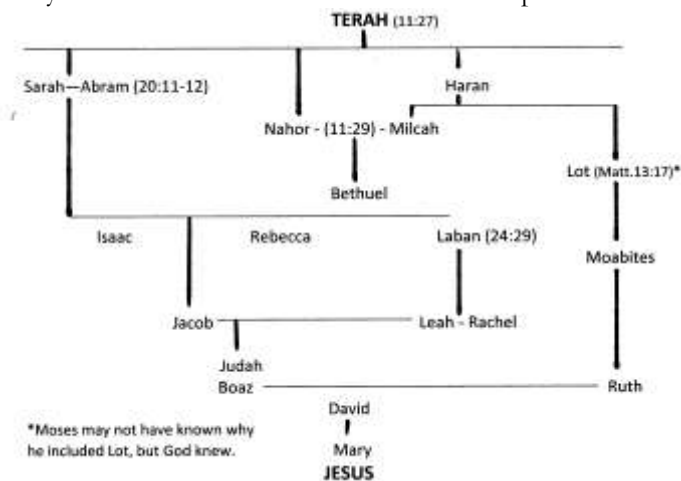
### The History of Terah: 11:27-25:11

This long history of almost 14 chapters tells of the new program of God's free and faithful grace for man's salvation. After the human race had as a whole twice forsaken the gospel, the Lord chose Abram of the family of Terah to make him the father of his special Old Testament people. To this people He meant to

reveal Himself in His free and faithful saving grace until the promised Savior would finally come forth from its midst.

This history is, however, called the history of Terah because God's special people descended from all the members of Terah's family mentioned in 11:27-32:

God carefully trained Abram (Abraham) to trust wholly in the great promises (7) given to him (12:1-3). These promises all found their purpose and meaning in the final assurance that through Abram all the families of the earth would be blessed (Savior). Cf. Gal. 3:8; John 8:56. God finally gave Abraham the son of



promise in Isaac, and Isaac was clearly set forth as Abraham's heir.

### The History of Ishmael: 25:12-18

Since Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, formed a side line, this history is very short. Six verses are enough to show that the one promise given to this son of Abraham, that 12 princes should descend from him, also went into fulfillment. How comforting that none of God's promises ever fail. The Ishmaelites play a part in the history of God's people.

### The History of Isaac 25:19-35 29

Isaac is not the strong, energetic leader, the man of action, that Abraham was. Isaac is a quiet, retired, passive nature. This history tells us how in the second patriarch of God's special Old Testament people faith

showed itself especially in patient, triumphant submission under trials. When that faith was in the foreground, he fulfilled his position as a patriarch and glorified God. When his faith became weak, he showed weaknesses in keeping with his nature.

Isaac had two sons. Even before their birth the Lord made it known that the older, Esau, would serve the younger, Jacob. For Jacob as the chosen one compare Romans 9:10-13 and Malachi 1:2-5 with Genesis 25:23.

Jacob, the son of Isaac who was chosen by God to carry on the line of the Savior, was inclined to trust in his own cunning. He tried to help God along in fulfilling His promises with sinful schemes of deceit. God carefully trained him in faith. He let him see that his trust in his own cunning and deceit only brought trouble upon him. At the same time God let Jacob experience His undeserved grace and protection. In this way the Lord finally taught Jacob to cast himself wholly upon God's saving grace in trouble (32:10,26). When Jacob had learned this, God gave him a new name: Israel - one who in humble faith had power with God and man.

### **The History of Esau 36:1-37:1**

This short history tells us how Esau, the Son of Isaac, though again forming a side line, also became a nation, the Edomites, as God had foretold before his birth. It involves a double development. First of all there is the development of Esau's family which settled down in Mt. Seir. Then there is the development of the people of the Edomites, made up of the descendants of Esau and the descendants of Seir, the Horite. Thus the term "toledoth of Esau" occurs twice in the chapter, in the first verse and in the ninth verse as each of these developments is carried out. The books of Deuteronomy, Obadiah, and Malachi confirm this development as historically true.

### **The History of Jacob 37:2-50:26**

This final history of Genesis shows how the patriarch Jacob through his twelve sons and one daughter became a family of seventy souls, who together with their households, were brought to Egypt.

God brought this about in His free and faithful saving grace by turning evil (Joseph's sale into slavery by his own brothers) into something good. In Egypt the Lord intended to have the family of Israel (Jacob) become the chosen people of God, which the next part of the Pentateuch, Exodus, sets before us as the object of God's saving activity during the entire time of the Old Testament, until the divine Savior of mankind was finally born in its midst.

In the prophetic blessings upon his sons (chapter 49) Jacob under the Holy Spirit's guidance designates Judah to be the bearer of the Messianic promise (verse 10). In their burial arrangements both Jacob and Joseph expressed their firm faith in God's promises that Canaan shall be the land in which the chosen people will perform their mission according to God's plan of salvation (chapter 50).

### **Introduction 1:1 - 2:3**

This portion of Genesis, which precedes the ten histories which we have unfolded, serves as an introduction to the beginning history of God's saving work for mankind.

It is the account of creation, and everything that God tells us in this account is, of course, true. Yet God does not tell us everything that our curiosity might want to know about creation. Also in the creation account God's revelation is historically true and factual, but not exhaustive. In this account God emphasizes certain things about creation which help to give us the necessary background for understanding the beginning history of God's saving work for mankind. What God has told us in the creation account as such an introduction can be summed up in this way:

In the beginning the eternal, almighty, and all-wise God made all things out of nothing and in six days unfolded everything with perfection for the benefit of man, whom He created in His own image to be the special object of His love. With man whom He had created in a perfect bond of trust and love God shared

His own sabbath rest of joy and satisfaction over all of His works. Man at creation enjoyed blessed fellowship with his divine Creator and rejoiced in God's love and in all of His works.

Against this background God would have us see His saving work in which He has been active for mankind ever since man fell into sin and thereby spurned God's love.

## **An Unfolding of Some of the Emphases of the Creation Account**

### **Its Picture of God**

The creation account begins with an abnormal Hebrew sentence. Not the verb but the phrase "in the beginning" begins the account. Emphasis is on this absolute beginning. God alone was there at this beginning and before this beginning. God alone is eternal.

In this absolute beginning God brought heaven and earth into existence. The Hebrew words translated "the heaven and the earth" are used throughout the Old Testament for what we would express by the one word "universe." Though two words are here joined together, the phrase really does not refer to two separate things, but one thing, the whole universe, everything besides God.

God made everything out of nothing, simply by an exercise of His will. That is important. Everything else owes its existence to an exercise of God's will. It has a right to existence only as it remains in harmony with God's will. He created all things for His pleasure and glory.

The sun, moon, and stars function without interruption according to God's will. They are, so to speak, programmed directly by God's will. God has also programmed the animals to function according to the instincts with which He has endowed them and which He upholds. God, however, made man with freedom, as we will see in going on in our consideration of the creation account. But it is worthy of noting that also man came into existence by the exercise of God's will and is therefore bound to the will of his creator.

This is a truth that is very important as background for the understanding of man's sin and God's salvation from sin. Sin is opposition to the holy will of God, who alone is eternal, the creator of all things. Sin is rebellion against God, an attempt to take the place of the eternal God, to pit man's own will against God's will. Since God cannot be dethroned and will not be dethroned, sin can only mean death as we already hear in Genesis 2:17. It means spiritual separation from God, who will remain in control of His creation. It means separation of body and soul, a return of the body to the dust from which it was taken, and a return of the soul to God who gave it. Sin means eternal death, eternal separation from God, if sin is not removed.

Sinful man does not like to face these truths of his responsibility and accountability to the will of God, and what the wages of sin as rebellion against God must of necessity be.

That is why sinful man has always tried to picture matter, from which also man has come, as something that is eternal, as something that has always been there. Thereby he tries to dull his awareness of his obligation to God's will. Already the ancient Babylonians did this in their creation account. That is what modern man still tries to do with the theory of evolution, which he substitutes for the Genesis creation account. Or he tries to interpret the creation account, in terms of evolution, suggesting that it may have been God's mode of carrying out His work of creation. Evolution, however, always thinks of matter and energy as being eternal, as having always been there in some form. It never has anything to say about how matter in its very first form came into existence. Evolutionists who still talk of a God and a creator still think of God and matter as both having been eternal. They even try to change the translation of the first three verses of Genesis in such a way that it seems to speak of matter as having been there from the very beginning. We find this in some Bible translations. But other clear statements of Scripture like Hebrews 11:3 would still testify against this translation. Evolution does not fit as a background for man's sin and the beginning history of God's saving grace.

The second verse of the creation account is again an unusual Hebrew sentence, again one which does not



begin with the verb. Our attention is immediately directed upon the earth, one part of the universe. All the rest of the creation account has to do with the earth. The earth is the dwelling place of man. God's saving work was for mankind. Here already we have a hint that man was created as the special object of God's love; everything else was made for the benefit of man.

Notice the four things that characterize the earth as it first came forth from the initial exercise of God's will: the earth was without form; it was void, without any form of life; it was shrouded in darkness; it was at least on the surface a vast abyss of water. During the rest of the six days of creation God was active in changing and modifying these four features to make the world a fitting dwelling place for man. Even the account of the creation of the heavenly bodies stands in close relation to the earth, setting forth the functions of these bodies for the earth.

In the course of the account of the six creation days we are made aware of further important attributes of our God. He is a personal God, not just an impersonal force. He has thoughts, He has plans, and purposes. He is almighty and all-knowing. He has a heart filled with love toward man, His foremost creature. Reverent awe and respect, childlike fear is the only proper attitude for man toward his God.

### **The Nature and Length of the Creation Days**

Why is this such an important matter for us? Our first answer will be that anything that Scripture says deserves attention. For this reason already we will try to determine whether Scripture in its creation account does tell us something definite about the nature and length of the creation days.

In our day this has also become an important matter because the theory of evolution claims that our present universe and all that it contains came about and developed over a period of millions of years. It seems to be the only way in which the theory of evolution can be made to appear plausible. During any person's lifetime, yes, during the whole known span of human history, the kind of changes and developments that evolution talks about have never been known to take place. During no person's life span has lifeless matter ever turned into a living plant or animal, or a fish into a land animal, or an animal into a human being. This has not happened during the whole period of recorded history either. Evolution seems to operate with the idea that if enough time is given anything is possible. Yet this idea is inherently false. If something is impossible in itself it remains impossible no matter how much time is given and allowed. But also those who try to combine evolution and the creation account say that the creation days must have been long eras of time. This gives us reason to see whether the creation account tells us something specific about the nature and length of the creation days.

In verse 4 we are told that after God had created the light and declared it to be good. He divided the light from the darkness. With the creation of light darkness was not to end. Light and darkness were to have their respective place in God's creation and follow upon each other. Verse 5 makes this even clearer; God called the light day, and the darkness night. Here we have the first use of the term "day" in the creation account. By God's own naming "day," first of all means the light period in contrast to the darkness period which we call "night" and which God called "night." Notice how carefully the creation account defines its terms.

Let us now turn to the second half of verse 5: "And the evening and the morning were the first day" (KJV). Here we have a second use of "day" in the creation account. We have "day" as referring to the first creation day. But it is not immediately clear how it is defined. It seems as though such a day was made up of evening and morning. That would be hard to understand. Yet this lies in the King James Version, which is not a very good translation of the original Hebrew. The NASB translates verse 5: "And there was evening and there was morning, one day." That comes closer to what the Hebrew actually says. "There was evening" according to the Hebrew should be understood in the sense that it became evening, that evening set in. That means that the light period, also called "day," the light period which began when God created light, now came to an end as evening set in. "It was morning" means that morning set in as the darkness period which God had called night and which followed the light period according to God's order had now come to an end. This light period coming to an end with evening followed by the darkness period coming to an end with morning together constituted day one. This defines the first creation day. It consisted of a light period and a darkness period.

