

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

A Comprehensive View of God's Great Plan from
Eternity to Eternity Illustrated with Chart

By

Louis T. Talbot
Chancellor of Biola College and Talbot Theological Seminary

Copyright @ 1936

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINAL MAN — THE FALL — THE FIRST PROMISE OF A REDEEMER

In our former study we considered the past eternity — the eternal, Triune God and His eternal purpose. We discussed the original creation as referred to in Genesis 1:1; the chaos of Genesis 1:2; and the renovation of the earth which followed, as recorded in Genesis 1:3-31. We saw that the renovation of the earth occupied six days, and that the order was as follows:

- first day, light and the dividing of light from darkness;
- second day, firmament and the separating of the waters on the earth from the waters, or clouds, of the heavens;
- third day, earth and seas and the bringing forth of herbs;
- fourth day, lights in the heavens, sun, moon, and stars;
- fifth day, fish and fowl; sixth day, cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth, and man.

We saw that to man, created in the image and likeness of God, the Lord gave dominion over all the earth.

We come now to the second chapter of Genesis, which gives us the detailed account of the creation of man. In this lesson we shall endeavor to find the salient points in regard to his original state as he first came from the hand of God, considering also his fall, and God's first promise of a Redeemer.

Man in His Original State

The detailed account of the creation of man is given in Genesis 2:7:

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

There is more truth implied in these words than is openly declared. Some of these things are very clear and need to be emphasized in this day in which we live.

1. Man is a Creature.

He had a beginning, and therefore is not co-eternal with God. If you are at all familiar, my friend, with the teachings of the cults, such as Christian Science, Unity, Theosophy, New Thought, Russellism and many others of like nature you know that their primary teaching makes man co-equal and co-eternal with God.

The Scriptures set forth no such doctrine; for according to the Word of God, man had a beginning; he is a creature, not equal with his Creator; and being a creature, he is responsible to God who made him, and will one day have to give an account to Him.

In this day of lawlessness and unbelief the doctrine of accountability to God is not very popular; but whether popular or not, yet it remains an inescapable and a solemn fact. You are responsible to your Maker, my brother, and will one day be called to give an account to Him.

2. Man's Bodily Frame Is of the Earth — Earthy.

Man was formed of the dust of the ground. There is not the slightest hint here that this dust of the ground was in the form of organized matter, as the evolutionists would have us believe. There is not the slightest intimation that man was evolved from some lower form of animal life. Such a theory of the creation of man is nothing less than a fairy tale foisted upon credulous mankind — and a theory is a supposition, not a fact! The divine record is to be believed, and here it is in Genesis 2:7: “**The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.**”

3. “Man Became a Living Soul” (Genesis 2:7).

Having created man's bodily frame, God “**breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.**”

Thus God communicated to the human race something from Himself, by virtue of which man became distinct from all the animal kingdom.

Not only was he a living soul; he was possessed also of a spirit, by which he was capable of knowing God and having fellowship with Him. This is something that the beasts which perish do not possess. Thus man has a three-fold nature: body, soul, and spirit.

Paul recognized this fact when he wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, saying: “**I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (I Thessalonians 5:23).

There is a difference between each of these three.

With the possession of a spirit, man became God-conscious, which fact determines an impassable gulf between the most sinful, the most degraded man and the highest form of animal life.

Some time ago a noted professor adopted a chimpanzee into his home, that it might be a close companion for his own boy. As we might suppose, he did this in order to study the animal carefully.

Later he declared that the chimpanzee acted in many ways as intelligently as his boy; for among other things he learned certain customs of table etiquette. He could use a knife, a fork, a spoon, even a table napkin. The professor thus endeavored to show how closely related the animal kingdom is to man.

Now all that he said about the formation of certain habits may be true; but there is one thing the boy could do that the ape could never do, no matter what his training or development might be. The ape could never reverently look up into the face of God and say, "**My Father.**" It requires God-likeness to do that. It requires the possession of a spirit.

And only to man did God give this likeness to Himself when He created him and "**breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.**"

Man was not left to be guarded by instinct as in the case of the brute creation. To him God gave the intelligence to understand His will and His requirements.

4. God Clothed Man with a Raiment of Light.

Yet another marvelous token of God's provision for man lies in the fact that He clothed him with a raiment that is, indeed, the garment with which He covers Himself. In Psalm 104:1, 2 we read: "**O Lord my God, thou . . . coverest thyself with light as with a garment.**"

The record of the fall, which we shall consider later, reveals that when man sinned, thus losing his God-likeness, he found himself naked.

That is why he made for himself an apron of fig leaves. This record, together with other portions of the Word of God, gives us reason to believe that man before his fall had a luminous garment which formed a covering, a glory that shone from within. We shall see that he lost that glorious covering when he fell; and ever since sin came into the world, unregenerate man has been naked, void of a covering, unfit to stand in the presence of a holy God. Not only so; his very nakedness is a constant reminder of his sin. But made in the image and likeness of God, how beautiful and majestic man must have been when he first came from the hands of the Creator!

5. God Gave Man Dominion Over the Earth.

This included lordship over the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. All the fruit of the trees of the garden was at his disposal, with one restriction only — he was not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Why did God place the restriction in regard to it?

