

# Survey of the Old Testament

*Longing for the Redemption God Promised*

Jack B. Scott, Ph.D.



*Pictured in the seal on the cover is the sower, taken from Matthew 13, the Parable of the Sower. All quarterlies in volume one will bear this emblem, thus enabling quick identification of the first volume. Subsequent volumes will trace the progress of the seed sown until full harvest (the last volume) in order to reflect the biblical concept of the believer as like a plant planted by God which grows to fruition, to the glory of God (Psalm 1:3).*



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ISBN: 978-1-944964-59-7

Leader's Guides and an introduction to the ABES Series may be found at <http://archive.pcacdm.org/adult-biblical-education-series-teachers-guides/>.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This is the first book in our study of the Scriptures in a systematic way. It is our goal to produce study materials which will cover all of Scripture and include not only a careful study of the content but also much more, as we said in *An Introduction to the Study Series*. [This is free to download from our website: <http://archive.pcacdm.org/adult-biblical-education-series-teachers-guides/>. It is listed as Vol. I Book 1.]

For every study there will also be a leader's guide [available free online], including points to be emphasized in each lesson, discussion of the heart of the text, discussion of points of difficulty, study of the meanings of special words used in the text and suggestions for personal application.

Inasmuch as we have already stated, in *An Introduction to the Study Series*, the basis of our approach and the goals for which we are aiming in the whole series, I will not repeat it here. However, every leader, and hopefully every participant as well, will have read it prior to beginning this series of studies.

It is our hope, through these lessons, to deal with all areas of Christian life and service having to do with the whole person in total service in the Kingdom of our God. Current problems facing us as Christians today in the world will be dealt with out of the context in which those problems arise and are dealt with in Scripture, tracing through the whole written revelation of God, seeking to know and to determine God's answer to those problems that face us daily.

Jack B. Scott, PhD

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# CHAPTER ONE

## God Begins His Great Plan

*Genesis 1–3*

### Introduction

We view Moses to be the human author of the first five books of the Old Testament, called the Five Books of Moses or the Pentateuch (5 scrolls). His authorship of these five books is attested by other Scripture writers, beginning with Joshua, who was his immediate successor (Josh. 1:7). The Pentateuch was early called the Book of Law of Moses because the Law was given through Moses from God (Josh. 8:31-32). In every era of Israelite history, the Books of Moses were recognized as given by God through Moses and therefore the Word of God. In the New Testament as well, the Law given by Moses is recognized as a separate distinct portion of God's revelation (John 1:17; Luke 24:27). Paul, as well as the gospel writers, makes frequent mention of this unit of God's Word (1 Cor. 9:9).

This raises a related question which can here only briefly be answered, but which will be referred to time and again as we progress in our later studies. That question is: "How do we know that this is God's Word?" This introduces us to the whole area of canon, or the concept of which books are to be regarded as God's Word. Churches and councils have not always agreed on this, and some churches today regard books as canonical (part of God's Word) which we do not so regard, such as the books called apocryphal books or pseudepigraphical books (1 & 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Baruch, etc.). "Apocryphal" literally means

“hidden” and refers to those books not in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Since churches and councils do not all agree, it is clear that such questions cannot be decided by them. Rather, we understand as we study Scripture itself and the whole historical development of the Word of God (the Bible) that it was recognized by God’s children—the people of God—*when* it was *given*, as the Word of God and not of men. In John 10:27, Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” So it is that the non-seminary trained disciples heard the voice of Jesus and knew that what He spoke was the Word of God; whereas, the “learned” scribes and Pharisees of that day heard the same words that the disciples and apostles heard and came up with entirely different conclusions. Such questions cannot be settled by the kind of debates which the learned scribes and Pharisees pursued, but must be determined by the activity of God’s Holy Spirit, working in and through the Word given, to convince men of its truth and source. *The Westminster Confession* declares just this fact in Chapter One, IV, V.

Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, most clearly describes this whole concept of the canon when he writes to the Christians in Thessalonica, “And we thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

This reflects then what we believe to be the basic principle regarding the canon; and it can be shown that immediately after the giving of the Law, the people recognized that it came from God. Shortly after the time of Moses, the people spoke of the Word of God commanded through Moses (Judg. 3:4). The people received and recognized it then as the Word of God. God had spoken through Moses, and the people of God immediately recognized that Word.