Notice that each of the six creation days are described the same way. Always we hear: And it became evening, and it became morning, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, the sixth day. The creation account describes all the creation days in the same way and thereby declares that they were all alike. This is also brought out by the fact that all the other five days are lined up with the first day by ordinal numbers, i.e., second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth. But you can only enumerate a series of things with such ordinal numbers if they are all alike. You cannot say the first cow, the second cow, and then proceed to say, the third horse.

The only question that still remains is this: Does the creation account clearly indicate what the length of the light and darkness period was which together made up each creation day? For an answer let us turn to verses 14 and 16, which speak of the creation of the heavenly bodies and their function. In verse 14 we read, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night." Notice the articles. If the text said: "To divide a day from a night," the day and night as light and darkness periods here spoken of could be something altogether new. Yet Moses writes: "To divide the day and the night." He is speaking of the day and the night to which he carefully introduced us in verse 5, day and night as the light and darkness periods which began when God divided the light and darkness periods on the first day. He means day and night as they together made up the first three creation days. Now we are told that these are the day and the night periods which the heavenly bodies, especially the sun and the moon, are to determine. Verse 16 states the same thing: "God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." The articles again show that God is speaking of the day and the night to which we were introduced in verse 5, the day and the night which together made up the first three creation days and also all the subsequent days. Each creation day, consisting of the day and night periods was determined by the sun and moon since the fourth day. Hence the creation days are just like our days, as we know them. They were not longer periods of time. How God brought about their length during the first three days we are not told. Yet they are lined up with the last three creation days with ordinal numbers as identical in nature. The creation account is very definite about the nature of the creation days.

This is also confirmed by the last part of verse 14 which tells us that the "heavenly bodies were to be 'for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.'" Here the account also speaks of days in the wider sense as determined by the heavenly bodies. In the context, however, they must be something shorter than years and seasons. They cannot be long eras.

What the creation account has clearly established is also confirmed by Exodus 20:9-11. In the original Hebrew the same word is used for the six days during which Israel was to work and for the one day on which Israel was to rest. The same Hebrew word for day is also used for the six days during which the Lord made heaven and earth and the sea, and for the seventh day on which God rested. Yet if the creation days had been periods of undetermined length, Israel would not have known during what periods of time they were to work and during what period of time they were to rest. They would not have known whether they were to work for seven weeks, seven months, seven years, or seven decades, nor would they have known whether they were to rest for seven weeks, seven months, seven years, seven decades. It was very vital, however, for Israel to know what the Sabbath Law meant, for they were obligated to it.

### **Man as the special object of God's love**

That man was created as God's foremost creature, as the crown and climax of God's creation, is shown,

- By the solemn manner in which God approached the creation of man. Note verse 26 of chapter 1 and compare it with 3a, 6a, 9a, 11a, 14a, and 24a.

While in all the other creative acts God merely spoke and it was done, God here takes counsel with Himself. He says: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness." The great moment had now come to bring that creature into existence for whom everything else had been made in preparation.

The plural verb "let us" and the plural possessive pronouns "our image, our likeness" can be satisfactorily explained only as an allusion to the truths of the Holy Trinity, that there are three distinct persons in the one Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Remember that the Spirit of God

is mentioned in verse 2, and that the New Testament informs us that God's Word with which He carried out His creative acts was the personal Word of God, the eternal Son of God (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; 1 Cor. 8:6).

- By the unrestricted dominion which God gave to man over the earth and all that it contains, and all by which it is served. Note verses 26b and 27.

Man is to subdue the earth. All of its powers and resources, physical, chemical, electrical, atomic are at man's disposal. While this dominion has not been withdrawn, it was greatly modified by man's fall into sin. Sin causes man to abuse this dominion. St. Paul also says in Romans 8: 19-21 that God Himself has made the creatures subject to vanity and placed the whole creature world under the bondage of corruption.

God originally did not make the creature world foolproof, because of the special way in which God equipped man for his position of dominion. This brings us to the greatest evidence of man's preeminence before God, namely, his creation in God's likeness.

- By creating man in the image of God. Two words or terms are used: likeness and image. When speaking of something very important, we often use more than one term. Sometimes we use two terms because one term does not always cover all the features of the important thing under discussion. A second term is then added to include additional features. At other times we use two terms in speaking about an important matter merely to stress and emphasize the thing involved. Here the latter reason for using two terms seems to obtain. In Genesis 1:27 "image" is used twice. In Genesis 5:1 the other term "likeness" is used twice. Either term covers the truth fully.

According to John 4:24, God is a spirit. According to Luke 24:39, a spirit, however, does not have flesh and bones. Since God, though a person, is an absolute spirit and thus has no body, the image of God in which man was created cannot pertain to the body of man. We must seek the image in man's soul, in the spiritual part of man. Our Savior Jesus Christ, of course, has a true body, but that is because He is also true man since He was born of the Virgin Mary.

Some have sought the image of God in which man was created in the fact that man is a person, possessing self-consciousness and a fully developed reason. A cat does not have self-consciousness. It does not know that it is a cat; neither does a dog know that he is a dog. While creatures have a form of reasoning, they do not have a fully developed reason. They cannot draw conclusions and develop a philosophy of life.

It is true that man had to have these characteristics of being a self-conscious, rational personality in order to bear the image of God. But these features do not make up the divine image itself. For Scripture tells us that man lost the image of God through the fall, though even after the fall he is still a rational, self-conscious personality.

What then is the image of God? Scripture gives us the answer when it tells us that the new life of faith which the gospel implants in us, the new man in us, is a restoration of the image of God in us. On the other hand, Scripture tells us that man's natural sinful state, his Old Adam, his sinful flesh, is the very opposite of the divine image in which God initially created man. We cannot take anything into the definition of the image of God that is not distinctive for the new man in us, and which man still possesses in his natural state.

Col. 3:10 bids us to put on the new man "which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." True knowledge of God and His work was a part of the image of God in which man was created. All of man's thoughts agreed with God's thoughts. Man was not omniscient, like God is omniscient; before God, according to His very essence, all knowledge is forever present. Also at creation man acquired his knowledge by observation through his senses. But all the thoughts and conclusions which man reached agreed with God's thoughts. In Eph. 4: 22-24 we are bidden to "put on the new man which after God is create in righteousness and true holiness."

Glimpses of the divine image which man bore in Gen. 2. We get glimpses of the divine image when we are told how God passed all of the animals before Adam that he might name them. Definite

creative thoughts of God were expressed in each individual type of animal. As Adam observed these animals, he immediately grasped these thoughts of God; for we are told that whatever Adam named the animals, that was their name.

- Again God had said that it was not good for man to be alone. Thereby God declared that man was unique, unlike any other creature, that man was in need of a companion like himself. After man had observed all the animals, he came to the same conclusions for we read: “But for Adam there was not found an help corresponding to him.” As soon as God had created Eve and brought her to Adam, awakened from his deep sleep, Adam exclaimed (verse 23): “This is now flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. She shall be called woman, for from man was she taken.” Adam’s thoughts again fully agreed with God’s thoughts.

The joyful way in which Adam said this and received Eve also shows that he found joy in the things in which God found joy. In gladly receiving God’s gift he showed that his will and his actions were in harmony with God’s will. This is what is meant with “righteousness and true holiness” in the Ephesians passage. It means that one rejoices in the things that please God and does God’s will gladly. This is true also for the Christian according to the new man, in which the image of God is restored. According to the new man of faith planted in our hearts by the gospel, we can say with the Apostle Paul in Rom. 7:22: “I delight in the law of God after the inward. man.”

In Gen. 2:25 we have another glimpse of the divine image in which both Adam and Eve had been created. They had just been united by God in marriage and become one flesh. Yet we are told: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not at any time ashamed.” Their will was in perfect harmony with God’s will. Thus also their marriage relation was carried out in perfect love toward God and toward one another, without any trace of selfishness. That is why there was no occasion for shame as long as man still bore the image of God.

**Summary:** The image of God in which man was created involved a blessed knowledge of God and His works man’s thoughts were in perfect harmony with all of God’s thoughts. The divine image also consisted in this that man’s feelings were in complete harmony with God’s evaluation of things; he found joy and delight in that which pleases God. Finally man’s will, all of his impulses, desires, and actions were in complete harmony with God’s holy will. Very briefly we can say that man was holy and righteous. Negatively we can say that man was without sin. In this summary we need to remember that the new man is a restoration of that image. That reminds us of the secret of man’s original divine image, the secret of man’s holiness and righteousness, the secret of his sinlessness. It flowed out of the bond of perfect trust, of faith, toward God, in which he had been created. Break that bond of trust, and the image of God would be lost. Satan knew that. That is why his attack was against Eve’s trust in God and in His goodness. When Satan succeeded in breaking that trust with his lie, the divine image of Adam and Eve was shattered and lost.

### **Other ways of stating the truths of the divine image**

We might ask: If the image of God in which man was created is such an important truth, why is it not mentioned oftener in Scripture? Answer: the truth is expressed very often, but in a different way. It is expressed in Gal. 3:26 when we are told: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The abundant assurances of our divine sonship cover the same truths as the truth of the restoration of our divine image by faith. When through the gospel faith is implanted in our hearts, we are reborn as God’s children. Then we again think as God thinks according to the new man in us, find joy in what pleases God, live according to God’s will. Note what is said of us believers according to our new man in 1 John 3:9. The Apostle John, of course, also knows of the Christian’s remaining old Adam, 1 John 1:8. Here on earth the image of God is only partially restored. That is why our Christian life is a constant battle between the new man and the Old Adam, our sinful flesh, a constant battle in which the new man must and can prevail through the power of the gospel (Rom. 7:18-25).

In 1 John 3:1-2 we are told that the image of God will be fully restored in the Christian believer when he enters eternal life. Through a blessed death the believer is purged of his Old Adam and on Judgment Day also his body will be raised in glory. John says: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear

what we shall be: but we know that, when he (better 'it') shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Also Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9 do not operate with a wider concept of the divine image.

Gen. 9:6 does not state that man as he exists since the flood still bears the image of God. It merely says that God made man in His image. In reminding us of what God did at creation, it bids us to remember that it is God's unchanging will that man should bear His image. This was His plan in creating man. When this image was destroyed through sin, God purposed to restore it. He sent His Son to redeem all sinners. Through the message of Christ's redemption God the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of sinners. As we have abundantly pointed out, the divine image is again restored in such faith, and will be completely restored in heaven as the believer remains in faith unto his earthly end. That is why God does not want man to take human life. That is why human life is to remain wholly in God's hands. Human life here on earth is man's time of grace. During this time God wants him to hear the gospel so that through faith the image of God may be restored in him.

In James 3:9 the inspired writer points out to us how inconsistent it is for human beings with one and the same tongue to curse man, created in the image of God, and to bless God as the Father. This inconsistency is only felt in its full strength when we cling to the concept of the divine image that we have established through Scripture. What can be more inconsistent than to use one and the same tongue to bless God as the Father, which means blessing God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and as our Father through Christ, and curse man, i.e., ask God to bring damnation upon man? Doing these two things with one and the same tongue is asking God to engage in contradictory actions.

## **How God Remained Faithful in His Love, When Man Became Unfaithful**

### **The Creation Sabbath: Gen. 2:1-3**

*Gen 2:1 "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."*

"The host of them." Meant are all the individual things mentioned as brought forth by God's creative Word in the course of the six days of creation.

Notice how clearly Moses speaks of God's work of creation having been finished and completed. He clearly distinguishes between the work of creation completed and the work in which God is now active, the work of preservation. This is brought out anew in v.2 and v.3 where the whole six day work of creation is spoken of as a single work or task.

Evolutionists fail to distinguish between God's work of creation which Moses says was finished, and the work of preservation which God is now doing. The advocates of evolution quite properly observe what happens in the universe about them while God is active in his work of preservation, study the processes that are operative. Very improperly they conclude, however, that the same processes must have been operative when God was active in His work of creation bringing the universe into existence. They conclude that the same amount of time must have been required to bring changes about. There is no justification for such a conclusion.

*Gen 2:2-3 "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because in it he rested from his entire task which God had created by making."*

How can Moses say that heaven and earth and all their host were finished at the end of the sixth day, and still say that God ended His work of creation task on the seventh day? Various solutions are proposed. The NASB translates "by the seventh day God completed his work."

