



CREATION

Genesis 1-2

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

God as Creator is the foundation for the Bible. While the Bible isn't focused on how God created, it is clear that throughout the whole process, God is the creator and is in control (sovereign).

Purpose in Creation can be seen as an extension of God's character as a creator. He establishes order, structure, stability, and functional roles that allow His creation to flourish. God is the source of life, and Genesis 1-2 reflects that.

Sacred Space is the result of God's creative act. He creates a space suitable for His presence to dwell in relationship with His humanity (tabernacle and temple imagery).

Image of God is represented in all humanity and their role as stewards of God's good creation. Humanity has the potential to extend God's creative work and character by how they live.

Divine Rest is connected to the seven-day period of dedicating the space He created. Creation is functioning properly, and God can now properly reign over his creation and take up his "rest."

LITERARY CONTEXT

God as Creator establishes God as the main character of the Bible, and everything flows out of his purpose and will. See John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-17; and Revelation 4:11.

Purpose in Creation can be seen by comparing the before and after pictures of God's creative act. What is the image in Genesis 1:2 and 2:5? In what ways did these non-functional spaces become suitable for humanity?

Sacred Space is connected to the image of God dwelling with humanity. Both the Tabernacle and Temple use imagery that ties them back to the original Holy space of Genesis 1-2. See Exodus 35-38 and 1 Kings 6.

Image of God is what gives humanity identity and purpose. See Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9. More than that, the image of God can be fully seen in the life of Jesus (Heb. 1:3; Col 1:15).

Divine Rest equals God's supreme reign over His creation. See Psalm 132:7-18; Hebrews 4:8-11.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

God as Creator highlights God's sovereignty over creation. In ancient Near East culture (ANE), creation results from conflict between the gods. In Genesis 1-2, the one true God establishes structure in an orderly process without conflict.

Purpose in Creation can be distinguished from other ancient cultures. In other ANE origin stories, the gods created the world for themselves and their benefit. Humanity was created as slaves to take care of the god's needs. Our God of the Bible creates the universe for the benefit of humanity. He serves His creation through His work of creation and extends his image to all humanity.

Image of God in ANE culture was not extended to humanity but was reserved for other gods or kings. Our God of the Bible elevates humanity's value by creating them in His image. God's ability to bring forth goodness and life is extended to His creation as they steward the sacred space He created for them. Adam and Eve live in close proximity to God's Presence.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

God is the creator of the universe and is sovereign over all.

God established order, structure, stability, purpose, and security through his power.

Creation is a reflection of God's character. He is the source of life and the sustainer of the universe.

God is Holy and distinct from His creation. Humanity isn't formed from God but from the dust in His image.

The universe and the Garden of Eden were created for God to dwell in an intimate relationship with His creation. Humanity can now flourish and thrive in the created space.

Humanity's identity and value are rooted in the image of God and the purpose He gave them to work in the Garden.

The result of creation is that God can properly reign over creation because everything functions according to their established purpose.



FALL

Genesis 3

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The Serpent is introduced in Genesis 3 as one who deceives humanity. The Serpent is not presented as an equal counterpart to God but as part of the created world. However, he represents evil and chaos, starkly contrasting what God established in Genesis 1-2.

Temptation to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is how the Serpent deceived Adam and Eve. The temptation is to achieve wisdom and become like God in a way that is contrary to God's established command and reign.

Sin is characterized by its rebellion against God's reign. The result is Adam and Eve respond to God out of shame and fear of God's judgment. God does pronounce consequences for Adam and Eve as well as the Serpent.

Exile is the consequence of sin. Instead of receiving death, Adam and Eve are banished from the sacred Garden in Eden. Sin established a barrier between humanity and God.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Eden is a picture of God's blessing and goodness even after rebellion. It is a picture of life under God's reign. See Isaiah 53:1-16.

Serpent is identified as Satan according to Revelation 12:9.

