

Session 3: Sin and the Seed

Faith, Hope, and Love: Rediscovering the Essentials of Christianity

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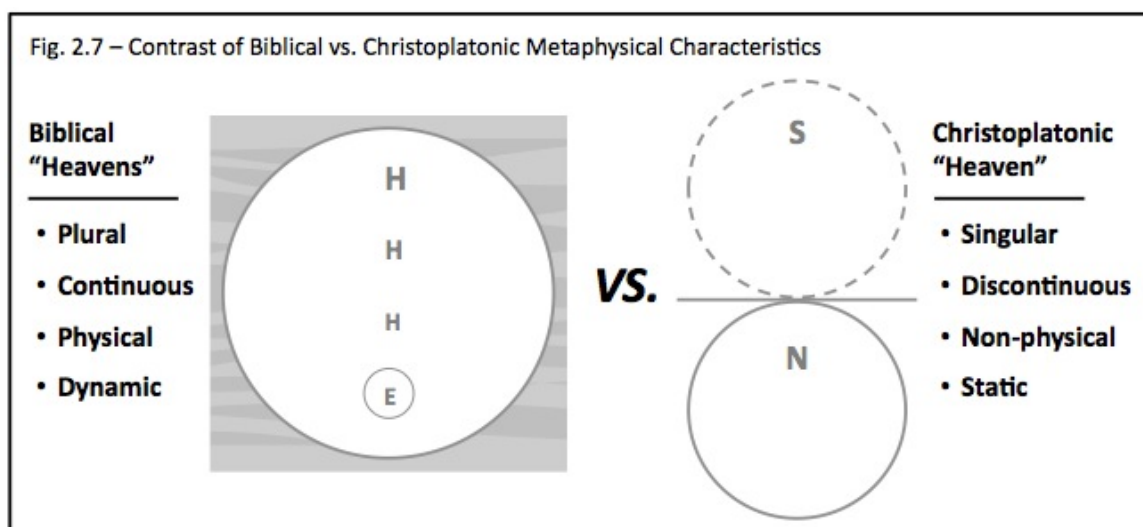
Review

In order to understand the story of Scripture and read the world from the Bible's perspective, we must "play the game" on the Bible's *field* and follow the Bible's *rules*. The Bible's field could also be called its worldview, or more specifically, its *cosmology*.

The Western worldview has been primarily shaped by Greek philosophy. Through a series of unfortunate events several hundred years before the first advent of Christ, Hellenistic culture and Platonic thought was disseminated throughout the known world.

Origen of Alexandria would disastrously fuse Christianity and Platonism through his writings. The official church would later condemn Origen's conclusions as heresy, but his *methods of arriving at those conclusions continued to be employed* by the church.

A *dualistic view of cosmology* was adapted and slowly became the unquestioned norm for the West. As a result, *Platonic dualism* is what best describes the cosmology of the modern Western Christian worldview.



In the beginning...

As we begin to look at the story of the Bible, we must not move too quickly past the beginning. In addition to *the setting* (“the heavens and the earth”), *the plot*, *some characters*, and *some very important terms* are developed in Genesis 1-11 that are critical for understanding the rest of the story. As we will see throughout our study, patterns are developed in Scripture that have their foundations in the early chapters of Genesis.

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

(Genesis 1:31 ESV)

1. From the inception of the story to its very end, the Bible portrays the God who finds great joy in His creation and deeply loves the work of His hands. Unlike the Platonic perspective that sees the physical realm as evil and corrupt beyond repair, God *loves* what He has created.
2. Adam was the pinnacle of God’s creative activity, being made in His *image* and after His *likeness* (Genesis 1:26). Adam being made in the *image* and *likeness* of God¹ meant that:
 - a. Adam’s relationship to *God* was that of a father to a son
 - b. Adam’s relationship to *creation* was that of a servant king

At the beginning of the canon, then, human beings are created as rulers of the earth, representing the mighty name of God throughout the world. They are the recipients of blessing, which includes not only their status but also the ability to transmit the image of God by creating life.²

3. As all things are wholly dependent on God for existence, He breathed the *breath of life* (Genesis 2:6) into Adam and *blessed* him (Genesis 1:28). Creation lives from, to, and through its Creator, and it is his “spirit,” or “breath” (Hb. *rûah*), which animates creation.
4. Adam was appointed to father others *in his likeness* (see Genesis 5:1-3 where he fathered a son named Seth *in his own likeness*). Adam’s commission was to:

¹ See the discussion in Gentry, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2012) p.189-202 and in Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty* (IVP 2003) p.58-60

² Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty* (IVP 2003) p. 62

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
(Genesis 1:28 ESV)