Moses himself explains: By resting on the seventh day, by blessing and sanctifying the seventh day.

What does it mean that God rested on the seventh day, the day following the six days of creation?

It does not mean that God ceased from all activity. Note John 5:17: "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." Having ceased from His task of creation, God is still intensively active upholding all things by the Word of His power. Heb. 1:3.

It does not mean that God rested out of weariness. Cf. Isa. 40:28.

It means, first of all, that God ceased from further creative activity. Everything in that task was done, and everything was very good. There was nothing more that needed to be done as far as creating is concerned. God's creative blessing is still effective and has also brought us into existence.

God's resting upon finishing His creation task means more than merely ceasing from further creating. Note Exodus-11:17: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, was refreshed."

Yes, when God ceased working He was indeed refreshed, in the sense that He found the greatest joy and delight in what He had brought forth, especially also in man whom He had made as His foremost creation in His own image and under whose dominion He had placed everything. What does it mean that God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, i.e., set it aside as something special?

Remember that Moses is speaking about the seventh day that followed upon the six days of creation. There is nothing that indicates that Moses is speaking about every future seventh day. God's blessings are not mere wishes like ours, even our prayerful wishes. When God blesses He effects blessings; His blessing is effective action. There is a difference, however, depending on the object of God's blessing.

When God blesses living beings, they become the recipients of His blessings.

When God blesses lifeless things, His blessing makes them the source of benefits for living things, especially a source of God's benefits for man and his happiness. Cf. Genesis 27:27, where God blessed fields. Cf. also Exodus 23:3-5, where God blessed bread and water. We pray: Heavenly Father, bless this food to Thy glory and our good.

When God sanctifies something it is set apart for a wholesome purpose. God blessed the seventh day and set it aside as a source of blessing and benefit for man.

Even as God rested after His work of creation, even as God found joy and delight in all that He had made, so man likewise was to find blessed rest in God's creative works and in their gracious God who had made it all for them. With joy and delight, with praise and thanksgiving to God, man was to see and experience on the seventh day how good God had made everything for them, and how good He had made them. In this way man was to enjoy blessed fellowship with His God and joy and bliss in all His works from the seventh day on, and on every future day.

That seemingly is the reason why the seventh day is not closed in the solemn way in which the Genesis account closes the six days, each individually. The divine acts performed on each of those six days were unique for each individual day, never to be repeated on any other day. Not so the blessing of the seventh day. It was to mark also every subsequent day for man. Yet this seventh day was the dedication day of heaven and earth and of all the joy and bliss which man was to find in God's creation, and in the God from whom it had come.

Cf. Hebrews 3:8-4:12, especially 4:9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The "rest" of God is described as remaining; it has not been revoked, it still continues in force, and blessed is he who is permitted to share it. It is not something new, a new blessing. God's rest, which he intends that we should enter, dates from the completion of the universe and will have no end. Adam and Eve were drawn into it to enjoy the blessedness of that rest. When they sinned they lost it. Through the Gospel, God offers it anew. Through faith we enjoy it. This rest is blessed fellowship with God, reaching its consummation in heaven.

Nothing is said here of the seventh day of every week, about every regularly recurring seventh day. Moses speaks of the seventh day that followed upon the six days of creation.

When God commanded the Old Testament weekly Sabbath, Exodus 20:11, He indeed pointed to His rest on the seventh day of creation and to His blessing and hallowing of the creation Sabbath, and pointed to this as a reason for His command to Israel.

God does not say that the Old Testament weekly Sabbath was already instituted at creation. He pointed to the blessed rest of man lost by sin. He pointed to Christ who would restore this rest. Of this the Old Testament Sabbath was a shadow, Col. 2:1 . Compare Deut. 5:12-15 with Exod. 20:11. Cf. Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII.

### **Summary of Genesis 1:1 to 2:3**

The eternal, almighty, all-wise, gracious God created all things in perfection for the benefit of man, whom He made in His own image to be the special object of His love and whom He drew into His own Sabbath rest.

### **How Man Was Seduced by Satan to Spurn God's Love and Goodness**

*Gen 3:1. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."*

In English this looks like a normal sentence. It is not a normal sentence in the original Hebrew. A normal Hebrew sentence always begins with the verb. When, as here, the sentence does not begin with the verb but with the subject, that subject gets special emphasis. This is important enough to note.

By putting the subject in the first position, our attention is immediately placed upon the serpent. So in this account we are definitely dealing, first of all, with a serpent, a snake. It is a beast of the field, one of the creatures whom God had made. The text says so. With these beasts whom God had made Moses compares it. Nothing is said about its kind, or its size. If we do not grant, first of all, that we are dealing with a serpent in this account if we assume that it is only a symbol, then we could not be sure that anything else in this chapter is a historical fact. Then other things in this account could be symbols with equal right.

Moses states that this serpent was subtle, i.e., cunning, shrewd, clever. He says that it was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field. But Moses does not tell us in so many words in what its subtlety or cunning consisted. That must mean that he simply wants us to take note of the serpent's cleverness as it becomes evident in the account, from what the serpent does, from the words spoken to Eve, to tempt, to draw her into sin, into moral evil.

This is a subtlety, a cleverness, however, that can only belong to rational, morally responsible beings. No mere snake, no mere beast of the field has the kind of cunning which we notice in the words spoken by the serpent to Eve. A snake cannot do right or wrong, it merely follows its God-given instincts in what it does. It is not morally responsible. Whatever subtlety or cunning the serpent possessed as a creature of God had therefore become the instrument of a subtlety which only a rational and morally responsible being can possess. The word "subtle" is therefore the first hint that in this account we are dealing with more than a snake, a serpent.

This serpent spoke. Yet serpents do not speak. Adam, who had named all the animals in a correct and meaningful manner, knew this. Eve, who possessed the same perfect mind, must also have realized that, though dealing with a serpent, she was at the same time dealing with more than a serpent. More we cannot say.

By what the serpent said, denying God's Word, questioning God's goodness, the actual tempter speaking through the serpent revealed himself as an enemy of God. Still, Moses is content throughout the account of the fall to speak of this rational, morally responsible, but wicked, tempter who approached Eve in terms of the serpent, this beast whom the tempter used as his instrument.

God has not been pleased in His Word to tell us everything in detail at one and at one and the same time. What God reveals at a later time in His Word never corrects or sets aside anything that He has told us before, it never contradicts anything that God has told us earlier in His Word. But God's Word gradually supplies greater details, often unfolds and clarifies earlier revelations.

God's New Testament Word still speaks of the serpent. St. Paul writes, II Cor.11:3 "But I fear, lest by

any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Notice how in unfolding this very admonition St. Paul, however, makes it very clear who it was who through the serpent tempted Eve. He makes it clear by adding the warning: “And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

St. John in Revelation 12:9 also speaks of both the serpent and of Satan in connection with man’s fall into sin. He says: “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan which deceives the whole world.” In Revelation 20:2 John speaks once more of “that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan.”

Jesus told the unbelieving Jews, John 8:44: “Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He is a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Here Jesus clearly identifies the tempter who started the basic lie that God is not good, that His will is not good. Jesus says it was the Devil who started this lie and with this lie brought death upon mankind. The Devil is the father of lies.

Yes, the fatal temptation came to Eve through a serpent and by means of the serpent through Satan, the Devil. But let us look at the tempter’s first question:

*Gen 3:1b “And he said to the woman: Is it really that God said: ye shall not eat of all the trees of the garden?”*

With this question the tempter implies that God’s commandment is a burdensome restriction. He cannot think of any commandment in any other way. He knows nothing and wants to know nothing of a divine commandment as a blessed and welcome opportunity for man to show his love and thankfulness to his God who had showered love upon man. He has no understanding for a divine commandment as a welcome opportunity for man to exercise his joyful obedience to his loving creator. He knows nothing and wants to know nothing about a divine commandment as a wonderful aid to become confirmed in such obedience, to become aware of evil and to take a firm stand against it with heart, mind, and will.

For Satan it is an either-or. Either God has not really said this, has not given this prohibition, or He is not really good, is not really concerned about man’s happiness, about man’s bliss and welfare. This is Satan’s basic lie: God is not good and God’s will is not good for man. Notice the double thrust of Satan’s first temptation:

The main thrust is to make God’s Word uncertain for Eve. If he succeeded in this, he could easily get Eve to transgress God’s will and commandment.

At the same time, Satan already implies that if God did say this, give the prohibition, then God is not good. He is already sowing suspicion concerning God’s goodness and love.

Satan still begins his temptations to sin in much the same way. His first thrust is to make God’s Word uncertain, to make us uncertain that God has really forbidden certain things as sinful. At the same time he already sows the seed of doubt about God’s goodness if the prohibition really stands.

Many Bible interpreters of our day do not want to take the serpent and his speaking seriously. Even less understanding do they show for seeing Satan as the real agent of temptation. They like to think of the accounts in the first three chapters of Genesis as parables, symbolic stories, as instructive fables. Thus they say: Why should we be disturbed about a serpent speaking? We expect that in symbolic stories, parables and instructive fables, religious or otherwise, and think nothing of it. Yet this account of Genesis does not bear the marks of a fable and parable. This was already evident to us as we considered the makeup of the entire Book of Genesis with its carefully structured ten toledoth, or histories, and an introduction. The characters of a fable or parable occur only in this-fable or parable. The characters of Chapter III are found also in the following chapters of Genesis; yes, they are spoken of as real people at places throughout the Bible. We have already heard this to be true also of the serpent and of Satan acting through the serpent. That we do not have a parable or instructive fable here is also clear in this chapter itself. An instructive fable has a clearly defined moral or lesson that it seeks to bring out. No such moral or lesson is attached to the account of the fall. No,



it tells us of an actual happening, acknowledged throughout Scripture, of a fatal action of Adam and Eve which had lasting consequences ever after for all mankind.

Others are willing to acknowledge that an actual temptation of Eve took place, a temptation to which Eve as a real individual was exposed. Still, they want the serpent to be a symbol of the woman's inner reasoning with temptation. Yet how did Eve, who was created in the image of God, created without sin, holy and righteous, come to evil thoughts, if they were not first addressed to her from without through an agent of evil? No, those who do not want to take everything seriously that is told us in Genesis III only raise more questions in their vain attempt to satisfy their own reason.

*Gen 3:2 "And the woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God has said: Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die."*

Eve did not immediately give up her faith. She fought for her faith. She was discerning. She understood the main thrust of the serpent's question, that he called the certainty of God's prohibition into question. She also caught the insinuation that the commandment, if actually given, was a burdensome and restrictive thing, that God's goodness and love would then have to be questioned.

Eve first of all addressed herself to these insinuations. She said: "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat." Very clearly she asserts that there is no burdensome restriction involved in this prohibition of the Lord. The tempter had put it that way. He let it appear as though every worthwhile blessing was bound up with the right of eating of each and every tree of the garden. He implied that if a prohibition really existed concerning eating of one tree in the garden, life in the garden was really a miserable thing. All this was implied by Satan's question, not said in so many words. Such hidden insinuations are always the dangerous assaults of Satan. Yet Eve meets the temptation squarely. She asserts, in effect: We are richly provided for as far as eating, for food. Of the many trees of the garden we may eat. The prohibition, though a fact, is no burdensome restriction at all.

*Gen 3:3*

v.3 -Then Eve meets the main thrust of Satan: "*But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden God has said, not shall you eat of it, and not shall you touch it...*" In her fight of faith against temptation from without, Eve asserts God's Word. She makes a very clear testimony concerning it.

Many Bible students think that Eve changed God's Word somewhat, that she added to it, especially with her "and not shall you touch it." But I feel that keeping the eighth commandment is also in place when we interpret somebody's words in the Bible. We should put the best construction on what is said, if this is possible. It is possible here. Notice that the tempter did not pounce on Eve's addition. He did hook into it with his next tempting remark. That gives us reason to think that he did not see a weakness in it, but let it stand as a legitimate unfolding of God's actual commandment.