The tree was so called because of the very restriction placed around it; and this prohibition was given in order to remind Adam and Eve of the fact that, while man was lord over creation, yet he was still a creature, responsible to his Creator. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was ever a reminder of the fundamental truth that the Lord God of heaven and earth was his Governor, his Lord, and that His will was supreme.

Let me emphasize again the truth that this lesson to be learned from the restriction God placed upon Adam and Eve concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the lesson man needs to learn most of all today — his responsibility to his Maker, his Creator.

We are living in a day when man is throwing off all responsibility, both human and divine. The day is coming, however, when man shall give an account of himself to God. And in that day whatsoever a man has sown, that shall he also reap.

Daniel Webster was once asked to name the greatest thought that had ever entered his mind; and this was his reply: “My accountability to Almighty God.”

My brother, this ought to cause you serious thought too. In the Garden of Eden God taught the lesson of human accountability to Himself; and throughout the Bible we find the same teaching — from Genesis to Revelation; from the Garden of Eden to the great white throne, before which will be gathered all the wicked dead, there to give an account of themselves to a holy God.

The Fall of Man

Such questions as these are often asked:

- Why did God not make man a character incapable of sinning?
- Why did He permit Satan to spoil His creation?

We shall endeavor to answer these questions in connection with the general topic, the fall of man.

Why did God permit the temptation?

We need to bear in mind the fact that when God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He placed them in a state of perfect innocence. There is a difference between innocence and righteousness. The latter is what God wants, as the Bible clearly shows; and innocence could not become righteousness until it had been tested and man had been given the opportunity of exercising his will Godward. This is what God sought in the Garden of Eden.

The age of innocence was that period of time during which man did not exercise his will either in one way or in another. Adam and Eve were innocent, but they are the only human beings that ever lived who were in this state.

We speak of babies as being innocent, but in this sense the word “innocent” is a misnomer. Babies are undeveloped rather than innocent. They have not reached the age of responsibility to God and man. We believe the Bible teaches that if a baby dies, he goes to heaven. But even so, babies are heirs to the fallen nature of sinful man; and as such, they are not innocent. Long before they reach the age of accountability, sin begins to assert itself; and sooner or later every child must be born again by the Holy Spirit of God if he is to be saved.

For a period of time Adam and Eve were innocent. God had given them a will which they could exercise Godward or sin-ward. For some time this will was dormant, as it were; and in order that they might have opportunity to exercise it, God allowed the temptation.

He permitted Satan to approach them in order that, through obedience to His Word, man might become righteous; for it is from such a creature that God receives the greatest praise. God is glorified through the obedience of a creature that is capable of disobedience, whose obedience is not mechanical, but rather is of the heart and of the will.

When people ask why God did not make man incapable of sin, they forget that such a creature could not be a man — a free moral agent.

The very term, free moral agent, suggests capability of either righteousness or unrighteousness.

God gets no glory from a machine, from the service of one who could not do other than follow a certain course. God gets glory from voluntary obedience, wherein there is a choice to be made. Therefore, in order that man might have opportunity of exercising his will, Satan was allowed to approach him with his suggestion.

Had man stood the test and obeyed God's Word, he would have become righteous. No doubt he would have eaten of the tree of life and become forever incapable of sin. But man failed in the test; he became a sinner — and what a loser he was!

We cannot tell what would have been the glories of man had he remained true to God and become righteous.

There would undoubtedly have been a glorious advancement in the knowledge of things pertaining to God. But having fallen and become unrighteous, the only advancement man can know, apart from Christ, is under the leadership of Satan; and this advancement is in the knowledge of sin, sorrow, tears, disappointment, and death — until finally it reaches the outer darkness and eternal separation from God.

The only way back to God now is through the work of Another, and that One is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to redeem fallen man when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save. He died on the cross as man's Substitute. Not only did He pay the penalty for man's sin, but He also provided a righteousness that fits sinful man for the presence of a holy God. In Romans 1:16, 17, Paul says: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation . . . For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”** This righteousness is **“unto all,”** but only **“upon all who believe”** (Romans 3:22).

The suit of clothes that I have on was unto all who saw it as long as it was in the shop window; but it is upon the purchaser only, the one who took it.

At Calvary God purchased a righteousness for unrighteous man. That righteousness is unto all: **“for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

But that righteousness which God gives with everlasting life is upon those who believe and upon those only. Man must make the choice; he must meet the condition — the personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Saviour. My brother, have you believed? Have you taken Christ as your own personal Saviour?

The Effect of the Fall

What effect did the fall have upon man? What changes did it produce in his person and in his relationship to God? Turn to the third chapter of Genesis for the answer.

1. Adam and Eve Lost Their Raiment of Light.

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7).

The luminous garment which formed their covering before the fall now ceased to shine.

Having lost the moral image of God, they lost also the outward expression of that moral image. Later on in this series of studies we shall see how all believers shall one day be like Christ, clad in His glory and likeness. It is sufficient at this point to say that through the fall man lost his God-likeness. And man has been naked ever since. This fact is not only a reminder of his sin; it proclaims also his need of **“the garments of salvation”** provided by Christ, the Lord.