Such a view runs headlong into the so-called higher-critical claims which raise doubts about the reliability of Scripture. We admit that in reading Scripture, we run across some *apparent* contradictions. Some doctrines seem to contradict others. The higher-critical approach to this is to say that because of various ideas of men expressed in Scripture, there are indeed contradictions. But for us, while admitting that there are in Scripture many things that are difficult to be understood, as Peter himself said about the writings of Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16), we confess simply that our minds are not equal to the mind of God. Paul himself, when writing on some of the more difficult doctrines, finally stopped and said: “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been

his counselor?” (Rom. 11:34).

Scripture does not always explain its doctrines in terms that we can fully fathom, but this is not a deficiency in God’s Word nor does it indicate that God is not the author; it is a deficiency in us, as Paul once more declares, “For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

We come, therefore, unreservedly to this Word of God to study and to learn, assured that the Scripture is its own best commentator, we shall, by persistent and diligent study, with hearts committed to its truth, through the work of God’s Holy Spirit (the only infallible teacher of that Word) grow in our understanding of the Word and in our ability to apply that Word to our lives.

## What Do We Find Here?

Since this is a survey of content, our discussion of the text by necessity will be brief. The first three chapters of Genesis are a unit which includes the account of creation, the account of God’s provision of all things good for man, and the account of man’s failure rightly to respond to God’s goodness shown to him.

### GENESIS ONE

Chapter one tells of the *creation of all things* out of nothing by the Word of God (see Heb. 11:3). We are made conscious of how God began the creation of earth as a waste and void with a prevailing darkness everywhere; and from that point He brought both light and order to bear on what He had made, so that in six days He had made all things very good.

Paul noted this and likened it to God’s power to bring order out of the chaotic lives of sinners (2 Cor. 5:17), and to His power to bring light in the darkened hearts of unbelievers through the gospel (2 Cor. 4:6). Thus, we see that in creation itself, God began to declare and teach His power and glory as the only hope for man.

Space will not permit us here to deal with the theory of evolution as held by many today in contrast to the biblical account of creation. That will come later in our more detailed study of this portion of God’s Word. Suffice to say here that Scripture is very specific in declaring that *all* was created by God in precise order in the space of six days.



We are also shown here that the world as created was *created in a different form* than we are familiar with today. We note that the world then consisted of a living area (the firmament or expanse) with great reservoirs of water both above and below that living area (1:6-8). Peter notes this and shows that it was in anticipation of the flood to come that God made the world as He did in the beginning (2 Peter 3:3-7). The vast reservoirs of water were held off until God determined to destroy that world; and after He destroyed it, the world that resulted was different in structure, no longer having the reservoirs of water as before.

We note further that *God made man in His own image* (1:26-27). Since God emphasized the plurality of persons in the Godhead in this passage (“let us,” “our image”), we conclude that man in God’s image would reflect the plurality of persons also, being made male and female and yet designed to be one flesh—through marriage (2:24).

Thus man, made in God’s image, was made to know and have fellowship with God: being able to enjoy the glory of God, living in the presence of God, and in fellowship with God. From Ephesians 1:4, we see precisely what God had in mind in making man: to have a people to spend eternity with Him in a fellowship of love, being both holy (belonging exclusively to God) and without blemish (being perfect, sinless). This is the kind of creature which could enjoy the presence of God forever.

## GENESIS TWO

This chapter is not a repeat of chapter one but rather gives to us detail of the creation of man and shows all that was made *centered around man*. The Sabbath concept is built right into creation itself, teaching both the activity and the rest of God at the completion of creation. By application, the doctrine of the Sabbath also teaches our responsibility to be involved in the work which God has given to us to do, six days a week here on earth. We are also to rest on the seventh in fellowship with God, in anticipation of the day when we shall spend eternity with Him, resting from our labors as God has from His (Heb. 4:9-10).

We see, too, from this chapter, that while man was surrounded by things good for him, nevertheless, he was expected to reciprocate and *respond to God’s love* by showing his love for God in obedience to God’s command. Man would therefore know of evil either by the revelation of God, who would define for him what was good and what was evil, or, rejecting the Word of God, he would learn of evil by experimentation, resulting in his own spiritual death (2:17).

*Marriage and the family* are given prime attention here as God first taught man his need of woman—a like creature to meet his needs—and then provided that creature from man’s own body. We see that as Eve was made from the rib of Adam, so thereafter, man would be born of woman; male and female, they were mutually dependent on one another and would complement each other. But God did make Adam first, and thus to him went the prior responsibility in spiritual leadership (1 Tim. 2:12-14).

### GENESIS THREE

Chapter three gives to us the account of *what man did or failed to do* with the opportunity given to him to glorify God while living in the image of God. The serpent described here, while one of the creatures of God, bore in his body the presence of Satan, man’s chief antagonist. From that time on Satan would oppose man until the end of the world when he will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). We see how Satan is identified with the serpent from Revelation 12:9.