5. When the heavens and the earth were created and two personal, historical humans walked upon the young earth, there was no taint of corruption, sin, or death. Through God’s *breath of life* and continued access to the *tree of life*, humanity was originally designed to live forever, enjoying unhindered fellowship and communion with God. God’s highest intent in creation was perpetual well-being.
6. God placed the man He had created in a garden in the eastern part of the land of Eden. The garden in Eden is often understood as merely a plot of farmland that Adam and Eve were required to till, water, and weed. While Adam could have taken on some agrarian responsibilities before the fall, closer examination reveals deeper meaning in two words that are used to describe Adam’s activity in the garden:

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”
(Genesis 2:15 ESV)

- a. When these two words in Hebrew are used together in the Old Testament, they always refer to Israelites *servicing God* and *keeping His commandments* or to the priests who *serve the Lord* and *guard His sanctuary*.³
- b. This clarifies that Adam’s service was overtly *priestly* and that the garden in Eden was a *sanctuary*, just as the priests and Levites were later to care for the tabernacle/temple. Adam’s was set to rest in a “Garden-Temple” to minister to God.

The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypical sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him. Many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries, particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple. These parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary.⁴

Therefore...if the garden was an archetype or pattern of the sanctuary, then humans were the archetypical Levites.

³ Numbers 3:7-8, Numbers 8:25-26, Numbers 18:5-6, I Chronicles 23:32, Ezekiel 44:14

⁴ G.J. Wenham, ‘Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story’, Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies 9 (1986), p 19.

Accordingly, Adam and Eve were created to serve the LORD, not the ground - they were like the priests who had the responsibility for the care of all the divine institutions in the sanctuary...All the details of the text then indicate that God created human begins to serve him in a spiritual capacity.⁵

7. God's original design was for Adam and his progeny to be priests of God and to proliferate the worship that took place in Eden's garden. As the population grew, Adam and Eve would ensure that the whole earth would continue to be a place where the LORD was honored and worshipped.
8. God walked in the garden and talked with Adam and Eve directly. Characterized by nearness and communication, their perspective of God could not have been more opposite from the caricature of a distant and stoic deity so prevalent in the modern mind.
9. Within Eden's garden stood two unique, important trees - the *tree of life* the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. It was the latter tree that God commanded man to not eat from. The consequence for disobedience was *death*.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
(Genesis 2:16–17 ESV)

The Fall and the Curse

1. In arrogance and pride, the first humans transgressed God's direct command to "not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" because of the serpent's temptation. This direct disobedience and hostility towards the kind, benevolent God tore asunder His relationship with humanity.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree

⁵ Allen Ross, referencing the work of Cassuto, has here argued that the linguistic features of the Hebrew in the passage should be understood as reflecting that the 'serving' and 'keeping' were overtly spiritual acts before the Lord and do not need to be referencing the Garden itself in the agrarian sense. *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, p 106.

that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”
(Genesis 3:1–6 ESV)

2. As God’s judgment on their sin, Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden-sanctuary to live as dispossessed royalty (Genesis 3:23-24). Their immediate access to God and their proximity to the tree of life was removed. The entrance to the garden and the way to the tree of life was guarded by a cherubim with a flaming sword. The consequences of their disobedience left them as ones *unable to fulfill their God-given roles* and constrained to *return to the dust* from which they were taken (Genesis 3:19).
3. God subjected Adam, Eve, and the creation itself to a *curse* because of sin. The harmony that God had originally established between man, woman, and the rest of creation was disrupted. Work was to be toilsome, the ground would cause pain and difficulty, the woman created to be Adam’s partner would bring forth children in pain, and humanity would *return to the dust from which they were taken*. Arguably, the curse of *death* is the most significant of them all.

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

(Genesis 3:14–19 ESV)

4. It seemed as if the serpent had won. Adam was no longer able to carry out the things God had commissioned him to do. God could not simply *forget* Adam's transgression. If He did so, He would not be true to His word ("if you eat... you shall surely die").

A Promise of Reconciliation and Restoration

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

(Genesis 3:15 ESV)

1. In the midst of God's curse, a ray of hope burst through the dark clouds of sin and death. This promise is often called the *proto-evangelium* ("first-gospel") because it is the first reference of good news to humanity in a fallen state.
2. From this point, two currents began to flow in the stream of history. Unless these two movements are anchored in our hearts and minds, it is possible to read portions of the Bible's story and entirely miss their significance. These two concepts are:
 - a. The *Seed* - God promised that a descendant (lit. "seed") of Eve would arise to crush the serpent's head. In context to Genesis 1-3, the triumph of the woman's seed over the serpent's seed would mean a *restoration* of everything that was lost through humanity's fall.
 - i. The promise to crush the serpent's "head" (symbolic of both life and authority⁶), is thus *genealogical* in nature. This understanding lays a foundation of expectation for the covenants and oracles from the prophets.
 - ii. It is after this promise that Adam names his wife "Eve", which means "the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). This is an act of faith on behalf of Adam as he believes God's promise to

⁶ The Hebrew language has no specific word for "head," but rather *rōš* refers to the "upper part," e.g., the "heads" of the mountains (Gen. 8:5), the "head" of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4), the "heads" of the clans of Israel (Num. 1:16), the "head" of the tribes of Israel (1 Sam. 15:17), etc (see W. White, "2097 ראש [rōš]," TWOT, 825-26). Thus, the "head" of the serpent could naturally be interpreted governmentally.

provide a seed through Eve that would deal with the curse of death and restore humanity to living forever.

