



# Volume I

By

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# Chapter One

Why do we exist? Why are we here on planet Earth? What's my purpose in life? What does the future hold for me? What will happen to me after I die? Why is there evil in the world? Why did God create the devil?

These are typical, yet important questions that most of us ask at different points in our lives. I'd like to share what I believe are the answers based on a deep-dive study of the Bible during the past 50+ years. These are not my opinions. Everyone has an opinion. What we need is some evidence to corroborate what's 'really real.' I pray these thoughts are helpful to you in your life.

## Why Do We Exist?

Let's begin with what may be the most basic question: why do we exist? I could expand the question to this – why do we exist rather than not exist? By 'we' I mean humans. Why do 'humans' exist?

If you had asked me that question when I was an atheist, my answer would be much different than my answer is now. As an atheist I believed that we 'just are.' There was no reason for the existence of humans. We had 'evolved' from some lower species – a 'common ancestor.' However, evolution has a big problem because there was 'nothing' before there was 'something.' The supposed 'common ancestor' evolved from something else that evolved from something else that evolved from something else, etc.

**Question:** from where did the first ‘something else’ come?

**Answer:** nothing. That’s what I believed as an atheist. Something came from nothing. I’m embarrassed to even admit that’s what I believed, but it’s what the public school system taught and I believed it was true until my early 20s.

That ‘something’ could come from ‘nothing’ is not logical and makes no sense. There is no ‘evidence’ for it. Yes, there are ‘theories,’ but no verifiable evidence. The fact is that the ‘theory of evolution’ is probably on its last legs in the scientific world. Many atheists today have turned to the idea of a ‘multiverse’ or series of ‘multiverses.’ The planet Earth just happens to exist in one that can sustain life on at least this one planet. However, the multiverse ‘theory’ still doesn’t explain what started the process that led to multiverses.

The 'Big Bang Theory' (no, not the television show) is just a theory. How does 'nothing' go 'bang?' I've read the supposed 'evidence' behind the 'Bang' and none of it holds water. The 'universe' has not always existed. There are physical 'laws' that support that as true. However, from where did those 'laws' emanate?

## Searching for Answers

I studied Hinduism, Shintoism, Taoism, and Buddhism prior to becoming an atheist. I didn't find any good answers to my basic questions about why the universe, the planet Earth, or humans existed from those worldviews either. It was not until I investigated Christianity that I found a worldview that made sense and answered my questions. Since the Christian worldview contained more than ample answers based on verifiable evidence, I became a Christian.

I share that with you so you will know I didn't 'buy into' Christianity because it's what my parents believed or the society in which I was raised. I was drawn into Eastern religion because of my martial arts training that began at the age of 12. I found it far more interesting and fulfilling than the Christianity I had known earlier. I became an atheist at 18. It seemed the best choice out of everything I had experienced. I attempted to disprove Christianity through an investigative process, but became a believer at the age of 23.

So, the answers I'll share in this series will be based on more than just the 54 years I've lived life as a Christian. I will also bring in my experience and research into multiple other religions and worldviews. If you're interested, you can read more about that research in a book I wrote almost 20 years ago. It's called *A History of Man's Quest for Immortality*.



## Chapter Two

The objective of our new series is to answer some basic questions that many people ask –

1. Why do I exist?
2. Why am I here on planet Earth?
3. What's my purpose in life?
4. What does the future hold for me?
5. What will happen to me after I die?
6. Why is there evil in the world?
7. Why did God create the devil?

These questions will lead us to many other questions as we go through the series, but we'll use these five basic life questions as 'jumping-off' places for other questions.

I mentioned in the introduction to this series that we'd do a 'deep dive' into these questions. What I mean by that is going 'below' the surface answers that we often hear from people. I personally think that 'surface' answers or no answers at all are a big part of the problem we see today in Christianity. Tens of thousands of people who grew up in Christian churches are abandoning their basic beliefs in Christianity every year through a process known as 'deconstruction' and/or 'deconversion.' I've written a lot about both of those on my Apologetics blog, [FaithandSelfDefense.com](http://FaithandSelfDefense.com), so feel free to click over there sometime and search for the words 'deconstruction' or 'deconversion' to see what articles you find. I also wrote an eBook you may find helpful. It's titled *[EXvangelical – What's That?](#)*

## Question #1

Keep in mind that I'm going to answer questions from a Christian perspective. Having studied many worldviews (and even lived several), I don't think you'll find good answers elsewhere. Probably something else you should know about me is that I believe Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God and has ALL of the answers to every question. I also believe the Holy Spirit is a Member of the Godhead and inspired human beings (primarily prophets and apostles) to write the individual books we know collectively as 'the Bible.' The Holy Spirit also has ALL of the answers to every question. If you disagree, please share your thoughts in the 'Comments' section below and we can 'discuss' so others can read our supporting evidence for each position.

## Why do I exist?

You exist because God wants you to exist. God created the heavens and the earth. 'He is that He is' ('I AM that I AM'). God is 'Self-Existent,' meaning that He is the 'Necessary' Being. Humans, and every other life form on the Earth, and the universe itself, is 'contingent' on God's existence. God exists. Nothing or no one else has to exist. God existed in Eternity before 'anything' else existed. He exists because He exists. We exist because He exists and wants us to exist. God is the 'uncaused Cause' of all things. He exists because He exists – always has and always will – 'Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God' (Psalm 90:2).