*Satan offered to man an alternative to the Word of God* as the basis for Adam’s conduct. That alternative was man’s own will and right to decide for himself what was right and wrong (3:1). When Satan lied, Adam and Eve were faced with a choice: to obey God’s Word or strike out on their own, independent of God. But in reality, the choice was to continue to live in God’s presence or to die spiritually—unfit for the presence of God. Satan’s lies at this point hindered their seeing the issue as it really was (3:4-5).

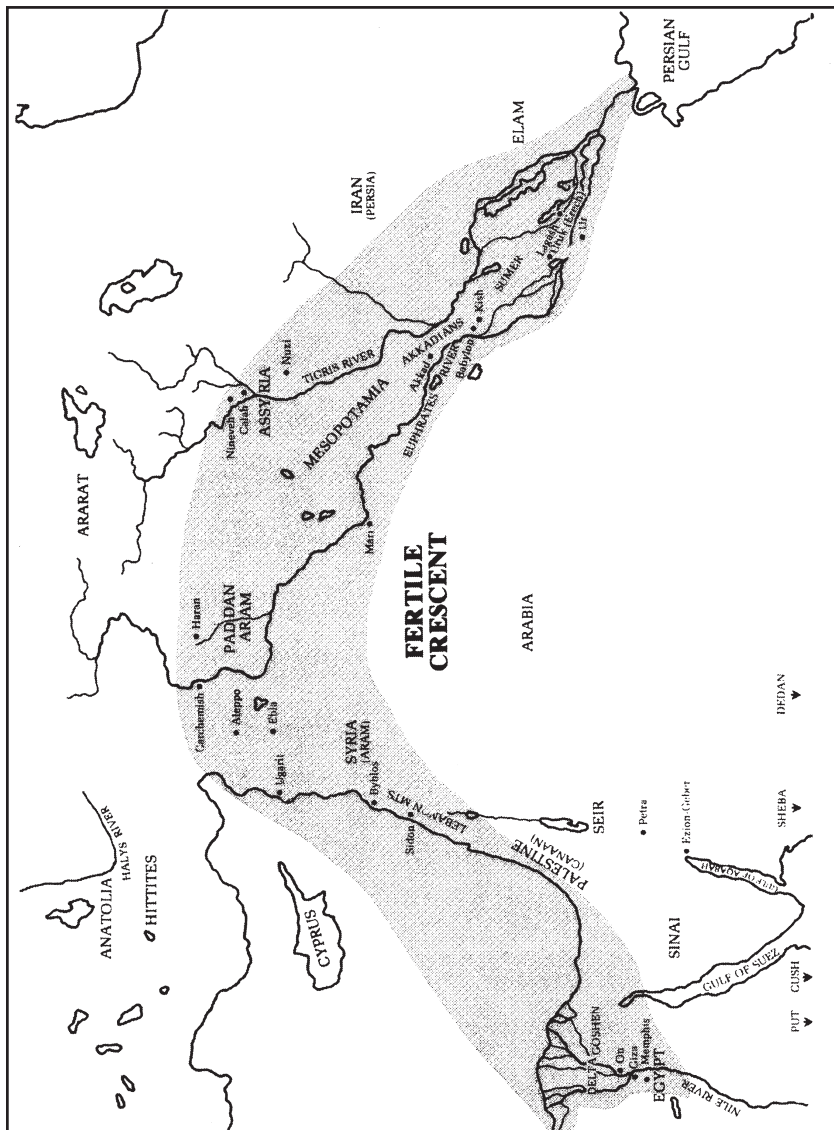
Once the choice was made in their hearts, they were already helpless in the hands of Satan. The portrait of sin described here is similar to two other passages in the New Testament: 1 John 2:16 and James 1:14-15.

## LUST = SIN = DEATH

Their own *unfitness to live in God’s presence* is illustrated in the subsequent actions and words on their part (3:7-12). But we note that God was not unprepared for what happened. He was ready with a promise that through the woman and her seed would come one who would, in the end, triumph over the antagonist of man, Satan (3:15). This verse is often called *the first gospel* because it points to the time when One born of woman would indeed set men free from the power of Satan (see Gal. 4:3-5; Rom. 16:20).

The chapter ends with *the dismal picture* of man’s punishment because of

his sin: man having to till soil that would no longer yield its fruit readily; woman having to bear children through pain and grief; woman subject now, not to man who was righteous, but to man who was prone to evil and would be cruel at times; and above all, both having to live now under the wrath of God unable in themselves to return to fellowship with God.