We understand that what Eve meant to say was this: Eating to have food does not come into consideration as far as this tree is concerned. God has simply told us not to have anything to do with this tree as far as food is concerned. That is why He does not even want us to touch it as a first step toward considering it as an object for eating. It is a matter of obedience, aye, opportunity to show the joyful obedience of our hearts. We can therefore understand Eve's reply thus far as simple testimony. It is not always necessary to restrict ourselves to the exact words of Scripture as long as we stay with what it says in unfolding it. We do this regularly in our preaching and teaching.

What about Eve's words, "...lest you die"? They, too, are not the exact words of God as given in Genesis 2:17. There we hear that God told Adam: "...for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." Eve stresses the reason for God's prohibition. This, too, can be understood correctly. God did want man to be kept from death. God wanted man to be aware of evil and of its terrible consequences. That is why God had said what He did. It was not a threat to keep man in check. Divine threats were not given to man until sin had come into the world. Now even believers need the threat of God's law to help them curb their Old Adam, their sinful flesh. Before the fall neither Eve nor Adam had a sinful flesh to curb and check. No, God's words

were a loving warning to make man aware of the possibility of evil that he might take a firm stand against it by a free choice, prompted by his trust and faith-born, thankful love toward God. Gladly would man avoid what his loving God pointed out to him as dire evil. In this way man could be confirmed in the rejection and abhorrence of evil even as this is true of the holy angels.

Yet we find in the next verse that Satan twisted Eve's words into a wrong thought. He chose to understand her words as though she meant to say that the evil consequences of disobedience supplied the motivation and were meant to supply the motivation for obedience. This God had not asserted. Such a motivation of fear is still not pleasing and acceptable in God's, sight. Fear of consequences should not move a child of God to do God's will. Fear of consequences has a use only in curbing the Old Adam for us who have one. Sinless Eve did not as yet have need for such a curb, as we have already said. Yet the tempter did hook into Eve's words, "...lest you die," with his next temptation.

*Gen 3:4 - "And the serpent said to the woman: Not shall ye surely die."*

The Hebrew makes it very clear that the tempter is quoting God. God had said: "Ye shall surely die." The tempter says: "Not shall ye surely die."

Satan also claims to have a better knowledge than Eve of what God is like. He says: "*God is knowing all the while that in the day when you eat of it your eyes shall be opened and you shall be like God knowing good and evil.*" In the Hebrew, Satan uses a participle to describe what God is like. Hebrew uses a participle to express an action that is characteristic. Satan implies that it is characteristic of God that He knows what will happen if Eve eats of this tree, and that He is acting out of that knowledge. He is charging God with being essentially jealous instead of good and gracious. Satan pictures God as intent upon withholding something desirable from His creatures, lest they rise to heights which He wants to reserve for Himself. Yes, Satan says that God does not want man to be like Him, to know good and evil as He does.

Satan suggests that Eve forget about God's commandment and that she assert her own will to get a knowledge of good and evil. What this knowing of good and evil is, and what advantage it brings, Satan does not say. The thing charms by its vagueness. Remember that God had actually called the forbidden tree the tree of the knowing of good and evil. Satan's temptations are always a tangle of truth and falsehood. For that very reason they are most dangerous. The tree of the knowing of good and evil was actually to impart a God-like knowledge of good and evil to man.

By consciously obeying God's command in childlike trust, man, like God, would have gained a knowledge of good. By entering upon such obedience to God's command from day to day with his whole mind, his heart, and his will, he would have experienced how good it is gladly to do God's will. He would have become confirmed in his devotion to that which was good, so that it would no longer have been a temptation for him. Thus the holy angels are confirmed in that which is good. Thus we will be confirmed in doing God's will when we reach heaven.

On the other hand, by being aware of evil, by being aware of the possibility of entering upon evil and all of its bad results, and by rejecting any part in it with mind, heart, and will in humble, joyful faith and thankful love, man would have gained a wholesome knowledge of evil. He would have become confirmed in a God-like aversion and rejection of all that is evil. In this way God knows evil without having anything to do with it. In this way also the holy angels know evil without having any part in it.

Yet the knowledge of good and evil which Satan held out to Eve on the path of disobedience, but which he left undescribed, turned out to be something quite different. It became a knowledge of good as something lost, and a knowledge of evil as something now experienced in all of its cursed reality.

Here we have the basic lie which Satan, the father of lies, brought into the world, the lie that underlies all sin still, and all the delusions of sin. It is the lie that God is not good and that His will is not really good. It is the lie that man's welfare and happiness does not lie in clinging to his God in humble, joyful trust, and in doing His will in joyful, thankful love. It is the lie that man comes to happiness by striking out on his own, by pitting his own will and judgment against God's will. Satan is the first advocate of the new morality, so popular today, which denies that there is an absolute authority and an absolute standard of conduct set by

God because He is the creator and man is the creature who owes his existence to Him and is thus under His holy will. How much even of modern psychology is filled with Satan's basic lie. It frequently asserts that the human soul is a very tender thing, that to restrain it by an absolute standard of conduct is to harm it. It is stated: Our soul should be free to develop and express itself through freedom and love. If you continue to submit to God's commandments as something absolute, you will become warped in your personality.

Faced by Satan's lie, Eve was forced to make a decision. Bearing God's image in the perfect bond of trust in which God had created her, she had a free will and the strength to use it. She had the strength in her faith to choose to do God's will out of thankful love because she wanted to, not because she had to. The whole creation about her and every experience of God in the beautiful home that God had made for man, also the bond of marriage in which God had joined her to Adam, testified of God's goodness, testified against Satan's bold lie.

Still, we see in the next verse that Eve did not use her freedom. She spurned God's love and goodness. She gave up her trust in God. The woman believed the lie of Satan, disobeyed God's commandment, and persuaded her husband to share her guilt. We cannot explain her sin. It will always remain a mystery for us. Every attempt to try to explain it will only lead us astray. We can explain our own sinning. We all have a sinful nature from our conception and birth. We are surrounded by sinners. Through them and through our sinful flesh Satan now tempts us with his lie, and we sin daily in weakness. Eve did not have a sinful flesh; Adam, her husband, also bore the image of God. Instead of trying to explain her sin, we shall content ourselves with acknowledging and accepting it on the basis of God's clear Word, which tells us about her sin in verse 6.

*Gen 3:6 - "And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant for the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit [and did eat], and she gave also to her husband who was with her, and he ate."*

The poison of Satan's lie did its work. It caused her to give up her joyful trust in her God. She accepted the tempter's lie instead. Eve pushed God's Word aside. She submitted to Satan and his thinking. Now she saw that the tree was good for food. With her trust in God given up, the image of God which she possessed thus far was shattered. No longer were her thoughts in harmony with God's thoughts. She now saw this tree to be good for something for which God had not made it, that is, for food. Her feelings were also no longer in harmony with the way that God evaluated what He had created. She saw this tree of the knowing of good and evil as pleasant for something for which God had not placed it in the garden. With her will she now began to strive for something that God had not set as a goal, the attainment of wisdom through disobeying God's commandment. Yes, with her trust in God shattered, with her trust now given to Satan and his lie, sin had taken full possession of her soul, of every aspect of it, of her mind, of her heart, and of her will. She was now sinful through and through. Sin now showed itself also in action. She ate of the forbidden fruit. She gave to her husband, and he ate likewise.

Note that Adam's sinful action is spoken of as following out of the woman's action, namely, the action that she gave the forbidden fruit to her husband. We do not hear that he, too, was deceived like Eve by sin's lie. No, Adam disobeyed upon Eve's inducement. He was persuaded by Eve. This is in keeping with St. Paul's statement, 1 Timothy 2:14: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

This does not make Adam's guilt less great. On the contrary, one could speak of it as being even greater. Adam sinned in spite of better knowledge. St. Paul, by the very use that he makes of Adam's and Eve's different mode of falling into sin, calls to our attention that both fell out of their divinely-assigned roles in their sin. Eve, who had been created as a fitting help for Adam, presumed to take on the role of a leader, a position for which God had not made her. Deceived by Satan, she took the initiative in disobeying God's commandment. Adam, who had been created for the role of leadership, did not supply such leadership. He listened instead to the woman and let her persuade him to follow her in transgressing God's commandment. St. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, bids us to let this serve as a warning, not to overthrow God's order of creation in the relation of the sexes.

Herewith we have considered the account of how mankind in Adam and Eve was induced to spurn

God's love and goodness. We have done so in the conviction that this Genesis account relates something that actually took place. That conviction is supported by Scripture throughout. We have already heard how 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14 treat the account of the fall as an actual happening. So does Romans 5:12f with its clear-cut assertion that sin entered the world by one man: Adam fell from a state that was good into a state of being evil. This is not true of you and me. When we sin, we merely give evidence of the sinful nature with which we came into the world. By sinning Adam became a sinner. When we committed our first sinful deed, we were already sinners. Adam's sin plunged the whole human race into sin and death. Paul contrasts Adam with Christ, saying, Romans 5:19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." If Adam's sin and its fatal consequence for all mankind is not a historical fact, also Christ's saving work cannot stand as the blessed fact that it really is.

## **When Man Had Become Unfaithful, the Lord our God Remained Faithful in His Love Gen. 3:7-24**

The Lord's free and faithful grace to His fallen creatures is set forth in the entire remaining portion of the third chapter of Genesis.

### **1. The Lord sought out His fallen creatures in solicitous love to lay bare their guilt, while they revealed their depraved condition. vss. 7-13**

*Gen 3:7 - "And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."*

Even before God appeared on the scene after the fall, Adam and Eve already showed themselves as fallen, sinful creatures. In a certain way the serpent's word had proved itself as true. Their eyes were opened in the sense that they had come to a knowledge of good and evil. Still, Satan's statement had been a tremendous lie. What Adam and Eve experienced was not the desirable thing that the tempter had held out to them as a vague promise. Neither was it the knowledge of good and evil that God has in mind for them by placing the special tree in the middle of the garden. Adam and Eve now knew good and evil from the standpoint of sinners. They knew good as something that they had forfeited and lost, evil as something that they were experiencing in its true cursedness. They experienced their corruption.

The special point mentioned on which their eyes were opened was this that they became very aware of their nakedness. Remember how in Genesis 2:25 we are told of Adam and Eve, who had just been joined together in marriage, that "the two of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not at any time ashamed." While both still bore God's image, i.e., while they were still holy and without sin, their will was in full harmony with God's will concerning all the drives and impulses with which God had created them. Also their sexual impulse and drive was in full harmony with God's will. They exercised it in perfect love toward God and in perfect love toward one another.

After having lost God's image, after having become sinful human beings, Adam and Eve no longer had full control of their impulses. Selfish, self-gratifying desires concerning the use also of their sex impulse began to assert themselves. As they became aware of this, guilt feelings arose in their hearts and filled them with a sense of shame. So strong was this new feeling of guilt and shame in connection with their nakedness that they immediately looked for a remedy. They improvised loincloths for themselves as best they could by sewing fig leaves together. We shall soon see how unwilling Adam and Eve were as sinners to acknowledge and confess their guilt. Yet without wanting to do so, and without intending to do so they did confess their guilt as they tried to cover their nakedness. The seed of death and corruption was now in their hearts, a seed that would ripen and break forth into physical death and eternal death, everlasting separation from God. Yes, sin had brought spiritual death upon them, separation from God's fellowship.

*Gen 3:8 -“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at evening time, and the man and his wife scurried for cover from the presence of the Lord God in the midst of the trees of the garden.”*

The Hebrew word used can be translated either as “voice” or as “sound.” Since God’s walking rather than His speaking is mentioned in the immediate context, we prefer to translate “sound.” Adam and Eve heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. God seemingly manifested Himself in human form for the purpose of speaking to man. The account strongly suggests that God had appeared in this manner before and spoken with our first parents. The time when this particular appearance took place was toward evening when a cool breeze generally arose. How long after creation the fall took place has not been revealed to us. Any conjecture on this point will remain just that, a conjecture. Nothing is therefore gained in saying more about it. At former appearances of God at this time of the day, if there really were such, Adam and Eve would have rejoiced. Now because of their sin they sought to hide. With their fear which they showed they again unintentionally confessed their guilt. They showed that they realized that God would rebuke them and call them into judgment for what they had done against His clear will and word.

