

Imagine that slavery is all that you, your parents, and your grandparents remember. While living in the New Kingdom of Egypt, you learned that the sun god Re spoke the god Ptah—his Word—into being as the firstborn of all creation. Then Ptah created the rest of the gods and the entire universe out of nothing.¹

You have heard the Babylonians tell another part of the story. They say that a problem arose: the gods got tired of having to work to provide food for themselves. At that time, the god Kingu chose to align himself with Tiamat, the cosmic sea monster. The hero Marduk split her in two, separating the vapors in the sky from the waters of the seas. Then he executed Kingu and mixed his blood with dirt to create the first people to do the gods' work.²

Since people in Egypt worship the pharaoh Ramesses II as a god,³ you had always known that you existed solely to labor as his slave. About a year ago, a man named Moses emerged from the desert to confront the pharaoh. He claimed that the God of your ancestors had sent him to deliver you from the horrors of Egyptian servitude (Exod 3:7–9; Exod 4:29–31). You watched in awe as the one who called himself “I AM” (Exod 3:14) used Moses to bring judgment upon the gods and goddesses of Egypt: those of the Nile (Exod 7:20–21), the sun (Exod 10:21–23), agriculture (Exod 9:22–26, 31–32), and cattle (Exod 9:1–7).

I AM did not spare even the future god of Egypt, the son of Ramesses the Great (Exod 12:21–30). Amazingly, the region where your people lived remained untouched by most of these plagues. After Ramesses freed you from slavery, he changed his mind, sending chariots to prevent your escape. I AM split the Sea of Reeds so that you could walk through and then destroyed Pharaoh's army as it followed you (Exod 14).

Soon after that, when I AM made a covenant with your nation on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:3–8), Moses called everyone together to learn the history of God's dealings with your ancestors. While much of what you heard sounded like what you had been taught in Egypt, there were shocking differences. This is what you learned:

Moses began by teaching, “In the beginning of God's creating of the heavens and the earth, the earth had been formless and empty.” The cosmos arose from nothing, coming into being by the spoken word of God. Order emerged from disorder. Unlike in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) creation accounts, God did not need to restrain forces of chaos or any personification of evil.⁴

Even the deep waters obeyed the Lord's commands, for the Spirit of God hovered over them as a witness of and participant in this divine activity. During the first through third days, God created habitations and assigned functions to them.⁵ Thus, he demonstrated his power and authority over the universe.⁶ First, he created light and separated it from darkness, establishing periods of time.⁷ Then the Lord split the primordial waters into vapor in the

¹John A. Wilson, trans., “Theology of Memphis,” in *ANET*, lines 53–4, 4–6.

²E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 4.135–40, 67.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n91/mode/2up.

³W. F. Albright and George E. Mendenhall, trans., “The Amarna Letters, RA XIX,” in *ANET*, lines 1–10, 485. <https://archive.org/stream/in.gov.ignca.16119/16119#page/n283/mode/2up>.

⁴John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 73.

⁵Meredith G. Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” *PSCF* 48, no. 1 (March 1996): 2–15. <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>.

⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 71–2.

⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 79.

heavens above and water in the seas below. He collected the waters below together so that dry land appeared and produced various types of vegetation. This set the framework necessary for living creatures to survive.⁸

In a second set of three days, God created the inhabitants of the cosmos which he formed on the first triad of days. On the fourth day, God spoke to generate the luminaries of the heavens, paralleling the creation of light on the first day. These lights enabled vision and set the secular and religious calendars. People tracked star movement to synchronize the lunar and the solar calendars. In contrast to the ANE focus upon worshipping these lights as gods, the Lord created them to serve.

Day five harmonizes with day two. On the second day, God separated the sky from the waters. Then on the fifth day, God created the inhabitants of those environments: aquatic creatures and birds.⁹ Among these were “the great sea monsters.”¹⁰ You previously associated these with the forces of anarchy who ruled the cosmic waters in ANE creation epics.¹¹ However, these monsters were not chaotic rivals of God but merely creatures whom he made,¹² living under their his command.¹³ God saw that it was good, and he blessed them.

On the sixth day, God brought forth living creatures from the earth. These animals fell into three categories: domestic animals, prey, and predators. Together, the Lord described them as, “every living thing which moves on the earth.” By constructing plants and creatures which self-propagate “according to their kind,” the Creator produced creators.¹⁴

Most importantly, you discovered that the gods did not make your ancestors from the blood of a rebellious god. Instead, the one who spoke the entire universe into being made you in his image.¹⁵ People believed that an image placed in a temple did the work of a god and wielded his authority.¹⁶ Therefore, God’s intention for you—as his image-bearer—is to serve as his representative.¹⁷ You can fulfill his purposes through your faithful stewardship in tending, guarding, and governing the earth while displaying the Lord’s glory to other people and extending his kingdom among them.¹⁸

After creating men and women in his own image, God rested from his work of creating the cosmos as his temple. Therefore, he provided us with an example to follow by ceasing from his labor on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the Lord prepared an eternal place of rest for his people.

⁸Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 20.

⁹Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 129.

¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

¹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 126–7.

¹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 24.

¹³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3* (ed. Martin Rüter, Ilse Tödt, and John W. De Gruchy; trans. Douglas Stephen Bax; DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 58.

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 132.

¹⁵“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, lines 6.1–36, 68.

¹⁶James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 46, <http://sacred-texts.com/egy/rtae/rtae05.htm>.

¹⁷Ian Hart, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis.” *TynBul* 46, no. 2 (November 1995): 315–36, 317–9, http://tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 130.