## What Additional Information Is Helpful?

A look at the map gives to us the general area of the location of Eden. Two of the rivers flowing from Eden are identifiable: *Hiddekel* (the Tigris) and the *Euphrates* (Gen. 2:14). This area is one end of what later came to be known as the Fertile Crescent which was a crescent-shaped strip of land running from the lower Euphrates and Tigris River valleys northward to Paddan Aram and then southward again along the Mediterranean coast through Palestine to Egypt and the Nile. It is so called because this area was inhabitable by civilizations, being able to bear vegetation. Above and below the narrow vegetation strip were hostile mountains, deserts, and seas.

Of course the map as shown indicates the way the land looks today. We cannot know its structure before the flood, but the identity of two pre-flood rivers are known to us, at any rate, as we noted above.

While nothing of history in this time is known from any other source than the Bible, nevertheless, many of the later cultures living in the area of the Fertile Crescent did have their traditions about creation and beginnings of men. It is interesting to compare and contrast some of these with Scripture.

Ancient Egyptian tradition taught that the world was created by a god called Ptah (tah) who created by the words of his mouth (compare Gen. 1:3). Babylonian tradition credits creation to the counsel of the gods and goddesses deciding that the mother-goddess must be killed. When their hero, Marduk, had defeated the mother-goddess and killed her, he became supreme among the gods and then cut her body in two, making heaven from half of her and earth from the other half. Men were made from the blood of her ally and were viewed as created to do the dirty work for the gods.

Another Mesopotamian tradition, from the ancient Sumerians who lived first in Mesopotamia, according to archaeology, taught that man was created first, then the vegetables and animals.

How can we explain the similarities and the differences between these ancient traditions and what we read in the Bible? We must remember that while the Bible centers its interest primarily on one particular people, the Hebrews, descended from Abraham, nevertheless, the Bible recognizes that there were many others who lived on earth at the same time. Noah had three sons, but our attention is primarily focused on the descendants

of Shem from whom Abraham came. The brothers of Shem doubtlessly recalled much of man's history from the time of Adam on, since many of the earliest men mentioned in the Bible lived until nearly the time of the flood. But while they recalled some facts, most of what they remembered and what became tradition to their descendants was polluted by the sinful nature of men, thus distorting the real facts.

When God revealed the ancient history of man and man's origin to Moses by His Holy Spirit, He enabled Moses to write the record which we find here, free of human error. What he wrote was guided by the Holy Spirit so that what Moses penned was the truth. This is what we mean when we speak of an inerrant or infallible Bible.

The Egyptians knew that the world was created by the word of God, **but** paganism had blurred their memory of who God really is. The Babylonians also knew man was created to serve God, **but** in the subsequent hardness of man's lot because of sin, they lost sight of the noble fellowship that man originally had with God and focused only on the irksome daily tasks of their meaningless labor on earth. The Sumerians knew man was first in importance in creation in view of God, **but** they erroneously assumed that this meant that man was first created, then the animals and vegetation. The Gilgamesh Epic recorded something of the tree of life and of the role played by the serpent, **but** is quite oblivious to man's disobedience and rebellion against God as the reason for his loss of eternal life and sees the tree of life as some kind of magical plant.

We see then, from the human records, further evidence of the effects of sin, even on the memory of men; and we see why an infallible Bible was needed for the people of God in order that they might know the truth. Therefore, *The Westminster Confession* declares the Holy Scripture "to be most necessary" (Chapter I, I) and affirms "its infallible nature" (Ch. I, V).

## What Did This Revelation Mean to God's People When Originally Given?

We need to remember that the revelation recorded here was given to God's people while in the wilderness, after they had been delivered from Egypt. They needed to know that God's calling them to be His people was not some new concept with God but part of God's plan from the beginning, and that it had been evident in the creation of man in the first place. When given the Law of God, they needed to realize that it had

been disobedience to God's Law that brought on man's fall, resulting in the kind of miseries which God's people had had to endure while slaves to cruel and sinful people in their own day. And as the Lord went on to tell them of their family and parental responsibility, they needed to see that from the beginning, God had purposed the family unit to be the basic unit in society where God's Word would be taught and exemplified.

We can see then how very important these lessons were to Israel as she began to be conscious of being the people of God in a sinful world.

## What Significance Is There for Us Today in This Scripture Lesson?

Keep in mind that this is only a survey.<sup>1</sup> Here then, we can only focus on a few of the lessons found in these chapters for us, commensurate with our remarks in discussion of the content in the first part of the lesson.