Sin has separated all humanity from God. Sin entered with Adam and is extended to all humanity. See Romans 3:23, 5:12, 6:23.

Future Promise is found in the protoevangelium, a Latin phrase for "first gospel." Genesis 3:15 refers to the seed of Eve, who will be bruised on the heel but will crush the head of the Serpent. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus. See 1 John 3:8; Romans 16:20; Galatians 4:4.

Cherubim guard sacred space in ANE culture. Cherubim guard the Garden in Eden, thus separating humanity from God. Both the Tabernacle and Temple have Cherubim guarding the Holy Presence of God. See Exodus 26:31; 1 Kings 6:19-32.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Garden in Eden refers to a luscious well-watered place where life springs up from the ground. In Ancient Near East cultures (ANE), gardens are where the gods reside and rule.

The Serpent in ANE cultures represented death, evil, and primeval chaos. In some ANE cultures and occult religions, serpents were worshipped for health and immortality.

Temptation in other ANE cultures was viewed as becoming immortal like the gods. The Biblical account is connected primarily to the wisdom that comes from God.

Curses for serpents are common in ANE cultures because a serpent on its belly (not in attack position) is not life-threatening. Eating dust is often a reference to the underworld or realm of death.

Toil refers to the work humanity was created to do in ANE cultures. In the Biblical account, humanity did not have to toil until after they were deceived by the Serpent and sinned.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

God established a sacred garden for His Presence to dwell with humanity.

The Serpent deceives Adam and Eve to try to achieve wisdom and knowledge in a way contrary to God's command. The irony is that Satan deceived Adam and Eve with the desire to be like God even though they were already like God because they were created in His image.

The Fall refers to sin entering the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience. The result was exile from God's Presence in the Garden.

Humanity now experiences the effects of being separated from everything God established in Genesis 1-2: order, structure, security, stability, peace, and life.

Humanity not only deserves death because of our rebellion but is united with death with no way to reenter God's Presence and divine rest by ourselves.



REDEMPTION

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Incarnation means that Jesus is God in human flesh. The second person of the trinity humbled himself and became a human (Philippians 2:1-11).

The Virgin Birth of Mary was a miraculous sign from God of His divine plan of redemption. By allowing Jesus to be born of a woman, Jesus is the seed of woman that the protoevangelium of Genesis 3:15 talks about.

Genealogies are important in God's plan of redemption. They testify that God was faithful to the covenants that he established through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Moses (Exodus 19-24), and King David (2 Samuel 7). Jesus was from the line of David in the tribe of Judah (Luke 3:23-38).

A New Covenant was established through the death and resurrection of Jesus. He was the once and forever Passover Lamb whose blood established a new covenant between God and humanity (Hebrews 9-10).

LITERARY CONTEXT

Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by Satan shows that Satan tempted Jesus with every sin he has used on humanity since Adam and Eve (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15). Jesus lived a perfect life and did not sin.

A New Covenant was established through Jesus' death and resurrection. See Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:26-41; Ezekiel 36:2-36, 37:15-28; Isaiah 42:1-9; Hebrews 8:6-13, 9:1-10:18.

Redemption was achieved through Jesus' death and resurrection. His body was broken, and his blood was shed to unite humanity with God. See Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24-25; Colosians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

The Temple Veil, Torn from top to bottom, symbolizes removing the barrier between God and humanity. See Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 10:20.

Adoption as sons and daughters was made possible by Jesus' death. We are no longer slaves to sin. See Galatians 4:4-7.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Greco-Roman culture is what defines the period that Jesus lived and ministered. Both the Greek and Roman cultures influenced the Jews living in Galilee and Judea. The process of spreading the Greek culture was known as Hellenization.