The verb form which Moses uses in the Hebrew to describe the hiding to which they were moved in their fear is noteworthy. We note what happens when there is a mouse in a dark room, and the light is suddenly turned on, the mouse will scurry here and there in an effort to find cover. That is the kind of action that the verb form which Moses uses expresses. With their fear of God and their fearful action to find cover Adam and Eve revealed their depraved condition. We also want to note their folly in their guilt-born fear of God. They vainly sought to hide from God, vainly sought to protect themselves from God’s just judgment upon their sin by their own effort. Here is the beginning of man’s vain thought of somehow rescuing and saving himself from God’s just judgment by his own efforts. This vain effort to save himself has remained indelibly engrained in natural man ever since.

*Gen 3:9 -“And the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”*

The Lord did not leave His fallen creatures to what they justly deserved. No, in solicitous love He sought them out to lay bare their guilt and to make them fully aware of it. In this way He meant to prepare them for the announcement of the new program of His faithful love, His gracious plan of salvation. God did this though there was nothing to compel Him to do that, nothing but the love of His own heart. God’s question is not a question for information. It is not put for God’s sake but for man’s sake to bring Adam to a full realization of the trouble into which sin has brought him.

*Gen 3:10 -And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”*

With this answer man again revealed his sinfulness. He revealed it by admitting that he was afraid of God, that he was disturbed that he was naked. Yet Adam knew very well what had brought his fear, and why he was suddenly troubled about his nakedness, till, the very sinfulness which he was revealing did not let him make an open confession of it. Vainly he sought refuge in half-truths, in deceit, and in evasion. Though he knew how he had come to be disturbed about his nakedness, namely, through his fall into sin, he still tried to cover up. He tried to make his nakedness a reasonable excuse for his hiding. He did not confess how he and Eve had scurried for cover when the sound of God’s approach in the garden had come to their ears. In reporting the way in which Adam now spoke about his hiding, Moses used a different verb form than the one he used when he reported how Adam and Eve really hid. The verb form that Adam used tried to make his hiding appear as a very proper and innocent action. It speaks of his hiding as though he were saying, Surely I could not appear in your presence in my naked condition. So I stepped aside and hid behind whatever tree was at hand.

*Gen 3:11-12 -“And he said, who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree concerning which I charged you not to eat of it?” And the man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree and I ate.”*

Patience, earnestly God continued with His questioning. The Lord exposed Adam’s vain evasions. With

two straightforward questions God faced Adam with the demand to give straightforward answers likewise. Still, a simple, honest confession was not given. Adam tried to tone down his sin. He tried to push the full responsibility for his sinful deed away from himself, tried to push it onto Eve, and finally to God who had given Eve to him as a companion. Why had God given him such a companion who misled him? Excuses never satisfy. Eve's sin and guilt was real, but it did not excuse Adam. Adam, who should have been Eve's head and leader, had yielded to her persuasion. Sin separates people from one another, even though they may take part in the sin together. The sinner is essentially selfish. What a disgraceful confession Adam made concerning himself as he tried to blame others, to blame Eve, and finally to blame God Himself. Where trust in God is gone, there is also no love for God; and where there is no love of God, real unselfish love for a fellow human being also fades away. What a contrast between Adam's relation to Eve after the fall and his joyful exclamation when Eve had first been brought to him as a fitting helpmate for him. Then he had exclaimed with a thankful heart "This one this time is flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." Now Eve becomes the butt of his excuse. Vainly he tries to excuse his sin by blaming God for giving Eve to him. What sinful ingratitude for what he had once recognized as a wonderful gift of God.

*Gen 3:13 - "And the Lord God said to the woman Why have you done this? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me and I ate."*

A simple, honest, humble confession did not come forth from fallen Adam. It was the same with Eve, whom God addressed in a similar manner with a question, and for a similar purpose. Though she was forced to admit her sinful act, she was not willing to assume full responsibility for it. She blames the serpent. During God's questioning both Adam and Eve revealed their totally depraved condition since the fall. They were not ready in their sinfulness and because of their sinfulness to acknowledge their guilt and to confess it in all humility. They had no power to do that until God again awakened trust in their hearts. But God's questioning had still served its purpose. Though they were not willing to admit their guilt, they were deeply aware of it, and they felt it in their conscience. Thus they were prepared for God's announcement of His new program of faithful saving love. When it would be brought to them, it would awaken faith in their hearts to take refuge in it against God's well-deserved wrath and punishment. We will hear of this new program of God's saving love in verses 14 and 15.

## **2. The Lord announced the new program of His faithful love, a program of saving grace.**

In verse 14 we, first of all, are told how in the hearing of Adam and Eve God laid a curse upon the serpent, the instrument of temptation, and therewith cursed above all the tempter himself, namely, Satan.

*Gen 3:14 - "The Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, cursed are you among all the cattle and among all the beasts of the field. Upon your belly shall you move and dust shall you eat all the days of your life."*

If we want to understand this verse, we will have to cling to what was said in connection with verse 1. When God spoke these words, a serpent was there, but also more than a serpent was there. God was dealing with a serpent, but He was also dealing with more than a serpent, with Satan.

First of all, a serpent was there, and God was dealing with a serpent. The text says so. It not only states in so many words that God spoke to the serpent, but it also speaks of a curse which the serpent as a beast from out of all other beasts is from this time on to bear as it moves about as a beast. It is to move, to crawl, on its belly. In doing so it is to eat dust. This is not to say that dust itself will be its food. But moving about as it will, close to the ground, it cannot help consuming dust together with its food. Such a mode of moving about will be a sign and symbol of defeat and humiliation. This creature in its outward actions exalted itself above man. It is now ever after to be degraded in man's eyes.

It is idle to speculate about the serpent's former way of moving about, its way of moving about before the fall, and to what extent it was different. What is said here is said for the benefit of man living after the fall. We are being told what we are to see in the serpent's present manner of moving about. For that purpose we do not need to know how the serpent moved about before. The serpent's present way of moving about is to

remind us of the wicked, fatal deed in which the serpent was involved as an instrument. At the same time we are to realize that this wickedness will end not in glory and success, but in utter humiliation and defeat.

Yet we cannot stay with the serpent here. We need to face the fact that God spoke to the serpent. Addressing someone assumes that you are dealing with a rational creature. According to the creation account, the serpent is not such a rational creature, however. This speaking of the Lord to the serpent therefore again makes it evident that He is dealing with more than a serpent, that He is dealing with the serpent as the instrument of the Evil One, Satan.

The words spoken by God to the serpent strike out at this Evil One, the tempter of mankind, the Devil. This is brought out likewise by the first statement of the Lord: "Because you have done this..." These are words that can properly be addressed only to a morally responsible individual. It is Satan, rather than the serpent, whom God is holding accountable for a wicked deed done. Also the announcement of humiliation and defeat which followed is therefore announced to Satan rather than to the serpent, though outwardly the serpent is to bear the sign and symbol of defeat before the eyes of men.

That actually a sign or symbol of defeat and humiliation is involved is clear from other passages of Scripture where the same language is used, and even a reference to this recorded incident is implied. In Micah 7:17 we read, for example: "They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee." What Micah is here describing is the final triumph of God's people, of God's church, and the complete defeat and humiliation of its enemies.

Verse 9 of Psalm 72 carries a similar message; "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." Noteworthy also is the fact that God asked the tempter, whom he was really addressing in the serpent, no questions. He did address such questions to Adam and Eve as evidence of His faithfulness toward them, as evidence of His desire to show them mercy. God holds out no mercy and grace to the tempter, to Satan, but only judgment, punishment as compensation for the violation of God's majesty, not punishment as a corrective chastening.

In the last analysis, these words are spoken to the tempter and to the serpent, his instrument, for man's sake. Adam and Eve were to hear these words, were to hear that Satan would not permanently triumph in his wickedness. They were to hear that he would suffer humiliation and defeat, lasting humiliation and defeat. All this is carried out more fully in verse 15, in the protevangel, the first promise of the Savior.

It is for man's sake also that the serpent, the beast employed as Satan's instrument, is to serve as a constant reminder of Satan's final and lasting defeat and humiliation. Also elsewhere in Scripture we meet with instances in which the irrational creature, which as such is not involved in moral responsibility or guilt must nevertheless, not for its own sake but for man's sake suffer outward punishment. In Genesis 9:5 we read that the beast which is instrumental in the loss of a human life is to be put to death, in order that man may be reminded of the sacredness of human life as sinful man's God-given time of grace. For a similar reason it was commanded in the Mosaic Law, God's temporary discipline for His Old Testament people, that the ox that had gored a man was to be stoned. Similarly the Mosaic Law prescribed that in cases of human acts of sexual perversion with a beast, the beast likewise was to be put to death, Leviticus 20:15. Thereby man was to be reminded that such perversion was worthy of death. From the New Testament, Romans 8: 19-22, we know that the entire creature world, ever since the fall, must perform a function of this kind for fallen mankind. It must groan under the bondage of vanity and corruption, not be cause of a sin that it committed, but because it is God's will, who wants the constant evidence of pain, of struggle, of futility, and of death in the creature world round about us to be an ever-present earnest reminder of the victory over Satan and over his fatal act of temptation, already touched upon in verse 14, is fully announced for mankind's comfort in the 15th verse.

*Gen 3:15.-"And enmity will I establish between you and between the woman and between our seed and between her seed. He shall crush your head (crush you with respect to the head) and you shall bruise his heel (bruise him with respect to the heel)."*

We noted that verse 14 already referred to the tempter. The serpent was, however, still in the foreground. Now this is reversed. The Evil One is definitely in the foreground, though still addressed as the serpent and

spoken of as the serpent, in whose guise he was present.

The object, enmity, emphatically heads the sentence. It is again not a normal Hebrew sentence. “Enmity” is the all-important concept. Eve had become the willing serpent of Satan. She had obeyed his lie. She had given up her trust in God, and so had also withdrawn her obedience from God. She had given both, her trust and her obedience, to Satan. Over all this Satan was certainly rejoicing. He thought it would always stay that way.

God, however, announced: “Enmity,” i.e., hostility, hatred, will I establish between you and between the woman. It is not that there was no enmity present thus far. We saw how Adam and Eve as sinners had become God’s enemies, how they were hiding from him in fear, how they were refusing to accept the responsibility for their disobedience of His will. We saw also how Adam now displayed enmity toward the woman, blaming her for his transgression. All this enmity, this hostility, was, however, misdirected. If man was to be helped, his enmity would have to be redirected upon the proper object again. He would have to acknowledge God again in humble faith as his gracious friend, and he would again have to direct his enmity upon Satan. Unless this would come about, man would continue to be mistaken about all things, and he would in a basic way continue to misuse and misjudge everything.

Note, however, that God did not proceed to advise and to counsel Eve to redirect her enmity upon the serpent. Eve utterly lacked the power to, carry out such advice. Neither did God command Eve to hate the Evil One. She could not have carried out such a command. Notice what God did instead. God announced His own intentions I, God, will put enmity between you and the woman. God Himself, God who alone was able, would do it. Proper enmity would be established by His divine doing, His initiative. It could be established in no other way. God was not simply promoting an enmity that man could bring about by himself, was not merely promising to arouse something that for the time being had merely become inactive.

Satan had to hear this, for it was said to him, as the serpent was directly addressed. For Satan it was an announcement of judgment and defeat. All that Satan could do was to listen. God did not invite him to a response. As soon as God had made this pronouncement to the tempter, Lord again turned to Eve and Adam, whom He had previously drawn into conversation with searching questions. All this makes it quite evident that it was for Eve’s benefit and for Adam’s benefit that God announced that He would do this great thing of again establishing enmity, hatred, between Satan and the woman. Here we have an initial revelation of God’s unmerited, yet triumphant, saving grace.