- iii. God also provided *skins as a covering* for Adam and Eve's nakedness (Genesis 3:21). We aren't told where the skins came from, but the mercy of *sacrifice* and *atonement* through the death of another is first seen here in the story.

- b. The *Dwelling Place of God* – Though not directly explicit in the generations following Adam, the desire for God to dwell in unhindered fellowship with humanity again remained in His heart and would later surface explicitly in His dealings with the nation of Israel.

Cain, Abel, and Seth

**Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."
(Genesis 4:1 ESV)**

1. Adam and Eve now live outside of Eden's garden, and Cain is born as their first descendant. Just as the "ground" (Hb. *'ădāmâ*) produced "man" (Hb. *'ādām*) with the help of the LORD, so Eve the woman (Hb. *'iššâ*, 2:23) produced a "man" (Hb. *'iš*) with divine help.
2. Eve would bear another son, Cain's brother Abel. The question at the forefront of Adam and Eve's mind surely must have been "*Would either of these men be the promised seed who would restore us as God had promised?*"
3. Both brothers bring a sacrifice to the LORD, but the elder brother's is rejected while the younger's is accepted. This "reversal" theme is prevalent throughout scripture. As David said, "*For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*" (1 Samuel 16:7 ESV)
4. Cain succumbs to sin's mastery over him and murders his brother. God sends Cain away from His face out of the land of Eden to the land of Nod (Genesis 4:8-16).
5. After Abel's death and Cain's banishment to Nod, Adam and Eve bear another "seed" to replace Abel. Seth is born, bearing a name meaning "appointed". In this context, Eve clearly has the promise of Genesis 3:15 in mind. Would Seth be the appointed seed who would restore what was lost in the garden?

“And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.” To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.”
(Genesis 4:25–26 ESV)

6. In contrast to Cain’s descendants (Genesis 4:17-24), Seth’s genealogy emphasizes the transmission of *the image of God*. Just as Adam was made in the likeness of God, so Seth is begotten in the likeness of Adam.

“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died. When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh... fathered Kenan... fathered Mahalalel ... fathered Jared ... fathered Enoch ... fathered Methuselah ... fathered Lamech.”
(Genesis 5:1–27 ESV)

7. Seth’s genealogy quickly moves to Lamech, the father of Noah, where a startling statement is made:

When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.”
(Genesis 5:28–29 ESV)

8. The continuity with Genesis 3 is unquestionable – Lamech believed that the birth of a son would bring relief from the curse of the land. Noah is envisioned as a savior. The promise of *the seed* was alive and bright in the hearts of the descendants of Adam.

Noah and the Flood

“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the

earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

**These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.”
(Genesis 6:5–9 ESV)**

1. Just several generations after Adam, the sin of mankind had reached untold heights and continued to spread like gangrene. The perfection of God’s creation had been ruined, spoiled, and twisted by the wickedness of man. God had apparently given up on the human race and had determined to bring to pass an event of unparalleled proportions in response to the evil of the human heart – a global flood that would destroy every living thing.
2. However, Noah “found favor” in the eyes of the LORD. In an age of social violence and injustice, Noah “walked with God”, having conduct that was pleasing and conforming to God’s standards. It was because of this that God “cut a covenant” with Noah:

And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood... For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

(Genesis 6:13–18 ESV)

3. By making a covenant with Noah, God is saying that His commitment “initiated previously at creation to care for and preserve, provide for and rule over all that he has made, including the blessings and ordinances that he gave to Adam and Eve and their family, are now to be with Noah and his descendants.”⁷
4. The flood parallels the original creation account in Genesis 1:2, where God’s spirit (Hb. *rûah*, also translated as “breath” or “wind”) hovered over the waters.

⁷ Gentry, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, (Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2012), p. 161

“But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.”

(Genesis 8:1 ESV)

- Noah, his family, and all the animals emerge from the ark into a *cleansed earth*, and immediately Noah builds an altar to the LORD and makes a sacrifice. Just as Adam’s service in the garden-sanctuary was *priestly*, Noah operates in priestly service in an act of intercession, and God commits to never again curse the ground because of man.