By sewing fig leaves together to make for himself an apron, man endeavored through, his own efforts to regain what he had lost.

The efforts of the natural man have ever been along this line; but man can be clothed, made fit for the presence of God, only on the basis of a death, and not through any work of his own. It is very significant that the covering Adam and Eve made was of fig leaves; for when Christ was upon the earth, the only thing He cursed was the fig tree.

It would indicate that the curse of God is upon all those who despise grace by going about to establish their own righteousness.

My dear friend, are you sewing fig leaves together for a covering for your nakedness before God? Or are you covered with that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ provided for you when He died on Calvary's Cross?

2. Sin Separated Man from God.

“And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8).

Sin always separates man from the face of God. If sin enters a home, it separates husband and wife. If sin enters a business, it separates employer from employee. But far worse than either of these, when sin entered the human heart, it put an impassable chasm between sinful man and a holy God — impassable so far as man is concerned, impassable except by the way of the cross of Christ. Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Sin separates!

3. The Fall Distorted Man's Vision of God.

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid” (Genesis 3:9, 10).

What made Adam afraid of God? Had God not been his Friend and Benefactor? Had He not bestowed upon him all the riches of His creation? Why then was he afraid? He was afraid because sin had distorted his vision of God. Sin always distorts man's vision of God. How strange that man should spend all of life in one great endeavor to get away from God! And yet this is not strange in the light of man's unconfessed and unforgiven sin. Adam was afraid because he had sinned.

I remember when I was a lad, if I had been told of a desert place where God was not, all my plans and purposes would have been concentrated on the one effort of getting there, so distorted was my view of God. And millions of people today feel that same way. They know nothing of the height, depth, length, or breadth of the love, mercy, and grace to be found in the heart of God for a sinning world.

God's cry, **“Adam, where art thou?”** is the cry that has come down through the ages. He is seeking man, seeking him to save him from his lost condition. But man still hides from the presence of God.

My friend, God's love has provided a Saviour. If you accept Him and trust His redeeming love and grace, you have no need to be afraid of His voice. You have no need to hide from His presence.

But if you reject this Saviour, then you have every reason to fear; for **“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** without the garment of righteousness that Christ alone can give! (See Hebrews 10:31).

Are you hiding from God today?

If so, let me tell you, my brother, that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost.

The First Promise of a Redeemer

Very soon after the fall of man, God promised a Redeemer.

Into the scene of man's failure and sin God came with the lamp of promise — the promise of a Saviour. This lamp burned brighter and brighter all through the Old Testament days, until the star of Bethlehem appeared and the angels announced the birth of the promised One. It was this lamp that lighted up the sin of man's failure, and dispelled the darkness.

Listen to the very first promise of this coming Redeemer; it was uttered when God spoke to the serpent, saying: **“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”** (Genesis 3:15).

Thus began the great line of Messianic promise which runs like a scarlet thread throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

In this marvelous statement several things need to be noted carefully:

1. *The promised Redeemer was to be “**the seed of woman**” — not of man.* This is the first intimation that the Saviour would have a human mother, but not a human father.
2. *The seed of woman was to “**bruise**” the serpent's “**head**.”* Now the head speaks of government, and the bruising of the head is prophetic of the overthrow of Satan's kingdom and the liberation of his captives.
3. *“**The heel**” of the seed of woman was to be bruised, prophetic of the Redeemer's death.* The heel is a part of the physical body; and in His death the hands and feet of the Saviour were pierced, even as the prophecy foretold.

The provision of a robe of righteousness on the basis of the death of the Saviour, **“the seed of woman,”** is next suggested; for in Genesis 3:21 we read: **“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”**

How suggestive this is!

The coats of skins could be had only on the basis of a death. To take the skin from an animal is first to destroy the life.

Here also is a prophetic picture — that on the basis of a death, the death of the Son of God, man would be clothed in a garment of righteousness that would fit him for the presence of a holy God.

We have seen that when man fell, he made for himself aprons of fig leaves. Now God took those aprons away, and gave him a covering of His own making.

- Into the fig leaf aprons God did not put one stitch; it was all the work of man.
- Into the coats of skins man did not put one stitch; it was all the work of God.

Moreover, before Adam and Eve could be clothed with skins, the fig leaf aprons, the work of their own hands, had to be taken away. They had to be willing to exchange their aprons for the garments of God's provision. They had to be willing for the substitution to be made.

My brother, there are only two religions in the world today — that which gives to man a false hope, as represented by the fig leaf aprons; and that which makes man fit to stand in the presence of God, as represented by the coats of skins.

The one is of works; the other is of grace.

One presents man's futile effort to save himself; the other rests upon what Christ provided when He died on Calvary.

Which of these two is yours today? Are you clothed with the fig leaves of your own works, or are you clad in the garments of salvation provided for you by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross? Remember! The former has the curse of God resting upon it, while the latter will fit you for the presence of God throughout all the eternal ages. God wants to say of you, “**Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him**” (Luke 15:22).

Will you let Him? Will you let Him today?

~ end of chapter 2 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