Would this divinely-established enmity be restricted to these two individuals, to the serpent and the woman? Would it come to an end, when they would come to their earthly end? No, God promised more in His announcement. God is still the subject, enmity is still the object, and God is still speaking about establishing enmity as He goes on to say that He would put enmity likewise between “your seed,” i.e., the serpent’s seed, and between “her seed,” i.e., the woman’s seed. In both instances the Hebrew singular “seed” is a collective. It clearly refers not to one individual but to a plurality of individuals. This in turn makes it very clear that the first statement in the promise concerning the enmity between the serpent and the woman does indeed have to do with two individuals, that it does not treat in general of serpents as a class or of woman as a class.

Yet, who is meant by the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed, as God goes on to say that He will establish enmity between them also? The promise is certainly intended for all of Eve’s descendants. Potentially the woman’s seed would therefore be all of Eve’s descendants. But when we think of the actual establishment of the enmity which God has in mind in this promise, only those of Eve’s descendants could come into consideration, who would come to be like Eve when she would again be at enmity with the tempter. Only then was Eve again at enmity with Satan when God had again brought her back to faith in Him, when she was led by God’s promise to trust in His saving grace. For this a complete change of heart was needed; yet God had promised to bring this about. It would be the same with Eve’s seed. Those of her seed, her descendants, whom God would put at enmity with Satan’s seed, would be those in whom the Lord would likewise awaken a humble trust in His saving grace. They would be the believers.

Satan’s seed, or the serpent’s seed, would be all of Satan’s followers, evil angels and evil human beings, all who like Satan would be enemies of God and be active in destroying God’s saving work. To think of



physical descendants, where Satan's seed is under discussion, is out of the question. Physical propagation cannot come into consideration as far as Satan is concerned. Essentially he is an angel. What Jesus states concerning angels, that marriage and propagation does not come into consideration for them, Matthew 22:30, therefore pertains also to Satan, though he is a fallen angel.

This understanding of the woman's seed and the serpent's seed in the second part of God's promise is in keeping with the language of Scripture elsewhere. In the parable of the tares among the wheat, Matthew 13:24-44, where the presence of the unbelievers in the world, God's field, is under discussion, Jesus explains: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemies that sowed them is the devil." On another occasion Jesus rebuked the hostile Jewish leaders, Scribes and Pharisees, because like their prophet-slaying forefathers, they were obstructing and opposing God's saving activity. He addressed them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers." Like here in the first Gospel promise, the Lord announced judgment to this serpent's brood, saying: "How can you escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33)

When according to the Gospel of St. John Jesus was similarly rebuking hostile Jews, who scorned and rejected His Savior's person and work, He told them: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it." John 8:44) This designation of unbelievers as Satan's seed and offspring is particularly decisive because Jesus is here clearly referring to the happenings and the details of the fall.

Another striking confirmation of our understanding of the serpent's seed is found in 1 John 3:8-13. We will need to content ourselves with a few points. There we are told in verse 8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Notice that in speaking of sinners as "being of the devil" this is led back to "the beginning," the very time that the account of God's promise in the garden of Eden speaks about. Verse 10 then sets forth a contrast: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother..." This is then made clear in verse 12 by an illustration: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous..."

Eve's very first seed, her first son Cain, because of his fruit of unbelief, is designated as being "of that wicked one," namely, as Satan's seed, or the serpent's seed.

St. John closes the section with the exhortation: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you..." The enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed, which the Lord announced as something that He would bring about, continues still. It is the enmity which exists between God's believing children and the unbelieving world. It began with Cain's hatred of believing Abel, and it is experienced by Christians today. It is not that the Christian hates the unbelievers as persons. The heavenly Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem them and to make them individually His own by faith. So also God's children, the Christian believers, are intent upon winning everybody in the world through the Gospel for Christ and His salvation. The hostility arises from the world as it remains hardened in sin and unbelief and resents and despises the childlike trust and humble, thankful service which the Christian renders to his God and Savior in faith. The Gospel by instilling such trust in the hearts of sinners moves them in faith to loving service. Thereby the Gospel gives occasion for enmity between Eve's believing seed and Satan's brood who want to have nothing to do with humble Christian faith and thankful love toward God. Jesus speaks of this when He says, Luke 12:51: "Suppose ye, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell You, Nay; but rather division."

The Lord's announcement of man's ultimate victory over Satan, however, comes in the final part of the promises "He shall crush you with respect to the head, and you shall bruise him with respect to the heel."

After having spoken of a large group of individuals involved on both sides in a God-effected enmity, the Lord again returned in His great announcement to the serpent as one individual. It is the serpent, not his seed, which shall bruise the heel of the woman's seed. The serpent will live on, even after the enmity has been extended to the serpent's seed and to the woman's seed. This again brings to light that more is involved here than a mere serpent. The actual serpent that had a role in Eve's temptation surely died in the course of time

after death had come upon the entire creature world. God is speaking of one much more powerful than a serpent, speaking of the one who used the servant for his evil purposes. Since the serpent in this final part of the promise is a single individual, this indicates that also the woman's seed, for that is what the "he" refers to, is to be taken as one individual. It is the woman's seed in the fullest sense, one outstanding descendant of Eve, the champion and special representative of mankind, the Savior who is to come from Eve.

The Lord God now told the tempter that this woman's seed would crush him with respect to the head. "Crush" seems to be the basic meaning of the Hebrew verb. It is the meaning in the other Old Testament passage, Job 9:17, where it occurs: "He shall crush me in a whirlwind." On the basis of its double use in this one verse of the promise, involving different subjects and objects, one can conclude that the scope of the meaning of this verb root is broad enough to include, on the one hand, a person's trampling upon the head of the serpent, and, on the other hand, the bruising or biting which a serpent can inflict upon a person's heel as that heel is carrying out a crushing action. The bruising or biting, pernicious and painful as it is, does not rob the champion of his complete victory. But to crush the head of a serpent means to administer a fatal blow, completely destroying such a serpent's power.

Someone may want to raise the question whether it is permissible or not to take "the woman's seed" to be a collective noun in part of the protevangel, i.e., the first promise, and then to take the pronoun in the last part which also refers to the woman's seed, as referring to an individual. We are convinced that the Hebrew collective singular noun lends itself to just such a usage. The collective singular may refer to all the individuals making up a certain class and at the same time refer also to one individual member by which this class is represented in a very special way.

In Galatians 3:16 St. Paul makes a point out of the collective singular which is used in Genesis 22:18 in God's promise to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Paul says: "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ." Still, Paul knows that the believers are at the same time also Abraham's seed, that they are that through their close relation to Christ, who in the primary sense is the promised seed of Abraham. That is why Paul can say in the closing verse of this same third chapter of Galatians: "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

To sum it all up, what the Lord God announced to Satan for the comfort of Adam and Eve in their fallen state was this: One descendant of Eve, as the champion and representative of mankind, would win a victory over Satan and rob him of his power. The power meant could only be the power which Satan had gained over mankind through the sin into which he had drawn our first parents. In winning this victory over Satan, in inflicting this complete defeat upon Satan, this Woman's Seed would Himself undergo suffering and pain at the hand of Satan.

Through this victory believers, "the woman's seed" in the wider sense, would win continual victory over Satan. To this St. Paul referred in Romans 16:20 when alluding to Genesis 3:15, he gave the Roman Christians a promise of victory over those who were creating divisions and offenses contrary to the apostolic doctrine under the prompting of Satan, saying: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

The Christian church has been right throughout the ages as it saw in Genesis 3:15 a protevangel, i.e., the very first promise of the Savior and of His victory over Satan and sin, a victory won through His suffering and death.

As the Lord God is the one who in this promise establishes the enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman, He must also be seen as supplying the power for the ultimate victory of the Woman's Seed over the Serpent. That is why we can say that already this promise encourages us to look for more than a mere man in this promised victorious champion of mankind; it encourages us to see in Him one who is also true God.

Together with Luther we also will not miss the significance of the fact that this promised deliverer is spoken of as the "Woman's Seed," rather than the seed of Adam. It is noteworthy that otherwise in the Old Testament a descendant is always spoken of as the seed of a man, the seed of a father or forefather. We do not want to say that His virgin birth or the deity of the Savior is already explicitly taught in the protevangel. We will again say, however, that the wording of God's initial promise was carefully chosen so as to be quite

adequate for embracing also these truths about the Savior when in the course of time God was pleased to reveal them very explicitly.

Some who raise doubts about Genesis 3:15 as a Messianic promise are apt to stress that this divine announcement is not quoted as such a promise in the New Testament. We are willing to grant that except for the clear allusion to it in Romans 16:20, to which we already called attention. We do not want to lose sight, however, of the prominence and the abundance with which our Savior's work of redemption is presented in the New Testament as a victory over Satan. In 1 John 3: 8 we are told; "For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Not to be in any doubt as to what works of the Devil Jesus had come to destroy, we need to bear in mind how clearly Jesus spoke in John 8:44 of Satan as the murderer from the beginning, the one who brought death upon mankind, who had done this as the liar from the beginning and as the father of lies. We need to remember how Jesus, our great champion, faced Satan in a series of severe temptations at the very beginning of His public ministry. (Matthew 4:1-11) We likewise should bear in mind that Jesus saw Satan's prompting behind Peter's attempt to dissuade him from the course of the cross, at the time when he solemnly announced His passion and death to His disciples. (Matthew 16:23)

In His final conversations with His disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem on the evening before His death, Jesus repeatedly spoke of His impending passion as a final battle with Satan, which would lead to full victory over him. Jesus told His disciples: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out..." (John 12:31) He assured them: "For the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in him." (John 14:30) In looking even beyond the victory to its proclamation in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus on that night promised that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would now reprove the world "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11)

In Hebrews 2:11-15 the purpose of the Savior's incarnation and work are spoken of as being the defeat-of the Devil: "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The use of Genesis 3:15 in Revelation 12 is quite outspoken. The references to the Woman, the Woman's Seed, the Enmity, and "that ancient serpent" are so evident as to be beyond dispute. It will suffice to call attention especially to one feature that might be passed over: the description of the church as "the rest of her (the woman's) seed" in verse 17.

### **3. The Lord in His faithful love laid disciplinary chastening upon the earthly lives of His fallen creatures in the interest of their salvation.**

The revelation of the Lord's faithfulness in His love toward His fallen creatures did not end with the announcement of the protevangel in their hearing. It continued to show itself as the Lord announced the disciplinary chastening which He was laying upon the woman and upon the man for this earthly life. We first hear about the chastening laid upon the woman.

*Gen 3:16 - "To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your painful conception; in pain shall you bear children; Yet to your husband shall be your desire, and he shall rule over you."*

Is this punishment or did we correctly refer to it as chastening? In giving our answer we need to remember that these terms are not always used with the same strict distinction. They are frequently used interchangeably. In the strict sense and usage punishment which God inflicts is compensation in suffering for the violation of His infinite divine majesty. Such punishment flows out of God's holy and righteous wrath upon sin. All suffering now and hereafter will finally become such punishment for those who are hardened and remain hardened in their sin.

God's chastening is suffering which He inflicts out of love in the interest of correction. While God is still offering man a time of grace, all the suffering which God sends upon sinners is meant as chastening. It serves the purpose of making man mindful of his sins and their merited curses, and of his utter helplessness before God, so that he may take refuge in the grace of God proclaimed to him in the Gospel. Yes, during this earthly

life God continues to send suffering as such chastening also upon those who have come to faith and who enjoy His forgiveness. This chastening is to aid them in their bitter struggle with their sinful flesh. (Hebrews 12:5-8)

The sufferings and discomforts which the Lord announced to the woman as her future lot were meant to keep her mindful of her fatal, sinful deed. In believing Satan's lie and in eating of the forbidden fruit she had looked for great delights. What sin brought her was sorrow and pain instead. Very emphatically God states: "I will greatly multiply your pain and your conception." It is best to take "your pain and your conception" as a figure of speech called a hendiadys. In this figure of speech two nouns are connected with "and" when in actual function the first noun is really subordinate to the other, serving the purpose of a descriptive adjective. That is why we previously translated: "I will greatly multiply your painful conception." For it is not the multiplying of the woman's conceptions in themselves which is to be thought of as an evil consequence of sin. In mankind's state of perfection, immediately upon man's creation as male and female, it was a divine act of blessing that God bade them to be fruitful and to multiply, and that by this blessing He enabled them to do so. The reminder of sin and its curses for the woman lay in the pain and the discomfort which would henceforth characterize each conception, each pregnancy, each birth, yes, the whole process of bearing and rearing children. In pain should she now bear children. In other words, the fact that sin brought not joy but distress and pain was to be brought home to Eve in connection with her basic womanly functions, her functions as wife and mother of the human race. They are still woman's basic functions. If she does not perform them, the human race will die out. Yet they are to be marked by a reminder of her sin, of how sin entered this world.