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.””

(Genesis 8:20–21 ESV)

- Noah is then presented in the story as a *new Adam*, being given a similar commission and blessing as Adam but with distinct differences:

Adam and creation	Covenant with Noah
Genesis 1:28 – “be fruitful and multiply”	Genesis 9:1, 7 – “be fruitful and multiply”
Genesis 1:28 – rule over the fish, birds, animals	Genesis 9:2 – “the fear of you shall be upon every beast”
Genesis 1:29 – plants given for food	Genesis 9:3 – “every moving thing that lives shall be food for you”, but no meat with blood
Genesis 4:8-24 – God requires an accounting of life from fellow family members	Genesis 9:5 – “and for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning”
Genesis 1:27 – in his own image	Genesis 9:6 – “in his own image”

- God gives Noah, his family, and all of their descendants a sign of the covenant He made – a rainbow in the clouds. Interestingly, there is no Hebrew word for “rainbow”. The word used in Genesis 9:13 is the word

used for an *archer's bow*. Warren Austin Gage makes a fascinating comment:

“The bow is a weapon of war, an emblem of wrath. God will now set it in the heavens as a token of grace. The Lord who makes his bow of wrath into a seven-colored arch of beauty to ornament the heavens is the one who will finally command the nations to beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks (Mic. 4:3) for the Prince of Peace takes pleasure in mercy (Mic. 7:18) and the Righteous Judge delights in grace.”⁸

8. Through the flood, humanity had been winnowed down to only eight beating hearts. The flood is the most widespread, catastrophic judgment the earth has seen in its history, because darkness had filled the hearts of men as they exalted themselves in pride and rebellion against God. The judgment was so severe that God made a covenant with Noah to never judge the wickedness of men through a cataclysmic global flood once again. He set a perpetual reminder of that covenant in the sky for all generations that *not only remind men of His mercy, but remind them of His severity, power, and ability to crush all rebellion against Him*.
9. Unfortunately, the “man of rest” would fail like his ancestor Adam, this time due to fruit from a vine instead of a tree. There would have to be another descendant who would bring relief from the curse. Ham, one of Noah’s sons, saw his father’s drunkenness and nakedness. When Noah awakes, he realizes what happened and speaks both curses and blessings over his sons.

“He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

He also said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” (Genesis 9:21–27 ESV)

⁸ Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winowna Lake, IN: Carpenter, 1984) p. 135

10. Caanan and the rest of Ham's descendants are cursed to serve the descendants of Shem. Shem is then singled out as the line in which the promise of hope for mankind will continue through.

The Importance of the Beginning

1. The Bible's story begins in *perfection*. Unlike the Greek philosophical view which asserts that physicality is inherently corrupt and *evil*, the Bible says that God called all of His creation *good*. Though we are far from the original state of the heavens and the earth, the good news that the scriptures exhort us to cling to is all which was lost at the fall will be *restored* and *reinstated*. All of Scripture testifies to the day when God will bring about what Peter summarized as "the restoration of all things" in Acts 3:21.

Repent...so that...He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.
(Acts 3:19-21 NKJV)

2. *Restoration* by definition means to "reinstatement" or "return to a former condition". Thus the end of the story can never be rightly understood without a clear picture of the beginning. Without a sense of *original* destiny and *original* perfection, we can never have a sense of *ultimate* destiny and *restored* perfection.
3. Beginning with Adam and Eve, human beings have continually risen up in pride and arrogance against God in their hearts, and have chosen to exercise their wills in ways that are hostile and rebellious toward God and detrimental to others. The center of the problem with existence is not found in the physical nature of creation itself, but in the way human beings manipulate and use creation for our own self-interest, self-indulgence, and perverse ends.
4. Man's sin brought forth the curse of *death*. Just as an event of sin brought death into the world, so will an event promised by God drive death out of the world (Genesis 3:15).

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the

Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

(1 Corinthians 15:20–26 ESV)

5. The consequences of this “crushing” event which purges death from the earth is the central hope of mankind. It is not the “crushing” event itself that is really the hope, but rather it is what the crushing event produces—*the reversal of death*. That is the deepest longing of every human heart. As sin and the curse of death is the *central problem* of existence, so is its removal the *central hope*.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them (as in the beginning). They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain (as in the beginning), for the old order of things (post-Fall) has passed away."

(Revelation 21:3-4 NIV)

6. The gospel, therefore, is not about “dying and going to heaven”, “bringing two realms together”, or “heaven invading earth”. The gospel is the good news of *resurrection and restoration* of the heavens and the earth. God *loves* what He made, and has promised to repair everything that has been tainted and corrupted because of sin. *This is the story that the Bible tells*, and *this good news is our hope, our joy, and our comfort in the midst of the difficulties of this present evil age.*