Manumission was a concept in the Greco-Roman world where a slave could be redeemed by paying a ransom. In the New Testament, Jesus is our ransom (1 Timothy 2:6)

Redemption, from a Jewish perspective, was primarily physical. The Old Testament referred to the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 6:6-8). It also referred to God redeeming the Israelites from the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles (Isaiah 43-44). However, in the New Testament, redemption became primarily spiritual. Jesus leads his people in a new exodus from sin. He paid the ransom through his sacrifice on the cross. The exile from God's Presence has been partially restored and will fully be experienced at Jesus' second coming.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

Genesis 3:15 sets the main storyline for the Bible. From the beginning of time, God planned to send Jesus to Earth to crush the Serpent, known as Satan.

God created the universe and the Garden as a sacred space for Him to dwell with His creation. But, unfortunately, sin had separated humanity from God's Presence.

Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, he paid the price for humanity's rebellion (sin) against God. Because of His substitutionary atoning sacrifice, humanity can again enter God's Presence.

God sent His Presence to dwell in the lives of believers of Jesus. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God in us (Acts 1-2).

Jesus redeemed his people through the cross, but we still wait for the full glory of God at Jesus' second coming. Then believers will experience redemption completely. Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:18-23



NEW CREATION

Revelation 21-22

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

God as Creator has been creating a place without evil since the beginning of time. Since the fall of Genesis 3, all creation has longed for final restoration and renewal (Romans 8:22).

Sacred Space is the result of God's new creation. God will once again dwell with His people and be their God (Revelation 21:3). Eden is restored and becomes a city without a temple building because God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

The Serpent, known as Satan, will be thrown into the lake of fire. While Satan has already been crushed through Jesus' death and resurrection, he will ultimately be defeated at Jesus' second coming.

Divine Rest is connected to God's supreme reign over His creation. In the New Heavens and New Earth, humanity will enter God's divine rule and rest forever (Hebrews 4).

LITERARY CONTEXT

Last Days refer to the gospel era where Jesus' death and resurrection established a new covenant between humanity and God. Believers in Christ experience a taste of restoration but will experience the full blessing of salvation in eternity. See Acts 2:17-18; Hebrews 1:1-2.

Now/Not Yet is the reality that believers experience in the last days. Believers experience the power of the Holy Spirit in them. The believer is called to faithful perseverance as we await the future glory of God. We are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), but we still wait till we can see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:10-12).

New Heavens and New Earth is not just a New Testament idea. The prophets Isaiah and Daniel use imagery of a future time of new creation where God's restoration is established. Then God's people will enjoy the full measure of God's blessing and goodness. But there is a warning for those who rebel against God. See Isaiah 65:20-25, 6:22-24; Daniel 12:1-3)

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Stoicism believed that at the end of each age, there would be a renewal of all things by fire. Then the universe would start over at the beginning and keep repeating itself in an endless cycle. 2 Peter 3:3-18 agrees that the Day of the Lord will bring about a refinement through fire. The difference is that judgment and destruction will bring about a new heaven and a new earth. Biblically speaking, we are not caught in an endless cycle but are in the last days awaiting the new creation.

Heaven in Jewish thought was distinguished between the visible heaven that housed the sun, moon, and stars and the "highest heaven." The "highest heaven" referred to the sacred space that God dwelt in that was above the visible heaven (Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27). Apocalyptic literature believed that the realm of God was visible by a seer or if the visible heaven was opened up to the unseen heaven (Acts 7:55-56; Revelation 1:1, 4:1). New creation points to when the space God dwells occupies the same space as humanity.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

God has been orchestrating the same plan and purpose for creation since the beginning. All creation longs for God's supreme reign and rule to be established.

Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension make restoration possible because Jesus has defeated and triumphed over Satan.

For believers in Christ, we have been saved from the punishment of sin, are being saved from the power of sin, and will be saved from the presence of sin.

For those who do not believe in Christ, Hell is reserved for them. It is described as a lake of fire and burning sulfur. It is eternal torment and separation from God's blessing and goodness.

For believers in Christ, the Holy Spirit is the down payment guaranteeing our inheritance until Jesus returns in glory. Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:5.