"Yet to your husband shall be your desire." In her fall, Eve had sought to act independently of Adam. She had assumed the position of leadership. She had sought to control the man by taking control into her own hands. By her persuasion she had even induced Adam to follow her in her transgression. But her sinful striving for independence from man and control over man had not brought her joy and satisfaction. It had brought sorrow and distress. It was a futile, fateful effort at overthrowing God's order of creation. Eve was given to hear that God's order still stood and would continue to be in effect. God the Creator made the woman to be a fitting help and companion to man who was first created. Note also 1 Corinthians 11: 9: "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Even sin has not changed this order. Woman's desire and attraction will continue to be for her own husband. She will never really feel at ease and fully satisfied without her own husband. Yet all the distress that she will meet with in seeking to realize, satisfy, and fulfill the longing for her own husband will constantly remind her of the sin that woman brought into the world.

Also in the state of sin her husband will continue to rule over her. This is still God's order of creation. In the state of sin, this rule has, however, all too frequently degenerated into harsh and heartless domination, into abject slavery for the woman.

What was here announced to Eve was obviously said to her not only as an individual but to her likewise as a representative and mother of all future women. That is why St. Paul in I. Timothy 2:11-15 can urge Christian women to live within God's order of creation, exhort them to be warned by Eve's fatal departure from this order, and encourage them instead to show their saving faith and their love and holiness while they humbly and contentedly pursue their basic wife and motherhood role.

Sin has poisoned and corrupted a salutary and blessed order of creation established in God's institution of marriage and the home. Only in a Christian marriage is its original blessedness again reached in a measure. It is reached when and to the extent that Christian husbands and wives in faith and in faithborn love heed Paul's exhortation "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands love our wives even as Christ also love the church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:22-25)

The chastening laid upon Adam was similarly intended to keep alive in him a keen remembrance of the sin to which he had consented and with which he had earned God's displeasure and wrath.

*Gen 3:17 -“And to Adam, He said. Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree concerning which I charged you, saying, you shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life.”*

Man had listened to his wife and submitted to her. He should have ruled. He should have supplied the leadership for which God had created him. As a constant reminder of his sinful default in his God-assigned role he was now to experience insubordination. He was to experience such insubordination from the soil, the tillable soil over which he would otherwise have exercised complete control and dominion.

Man would henceforth experience difficulty in securing his livelihood. The ground would produce its fruits, but winning them from the soil would always be attended by toil, difficulties, and misery. In toil man was now to eat the fruits of the ground. A divine curse had blighted the fruitfulness of the soil. No longer would it be fitting for sinful, imperfect man to live in the midst of a perfect world. God made the outward circumstances surrounding man correspond with the spiritual state of man for his own welfare. Man needed to feel the wretchedness of sin. For man's sake such a world that was put under the bondage of corruption and made subject vanity (Romans 8:19-22) would best serve to prepare man for God's invitation to take refuge in His saving grace.

*Gen 3:18 -“Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and You shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread.”*

That which man would now get through his labors would be gotten in meager quantities. Undesirable elements, thorns and thistles, would from now on grow without receiving attention, while man would be eating the plants of the field. Lifelong continuance of toil and labor was imposed on man.

*Gen 3:19 -“In the sweat of your face you shall eat -bread, until -you return to the ground, for from it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you shall return.”*

When Adam is told: “In the sweat of your face shall you eat breads” that is just another forceful way of repeating the previous statement: “In toil shall you eat all the days of your life.” It is not that eating would be so difficult that it would bring sweat upon man's face. Yet, his work and labors would be so strenuous and so continuous that the moments of refreshment and relaxation would still find man bearing the signs of his labors. This life of toil would finally end in physical death, in the dissolution of man's body into dust from which it was taken.

We again believe that we are here told how God actually described the labors and difficulties which Adam would be facing in gaining a livelihood after being driven out of Paradise. Yet the type of disorders mentioned are merely a sample and a type of all the difficulties and troubles which man since the fall experiences in labors of every kind, whether they be physical or mental, by which he gains his earthly livelihood.

#### **4. In his faithful love God led Adam to faith and to an expression of his faith in God's promise.**

*Gen 3:20 -“And the man called the name of his wife: Life (Eve), for she was the mother of all the living.”*

Eve means life in Hebrew. That was already recognized by the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint. It used the Greek word for life as the name of Adam's wife. The old Latin translation used the Latin name for life as the name of Eve, Vita. In faith Adam fixed his attention on the one comforting detail in the entire announcement of the Lord. He was expressing more than the mere idea that Eve would have offspring, and that for this reason she would become the mother of all the living. That is a truth which is quite evident and one which would be readily believed. It would hardly be significant enough to mention in such a solemn way in this brief account. We rather have the conviction expressed here by Adam that since all living beings are to come from Eve, therefore also life in the fullest sense. Life in Scripture very often is simply equated with salvation.

The significant way in which Adam's new name for his wife is reported here leads one to believe that

Adam was referring to the things offered in the promised victory over Satan, life before God in the midst of death. It is worth noting that this naming on the part of Adam follows closely upon the announcement of physical death. In distinction from the name “Woman” which Adam had given to his wife when God first brought her to him as a helpmate, this is a proper name which is a memorial of promised grace. It is an expression of faith on the part of Adam that he looks not only for the continuance of the human race in the motherhood of Eve, but also final victory over Satan and death through the promised Redeemer. This is an understanding that Melancthon had already expressed.

### **5. In His faithful love God clothed His fallen creatures appropriately in their shame.**

*Gen 3:21 “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them.” Also this statement carries out the thought that the Lord God revealed the faithfulness of His love toward His fallen creatures. In such faithfulness He clothed Adam and his wife appropriately in their shame.*

We heard in verse 7 that as soon as Adam and Eve had given way to Satan’s lie, as soon as they had given up their trust in God and thus lost the precious image of God, shame asserted itself in their lives. Realizing that they no longer had control of their impulses to direct them properly and to use them according to God’s holy will, they were conscious of their nakedness. They had sewed loincloths of fig leaves for themselves. Still, God recognized their sense of shame as serving a vital, wholesome purpose during man’s state as a sinner. By providing man with proper clothing, God strengthened this sense of shame. It was to be a help, an aid, for man in his struggle against sin and temptation.

Note that creatures must give up their life to supply man with vital clothing. How God made these garments of skin and how God clothed man is not stated. It could have been by instructing man to slaughter the animals for their skin and then directing man in the making of the garments as proper clothing. Our text informs us of the fact. It does not enter in upon the manner. We must content ourselves with what God tells us.

### **6. In His faithful love God guarded His fallen creatures against the further evil of eating from the tree of life in their sinful state.**

vs. 22-24 -“And the Lord God said: Behold the man is become like one of us with respect to the knowing of good and evil: and now lest he stretch out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever – and the Lord God sent him forth out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. And he drove the man out, and he placed eastward of the garden of Eden cherubim and the flaming sword, the one that turned back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Noteworthy is again the plural “like one of us.” The fathers of the church who saw in these words a foreshadowing of the truth of the Holy Trinity had the proper understanding, the only one that satisfies. This plural, like the plural in the account of the creation of man and the plural in the Hebrew name for God, prepare

for the fuller scriptural revelation concerning the great mystery of God’s being, the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are at the same time three distinct persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, equal in essence, power, and, glory. The unfolding of these truths in Scripture goes hand-in-hand with the gradual unfolding and execution of God’s plan of salvation.

The tempter had seduced Eve as he had assured her that by eating of the forbidden fruit they would become like God knowing good and evil. God Himself now states that man has indeed become like God in this very matter of knowing good and evil. We are ready to say with Luther that God said this in a divine and holy irony. Yet it is not irony in the sense of venting His amusement over His fallen creatures. With sadness God rather takes note that man has come to a God-like experiential knowledge of good and evil, yet one that is a caricature of the knowledge of good and evil which God had intended for man. It fills God with sadness that man now knows good good as something that he has lost, that man now knows evil as something that permeates his being through and through, as something to which he is now enslaved by nature, and against which he must unceasingly fight even as he is brought back to faith by God’s Gospel promise.

Man had sought to be like God; like God he had become, i.e., independent, but in what a perverted sense. He was now the slave of evil. God is good and hates evil. Than is evil and hates that which is good. This sad situation moved God to cast man out of Paradise. This casting out was one of the evil consequences of sin. Yet it was love which moved God to cast man out of the special home that God had prepared for him. Man was not to eat of the tree of life and live on forever in his sin-stained condition.

It must have been the original purpose of the tree of life to confirm man in the possession of imperishable physical life and finally to make physical death impossible. In accordance with Luther we can think of it as having been brought about by the power of God's Word connected with this tree.

God did not want fallen man now to eat of the tree of life. It would have hindered God from carrying out His great plan of salvation through His Son' the Woman's Seed who was to crush the serpent's head. Now that man had fallen into sin, he was not to live on and on here on earth in his fallen state and in a sin-torn and sin-defaced body as the damned in hell shall live on and on in unending shame and torment.

-God instead wants fallen man to hear the Gospel message in this life that through it he may be brought back to fellowship with God by faith in His Son. By a blessed death he is to regain perfect fellowship with God in heaven. On the last day our Savior wants to change our vile body that it may be fashioned like His glorious body. (Philippians 3:2) In heaven the believer "shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7 This means that those who by faith enter heaven through a blessed death and who experience a glorious resurrection of their body on the last day shall enjoy the eternal life in His fellowship which God wanted man to have in Paradise, the eternal life which Jesus had again won for man after the fall, the eternal life which we can now have, however, only in heaven.

After being told by Moses that God did not want man to "stretch out, his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever," we expect to hear God say what He intended to do to prevent this. Instead Moses interrupts the construction of the sentence and simply tells us what God did. He tells us God expelled man from the garden of Eden. There is no need that we be told what God said. To know what God did is fully sufficient.

God had made the garden of Eden as a wonderful home for man. God had fitted it out in a way that it could meet all of man's physical needs and at the same time satisfy his deepest yearning for beauty. Here there were trees of every kind, trees for food and trees pleasant to the sight. Near at hand was gold and the onyx stone and bedhellium, a precious resin highly prized in the ancient world. Here was a wonderfully arranged river and a constantly rising mist to keep the plants and trees continually fresh and fruitful. In taking care of this garden, man was to find satisfying activity, which would enlist all of his physical, intellectual, and emotional powers and abilities in a pleasurable way.

When God on the seventh day rested from His task of creation with great joy and satisfaction over all that He had made, He made this day also a source of blessing for man. Man was likewise to find joy and delight in God's work and in His loving God and Creator, who had made all these things with divine perfection and made them all for man's joy and benefit. Man was to enjoy the rest of blessed fellowship with God.

In such joy and bliss of Paradise man might have been confirmed in holiness. This would have come about if man had continued to express his trust and thankful love toward God with reference to the tree of the knowing of good and evil. Man might have been confirmed in holiness as with mind, heart, and will he would have entered in upon that which was good and at the same time have rejected that which was evil in God's sight.

