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365

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NIV<sup>™</sup> NEW  
INTERNATIONAL  
VERSION

JANUARY 1



# BEGINNINGS OF EARLY MANKIND

(Creation to ca. 2100 B.C.)

## *The Beginning*



Is it possible to imagine a time when nothing existed? Take away the brilliance of the sun, for example, and the moon and stars at night. What would life be like without them? Take away the clouds and sky and rivers and oceans. Imagine the earth without any human beings, animals, fish, birds, grass, trees, or plants of any kind. What would it be like with the earth completely bare? Indeed, what would it be like if there were no earth at all, no universe—nothing? Has the universe existed forever? Was there never a time when it had a beginning? Surely it must have had a beginning. But when would that have been? How would it all have happened? What made it happen? For what purpose, if any, did it happen? Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here?

Since recorded history began, men and women of every generation, culture, and place have searched for the answers to those questions. Some say it all happened by chance, without any reason or purpose whatever. But given what appears to be intelligent design and order throughout the universe, an origin by chance seems hard to accept. And life without meaning seems clearly contrary to the very mind which searches for meaning. So what are the answers? Where did I come from, and why am I here? How did it all begin?

ACCOUNT OF CREATION. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Gen. 1:1,2

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. Gen. 1:3-5

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. Gen. 1:6-8

Gen. 1:9-13 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

Gen. 1:14-19 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

Gen. 1:20-23 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

Gen. 1:24,25 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:26-30 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>a</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything

<sup>a</sup>Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Svriac): Masoretic Text *the earth*

that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Gen.  
1:31-2:1

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Gen.  
2:2-4

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

## *Adam and Eve*

The answer is God. God is the Creator of all things. God existed before the universe came into being, and it was God who made it all happen.

What power and majesty must accompany this God! The Genesis account of the beginnings of all things is a revelation which ascribes creation to an all-powerful, all-knowing, and purposeful Supreme Being—a living Creator and spiritual God acting with meaningful deliberation. In documenting the creation of man, the account suggests that God speaks with more than one voice in bringing about his creation. The implication is that there is a fullness to this divine personality, a fullness which will be more completely revealed as the biblical text unfolds.

Of even more significance is the statement that, in some way distinctly different from all other creatures, mankind has been created in the very likeness of God. Surely this cannot mean that the likeness is a physical resemblance, since God existed before anything physical came into being. Therefore it probably suggests that, like God, human beings are essentially spiritual beings, having intelligence, moral consciousness, and freedom of choice. Though limited by human form, mankind is given creativity and permitted to exercise a degree of dominion over God’s creation and the lesser creatures within it. What an amazing thought, that mankind, both male and female, should be so honored by the Creator!

As if to underscore the significance of mankind’s creation, the Genesis revelation gives a special account of the first man and woman, known as Adam and Eve. Adam is formed first from elements of the earth, as if God, working like a potter, fashions him from a lump of clay. Then Eve is formed from part of Adam’s own body, suggesting a wholeness and unity between man and woman, particularly when the two are joined in the marriage relationship, which is instituted with this first couple. Both Adam and Eve share in the uniqueness of having received a divine inbreathing of God’s Spirit which sets them apart from all other living creatures. They are given dominion over the other creatures and are set in a garden of lush vegetation in a place called Eden, an area associated with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, just east of the Arabian Desert in the Middle East.

Here in Eden, Adam and Eve live in a time of innocence until both are tempted by a serpent to eat of a particular fruit which God has forbidden them to touch or taste. Although a complete explanation is lacking, it appears that the serpent is being used on this occasion by Satan, or the Devil, who will subsequently be identified as God's adversary in the spirit realm and the great Tempter of mankind to do evil.

The effect of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God is a new acquaintance with sin and the reality of punishment. Their sin not only produces feelings of shame, fear, and blame but also results in more specific consequences to all mankind, who will be seen in each subsequent generation to participate in their own disobedience to God's will. The ultimate punishment, as far as Adam and Eve are personally concerned, is banishment from the garden, with all its ease and pleasure. They, like all generations thereafter, must face the hardships and struggles which life on the earth imposes.

Gen.  
2:5-7

**CREATION OF MAN.** Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth<sup>a</sup> and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams<sup>b</sup> came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed a man<sup>c</sup> from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Gen.  
2:8-17  
Mesopotamia

**GARDEN OF EDEN.** Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>d</sup> and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>e</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Gen.  
2:18-22

**CREATION OF WOMAN.** The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

<sup>a</sup>Or *land*; also in verse 6      <sup>b</sup>Or *mist*      <sup>c</sup>The Hebrew for *man* (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground* (*adamah*); it is also the name *Adam* (see verse 20).

<sup>d</sup>Or *good*; *pearls*

<sup>e</sup>Possibly southeast Mesopotamia

But for Adam<sup>a</sup> no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs<sup>b</sup> and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib<sup>c</sup> he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

UNION OF MAN AND WOMAN. The man said,

Gen.  
2:23-25

"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,'  
for she was taken out of man."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

TEMPTATION TO SIN. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Gen. 3:1-5

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

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

SIN PRODUCES SHAME. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Gen. 3:6,7

SIN PRODUCES FEAR. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Gen.  
3:8-10

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

SIN PRODUCES BLAME. And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Gen.  
3:11-13

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

CURSE ON THE TEMPTER. So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

Gen.  
3:14,15

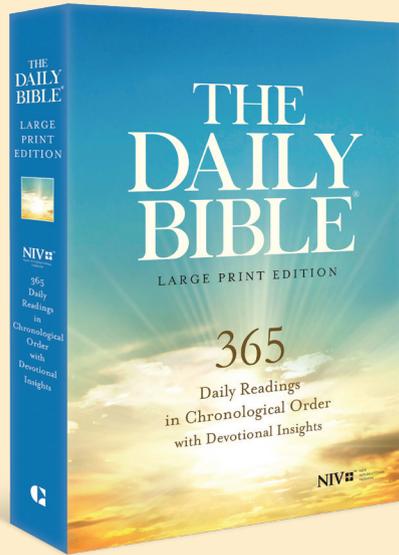
"Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

<sup>a</sup>Or *the man*

<sup>b</sup>Or *took part of the man's side*

<sup>c</sup>Or *part*



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