### 1. We are given a daily sermon by natural revelation.

We have seen already how Paul related God's activity in creation to His activity in the new creation of us in Christ. In God's making light to come and conquer darkness and in establishing the succession of days—"there was evening, and there was morning, one day"—God thereby built right into the sequence of night and day a continual sermon from natural revelation declaring the triumph of God's light over darkness. In our counting the day as beginning at dawn, rather than at dark as the Hebrews did, we perhaps miss something of this significance.

### 2. The world was different than it is now.

We noted how Peter speaks of the different world prior to the flood. This is most important in our consideration of other views of the world's origin which contradict the Bible. Most views are based on scientific observations of what we can see and know *now* of natural laws. But Scripture shows that the world was different structurally then; therefore, natural laws presently in effect, were not necessarily so before the flood. By Scripture we are shown that we do not have to regard the biblical view as based on ancient mythology at all. It speaks of a world we never knew nor can know, except through the revelation of Scripture.

<sup>1</sup> The *Adult Biblical Education Series* consists of 26 volumes, of which this is the first. You will find the series at [www.pcabookstore.com](http://www.pcabookstore.com).

**3. God's goal for us today is one and the same as His goal for man from the beginning.**

It is thrilling to see how the concepts expressed in Ephesians 1:4 are so clearly built into the creation of the world and of man in it, so that man might be holy (belonging exclusively to God and finding his purpose only in God's purpose for him); *without blemish* (created very good, faultless in God's eyes); *in God's presence* (in a place which the Lord specially prepared for him to have fellowship with God); *in a bond of love* (knowing first God's love for him in the provision of everything good for him and then having opportunity to show his love to God by doing his work as unto the Lord). It is thrilling to realize that God's goals, as expressed in creation and in Ephesians 1:4, are His goals throughout His entire revelation and that we today are caught up in that same purpose of God, being challenged to be holy and without blemish, as we walk in fellowship with the Lord, in love toward Him and toward one another.

**4. Man's failure in the beginning is one and the same as the cause of his continued failures today.**

The age old question of Satan: "Did God really say?" is still the basis on which Satan wages war against the saints and the Church. There is nothing new in the criticism which today challenges the integrity of God's Word. That started with Satan in Eden. Man, still prideful, continues to exalt his own opinion against God's Word. The new morality of situation ethics and political correctness of our own day are but continuing patterns of the same old questions: "Did God actually say?" Realizing this, of course, tends to make such popular ideas less sophisticated when they are stripped bare of their veneer of originality and shown to be the same kind of questions unbelievers have asked from the beginning of history.

**5. The answer to man's needs in the beginning is the same as the answer today.**

God gave the answer in Genesis 3:15: that through One born of woman would come the victory over Satan, our ancient enemy. From the beginning, there never has nor ever will be but one answer, and that is faith in Jesus Christ, *the Seed*, born of woman, who came to save us from Satan and to give to us that eternal life which we lost through Adam (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:22,45-49).



**MEDITATION ON AND APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD TO OUR LIVES**

1. *God committed the care of all He had made on earth into Adam's hands. Since Adam (and therefore mankind) was still responsible for the care of the world after his fall, what then is my obligation to God in respect to the daily work I do? in respect to the materials of earth that I use? in respect to ecology and the proper care for all that God has made?*
2. *God made man in His own image, to bear the glory of God before all creation. Do I reflect God's exclusive claim on me as His child in my daily life and planning? Do I reflect His sinless nature in my life before men? Do I enjoy fellowship with God by Bible study and prayer? Do I reflect God's love in my dealings with others?*
3. *God established by His own example the concept of the Sabbath of rest, but in the context of six days of labor for which He could give a good account: nothing shoddily done in those days, nothing unfinished that ought to have been completed, no one short-changed by His neglect. I realize the importance of worship on the Lord's Day with the people of God, but do I just as zealously render a good accounting of the other six days? Is all of my work done as unto the Lord? Is it free of shoddiness? Do I leave it neglected and incomplete?*
4. *Adam was first told by God what is good and what is evil, but he rejected God's revelation of such things and chose to learn by experiencing evil. That proved to be folly. But am I listening to authorities other than God's Word to help me determine what is right and wrong? Are there wrong decisions which I have made because I did not seek guidance from God's Word?*
5. *When Adam and Eve sinned, they sought to cover it up by hiding from God. How do I react when I have sinned? Do I try to ignore it or hide it from God and men, or do I confess it to the Lord, seeking His forgiveness?*