Through his sin man had, however, forfeited this life of blissful, restful fellowship with God. It would have been futile for fallen man to have tried to regain it by eating of the tree of life. Quite a different kind of life would have been perpetuated by such an act. The garden was no longer for man. From now on man's earthly life was to be spent outside of the garden, to be spent there tilling the ground of which he was taken. What this would mean we have already heard as we considered God's announcement of chastening to Adam and Eve. It would be a life of weariness and toil, of much sorrow and distress, ending in physical death. Yet we also noted the purpose of just such a life for fallen man. It was to serve as a time of grace.

Yes, God sent man out of the garden. God did more. He took measures which made it impossible for

man to return to the garden to get at the tree of life. God placed cherubim at the eastern end of the garden of Eden to prevent re-entrance on the part of fallen man.

Scripture does not tell us too much about the cherubim. They are mentioned in Psalm 18:10 and in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel. Figures of cherubim facing each other were placed on the mercy seat of the ark of covenant; with their wings they overshadowed the spot on the mercy seat where the blood of atonement was sprinkled in God's holy presence. Figures of cherubim spanned the holy of holies in the temple of Solomon. From all of these scripture references we can conclude that they are ministering spirits of God, angels, who perform various tasks which God assigns to them. Often with their presence they symbolize the glorious presence and majesty of God. When God was pleased to have them appear, they assumed various physical forms. These physical forms do not belong to their being, since they are spirits. In the form in which they appeared here at the garden of Eden the cherubim seemingly wielded the flaming sword which turned every way as an additional measure to keep man from trying to re-enter the garden. That is probably the best way of understanding the statement of Moses that God likewise placed at the east of the garden the flame of the sword. That is the Hebrew way of saying a flaming sword.

How long did the cherubim and the flaming sword guard the entrance of the garden? How long did the garden itself continue to exist? God's Word is silent concerning both questions. Any speculation on our part is futile. As always when Scripture is silent, our attention is directed to something else.

God wants our attention to be directed upon the truths that the joy and bliss of Paradise are no longer meant for the earthly life of sinful man. Even Adam and Eve had great difficulty in accepting this truth wholeheartedly. We are not merely told that God sent them out of the garden of Eden; we hear that God drove man out. God seemingly met with unwillingness on the part of Adam and Eve. This was true even though we noted a reawakened faith in Adam as he named his wife Eve. We note such faith also in Eve at the birth of her first son. Yet even in such reawakened faith they had to struggle against their sinful flesh.

Sinful man still clings tenaciously to the thought that life here on earth can somehow still be turned into a Paradise. Though a child of sin and death, man constantly deceives himself into thinking that his trouble is after all nothing more than a question of providing a proper earthly environment. Man hopes to re-enter Paradise by providing a Paradise-like environment for himself by finding proper housing, proper schooling, proper recreation, by bringing about greater wealth and abundance in material things, by making progress in banishing ignorance, poverty, and disease. He even makes heroic efforts to prolong life through the transplanting of vital organs. With all this we do not want to say that any of these things mentioned are in themselves wrong, and that these things cannot be received with heartfelt thanksgiving as earthly blessings of God.

What is wrong and at the same time vain and futile is the pursuit of all these efforts out of the hope that man can really turn this earthly life into a new Paradise. What is wrong is this that sinful man forgets that ever since the fall the main function of this earthly life is that of serving as a time of grace. It is wrong to forget

that God uses toil, sorrow, and pain, and need as constant wholesome reminders of sin and its curses. Through these reminders He urges us to take refuge in faith to His Savior's grace held out to us in the Gospel message. Only as we cling in God-given faith to our Savior will our earthly life serve its real purpose, the main purpose that it has since the fall, that of a time of graces for though we return to the dust from which we were taken we will in such faith ultimately rise from the dust in glory for everlasting fellowship and joy with God in heaven. God does promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7

## **God's Promises to Abraham - The Object of Abraham's Faith**

When the publican Zacchaeus confessed his faith in Jesus the Lord Himself said of him that he, too, was now a son of Abraham (Luke 19:9). In his letter to the Romans (Romans 4:11,16) we hear St. Paul call Abraham "the father of all them that believe." In Galatians 3:7, the same apostle writes: "Know ye, therefore,



that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham.” Such statements of Scripture point to Abraham as the great model of saving faith, showing us how faith becomes strong and how it becomes weak, what blessed fruits it bears, how it is tested, how it triumphs, and how it leads to a blessed death.

### **A New Chapter in God’s Plan of Salvation**

The birth of Abraham takes us back to about the year 2167 BC.<sup>1</sup> The development of mankind after the flood had followed much the same course as that which led up to this universal judgment. As the descendants of Noah multiplied, most of them once more lost sight of the promise of the Savior which God had already proclaimed in Paradise after the fall. Of this promise of the Savior Noah had prophesied that it would be carried out through the line of Shem. Instead of glorifying God’s name by seeking comfort against sin and death and strength for a godly life in His saving grace, most people again went about making a name for themselves and vainly sought to work out their own welfare. This is shown in the story of the judgment of God in connection with the confusion of tongues at Babel. Yet God’s faithful love did not waver in its gracious purpose of giving sinful mankind a Savior and full salvation through Him. In Acts 14:16 St. Paul tells us how God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” God now chose one man, revealed Himself to him and carefully trained him in faith in order to make him the father of a special people among whom the Gospel should be preserved until the Savior of mankind would be born from its midst.

### **God Chose Abraham**

Abram was of the line of Shem. According to Genesis 17:5, God later changed his name to Abraham. His father, Terah, of whom Joshua (Joshua 24:2) tells us that he, too, had fallen into idolatrous practices, lived in Ur of the Chaldees, near the lower Euphrates. Here Abraham and his older brothers Harare and Nahor, were born; here Abraham took Sarai to wife; here Abraham continued to live until, together with Sarai and his nephew Lot, he accompanied Terah to Haran in upper Mesopotamia. Concerning this journey, Moses states that they went forth from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan, and that they came unto Haran and dwelt there, sad that Terah died in Harare.

From Stephen’s address recorded in Acts 7:2-4, we conclude that this journey was prompted by the fact that God had appeared to Abraham and said unto him: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.” Terah, the head of this clan, was still alive and would out of respect be considered the head of this expedition, even though God’s command to Abram was the real reason for it being made.

Moses in Genesis 12 then tells us how the Lord repeated this call at Harare after Terah’s death, when Abraham was 75 years old. He also sets forth the rich promises with which God moved Abraham to follow this call in obedient faith: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

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<sup>1</sup> We get this date by working back from the time of the division of the kingdom of Israel. 931 is a fairly well-established date for this division on the basis of the Assyrian eponym lists.\* In 1 Kings 6:1 we are told that the foundation of Solomon’s temple was laid in the fourth year of his reign. Since Solomon reigned 40 years, this would have been 36 years before the division of the kingdom, approximately the year 967. In the Kings passage, we are told that this was 480 years after the exodus, approximately 1447 BC. In Exodus 12: 41 we are told that on the very day that the exodus took place, the children of Israel had dwelt in Egypt for 430 years. The beginning of these 430 years takes us back to the year when Jacob took his family to Egypt upon the invitation of Joseph and Pharaoh. At that time Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh, and, according to Genesis 47:9, Jacob was 130 years old. This would place us in the year 2007. According to Genesis 25:26, Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born. This would be in the year 2067 BC. According to Genesis 21:5, Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. Thus we get the approximate date of 2167 for the birth of Abraham. We have to say “approximate” because the various events that we have mentioned may have taken place in different parts of the year and thus one could in this way of figuring gain or lose a few years. This way of figuring on the basis of scriptural statements gives us a satisfactory general date for Abraham’s birth.

\*The Assyrian eponym lists covering each of the years individually from 890 to 648 BC contain astronomical data such as eclipses. Thus they are the best help that we have for establishing ancient history dates. Such contacts between Israel and Assyria during these years are recorded in the Bible and also mentioned in these eponym lists, a dating of the biblical events with reference to the Christian calendar is made possible.

## **God's Rich Promises**

Here indeed were rich promises. We can distinguish seven individual points of promise:

1. God would show to Abraham and give to him a special land.
2. Abraham, though still childless, would become the father of a great nation.
3. God would richly bless Abraham.
4. God would make his name great.
5. Abraham would become a blessing also to others.
6. According to their attitude toward Abraham, people would receive either God's blessing or His curse.
7. In Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed.

The final blessing is the key to all of the rest of them. This final blessing gives purpose and meaning to all the others. All the other blessings, if they are to be understood correctly, must be kept in close connection with this final promise. Only in this way would Abraham's faith in any of these points of promise be saving faith. This is the manner in which Abraham's faith on any of these various points of promise are considered in the account of Genesis. When, for example, according to Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven, God counted this faith unto him for righteousness.

Only in one way could all the families of the earth be blessed through Abraham, namely, in that from his seed would come forth the Savior of mankind, the woman's seed of whom God had said in Paradise that He would overcome the cursed power which Satan had won over mankind through sin. Because this was its meaning, St. Paul states in Galatians 3:8 that God, according to the Scriptures, preached the Gospel unto Abraham in saying: "In thee shall all nations be blessed." In these promises the Lord revealed His Savior's heart to Abraham, deep desire to give salvation to a world of sinners.

## **The Fulfillment of the Promises**

To us who live in the light of the fulfillment of these promises, their content is revealed in its full details. It is quite evident to us that because of the part which God assigned to Abraham in His plan of salvation, Abraham's name would of necessity ever remain great. Wherever the Gospel is preached and taught, not merely the name of Abraham, but also the temporal and spiritual blessings which God heaped upon him will be kept in remembrance. God gave Abraham many earthly blessings. He protected him from all of his enemies, for through Abraham He meant to carry out His plan of salvation. Thus God allowed no harm to come to Abraham. With the greatest of care God trained him in faith and thus also gave him great spiritual blessings. Through Abraham all the families of the earth have indeed been blessed in that from him, according to the flesh, Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer, came forth. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. It will continue to be true that all who bless Abraham because in faith they see their peace and eternal hope in the Savior whom God brought forth from Abraham, shall be blessed forever. He, however, who thinks lightly of Abraham because he despises the salvation which God brought into fulfillment through him, will perish under the curse of his sin.

We know Abraham as the father of the people of Israel, God's chosen Old Testament people. They were a great nation according to the standards of God's grace inasmuch as God used them to preserve and unfold His Gospel message until Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary in their midst. Even now, Abraham is the father of the spiritual Israel of God, the father of all believers. We likewise realize what a fitting dwelling place God gave to Abraham's seed, the children of Israel, in the land of Canaan, to which He led the patriarch. This narrow strip of fertile land, with the natural barriers of a great desert to the east and of the Mediterranean Sea to the west, made it possible for Israel to develop and to keep its identity as a nation during all the political turmoil of the ancient world. At the same time Israel was not isolated. Through Canaan ran the vital routes for warfare and commerce between Egypt in the south and the Greeks, the Hittites, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians to the west, north, and east. In this way Israel not only had rich opportunity to let its light of salvation shine before the nations, but the Lord also repeatedly used the hostilities between these nations to chasten His unfaithful people Israel.

### **Abraham Believed the Gospel**

As we consider these promises in the light of their fulfillment, we are not to conclude that they still lacked meaning for Abraham when he received them. Certainly, he did not know all the details as we are able to know them. Yet Abraham saw in these promises a revelation of God's saving grace. Jesus says, John 8:56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham realized that the promised Savior and His gift of salvation for all men was the ultimate goal of all those promises. In that vision of faith he was glad, glad because it gave him comfort against sin and death. See, therefore, that essentially Abraham trusted in the same Gospel to which we cling in faith. True faith can have no other object than the Savior's pardon. All other spiritual as well as earthly promises of God flow out of the blessing of the Savior's gift of forgiveness. Because Abraham believed in the coming Savior and His forgiveness, he could also be certain in faith of the fulfillment of all the other promises of God that had been given to him.

Also our faith centers in the forgiveness of sins procured by our Savior. All other blessings, also all earthly blessings, are promised to us for Jesus' sake. God gives the earthly blessings as they fit into the interests of His kingdom and our eternal welfare. St. Paul writes in II Corinthians 2:20: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."