The narrative of Gen 2:4–24 reiterated the sixth day of creation from a more intimate perspective: God’s provision for and relationship with those created in his image. After forming Adam from the ground and breathing a living soul into him, the Lord placed him into a well-watered, luxuriant garden to perform the priestly function of serving, working, cultivating, and keeping it. This beautiful park full of trees produced wonderful food, including the tree of life which stood at its center. God gave Adam freedom to eat from any of these.

However, he made one prohibition. “The Lord God laid charge upon the man, saying, ‘From all of the trees of the garden you are able to eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, because in the day you eat it, you shall surely die.’” God expected Adam to acquire wisdom through their relationship, rather than seeking it on his own.

Recognizing that the man should not be alone, the Lord sent a parade of animals he had created to Adam. While exercising the authority of an image-bearer of God by naming each animal,¹⁹ Adam reached a devastating conclusion: every animals had its partner, but an equal and adequate helper did not exist for him. Now that God had awakened Adam’s longing, the Lord placed him into a very deep, supernatural sleep. God took raw material—not from the ground—but from Adam’s side to fashion the first woman. Upon awakening, the man recognized his true counterpart and enthusiastically uttered a covenant of unalterable loyalty:

This, this time,
[is] bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called woman,
for from man was taken this!²⁰

In harmonious intimacy, the two became one flesh. Despite their nakedness, they knew no shame.

Adam, as the representative for all of humanity, underwent a time of probation to determine whether he would accept his position of power under God, his emperor. The Lord accomplished this by presenting him with a seemingly arbitrary command.²¹ Meanwhile, the serpent sought to thwart the expansion of the kingdom of God through the disqualification of the Lord’s vice-regents.²²

In contrast to the man and woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*), the snake was shrewd (*arum*).²³ Aside from the fact that the serpent spoke,²⁴ the text gives no hint that the snake was anything more than an animal made by God.²⁵ Moses did not state why the serpent addressed Eve,²⁶ why she misunderstood what the Lord had said, or why Adam failed to

¹⁹Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 75.

²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70. Translation by Wenham.

²¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

²²Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament (IVPBBCOT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Gen 3:1, electronic ed.

²³Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

²⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

²⁵Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

²⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

assist her in countering the snake's assertions.²⁷ By twisting God's words, the serpent snared Eve into allying herself with him in her quest for divine wisdom, causing her to covet the forbidden fruit.

Events cascaded rapidly: "And she took of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil's] fruit, and she ate, and she gave [it] also to her husband [who was] with her, and he ate." Each fell because of the other, in unity yet carrying the entire burden of guilt. In one respect the serpent told the truth. Their eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery. They were naked!²⁸ With their innocence replaced by shame, they quickly made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves.

Well-aware of what they had done, the Lord came to Eden in "the wind of the storm."²⁹ Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment and went into hiding.³⁰ In his attempt to evade answering God's question, Adam immediately indicted himself by declaring that he knew he of his nudity. The divisive effects of sin quickly emerged. Adam blamed Eve as well as the Lord for creating her. Eve admitted that she was deceived and pointed to the serpent. Sin had obliterated the harmony between God and humanity, men and women, and people with animals.³¹

Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither interrogated the serpent nor allowed him an opportunity to explain his behavior.³² Instead, the one who was crafty (*arum*) became cursed (*arur*).³³ By being forced to crawl on his belly and eat dust, God reined in the snake's aggression and hinted at his demise.³⁴ The serpent and his seed would engage in battle with the seed of the woman,³⁵ corporately and, eventually, in single combat.³⁶ Both champions would be mortally wounded.

In the aftermath of eating the forbidden fruit, the arrival of the seed which Eve would conceive would cause her agony.³⁷ In addition, she would long for the intimate, equal relationship she had previously experienced with her husband. Instead, Adam would rule over her. After informing Eve of the results of her sin, the Lord shifted his focus to Adam.

Since Adam had disobeyed the Lord and eaten of the forbidden fruit, God cursed the ground. He made it dry and unfruitful by withholding his blessing. Thus, the toil behind the preparation of every meal reminded Adam and Eve of their guilt.³⁸ Creation fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair.³⁹ In a great reversal, the ground from which God created Adam would resist his efforts and eventually swallow him into itself.⁴⁰

²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

²⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

²⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:8.

³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

³⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

³⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

³⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

³⁹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

⁴⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

After the Lord completed his decrees of judgment, Adam named his wife as both a sign of his new rule over her and a re-inauguration of their covenant of marriage.⁴¹ By calling her “Eve”—which means “the mother of all the living”—Adam spoke in faith that God’s promise of progeny would come to pass.⁴² Despite the Lord’s pronouncement of death, Adam named his wife in terms of life.⁴³

Finally, God clothed the couple with leather tunics. This signified that he would not disinherit them but instead would graciously reinstate his covenant with humanity.⁴⁴ Clothing also provided protection from the thorns and thistles which awaited Adam and Eve as they cultivated the ground which the Lord cursed.

The Tree of Life stood at the center of both the garden of Eden and the story of creation.⁴⁵ By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the former priests of Eden became intruders.⁴⁶ Lest Adam and Eve stretch out their hands to take from the tree of life, the Lord made a preemptive strike against any further desire of theirs to become like God.⁴⁷ He drove them out of the only home they had ever known.⁴⁸

God placed new protectors at the entrance to the garden: a pair of cherubim and “the flame of a sword turning this way and that.” Consequently, all of us have been born outside of Eden, with our natural inclinations and thoughts confirming our status as outsiders.⁴⁹ No longer do we automatically enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord.⁵⁰

⁴¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 72.

⁴² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 205–7.

⁴³ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 216.

⁴⁴ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 141.

⁴⁶ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 137.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

⁴⁸ Holladay, “shalakh,” *CHALOT*, 372.

⁴⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 232.

⁵⁰ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 132.