You and I exist for a reason. That would be God's reason for our existence. We discover His reason by reading what He revealed about His reason –

*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Genesis 1:26-28*

## Image and likeness

Both of those words are very important in light of the other life forms God created in His image and likeness. However, as far as we know there are none. The Bible does say that God made humans 'a little lower than the angels' (Psalm 8:5), but it doesn't say that God made angels in His image and likeness. The Bible does say that angels are 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation' (Hebrews 1:14). We also know that Jesus Christ is 'so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Hebrews 1:4). The Bible says that each true Christian is 'an heir of God through Christ' (Galatians 4:7) and 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ' (Romans 8:17). The Bible says that Christians will 'judge angels' (1 Corinthians 6:3) and 'rule and reign' with Christ (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5). Based on what we see in Scripture, it seems likely that God made only humans in His image and likeness.

## God's Purpose

God explained His purpose for creating human beings in the first Book of the Bible and the last Book of the Bible –

*... let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Genesis 1:26-28*

A ‘key word’ here is ‘dominion.’ It’s the Hebrew word  $\text{רָדָה}$  (*radah*) and means ‘to rule.’ The word ‘subdue’ will play an important part in our series, but I’ll save that part of the deep dive for another time.

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Revelation 20:6*

*There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:5*

Notice that humans ‘ruling and reigning’ with God are His purpose for us. There’s just one problem with this – humans are not ‘ruling and reigning’ with God. Thousands of years have gone by without God’s purpose being realized by humans on earth. So, what do make of that? How did humans lose their way and how will they get it back?

In the last part of our new series we saw that God created humans to ‘rule’ (have dominion) over the earth. We find that in the first chapter of Genesis. In the last Book of the Bible, Revelation, we find humans ruling and reigning with God forever. If those were the only two portions of Scripture we



read, we'd think everything worked according to God's plan and purpose. However, there are thousands of years where humans did not (and are still not) ruling and reigning with God on the earth. Why? What happened?

## Chapter Three

God's eternal plan and purpose is for humans to rule and reign with Him. However, His plan includes training us to reign with Him (*Train to Reign*). The training period began soon after God created the first human being – a male named Adam.

God the Creator made a place for Himself to dwell on the earth with the humans He created. It was called Eden. God created Adam in Eden, then took the man to live just east of God's land in a place called the 'Garden of Eden.' Lots of homes around the world have beautiful gardens near them, so that should be a surprise that God built a special 'Garden' for humans to live.

*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 being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. Genesis 2:7-8*

Think about that. You are living next door to God! You live in His Garden!! And what a Garden –

*And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9*

Every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Yummy! But wait a minute – what’s this? “... and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ ?? We know about ‘good’ from Genesis 1, but why a tree that contained knowledge of ‘evil?’ Did somebody sneak into the Garden overnight and plant the ‘evil’ tree? Nope. Genesis 2:9 says ‘the Lord God made every tree,’ including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God created that tree for some reason – but why?

## Basic Training

*Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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 2:15-17*

We have just been introduced to God's plan for 'basic training.' It started in the Garden. God gave Adam his first orders –

- tend the Garden
- keep the Garden
- eat from the Garden, except for the fruit of one tree

The Hebrew word for 'tend' is עֲבַד (*abad* -to work, serve). The Hebrew word for 'keep' is שָׁמַר (*shamar* – keep watch, protect, preserve). Okay, I get the 'work, serve' part, but why 'protect, preserve?' Protect from what? Keep that word in mind as we continue through this series – *shamar* – because it is at the heart of our training.

Moving on. Not only did God plant the tree of the 'knowledge of good and evil,' He told Adam that if he ate from that tree he would 'die.' Die! What? Wait a minute. God created Adam in Eden, built a Garden next door where Adam would live, created lots of trees with great food to eat, then said there was one fruit that would kill him if he ate it? Why would God do that?

## Chapter Four

Genesis 1 and Revelation 22 tell us that God created humans to 'rule and reign' the earth.

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Genesis 1:27-28*

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They*

*shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:1-5*

However, as we saw in the last part of our study, humans do not have 'dominion' (rule) over every living thing that moves on the earth. Humans are not eating from the 'tree of life.' The nations are not 'healed.' Our world is under a 'curse.' We do not 'see the face' of God. We do need the sun. Humans are not currently 'reigning forever and ever.' Why not? Good question.

# The Garden

It's important that we understand the purpose of the Garden of Eden. God created Adam in Eden, the dwelling place of God on the Earth He had created. God planted a 'garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed' (Genesis 2:8). God created many 'creatures' on the Earth, but none like human beings. He made them in His 'image and likeness' and told them to be 'fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.'

The fact that God placed Adam in the Garden 'eastward in Eden' demonstrated His desire to dwell with humans in a special relationship. This relationship was to be on earth. God had already created supernatural beings who dwelled with Him in Heaven. His relationship with angelic beings would be somewhat different than the relationship He would have with humans.



We need to closely look at what happened in the Garden to understand what we face today in our lives on earth. The great promise of the Garden is not being fulfilled, has not been fulfilled, and will not be fulfilled until the events of Revelation 22 when a 'pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,' will proceed from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Jesus Christ). In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, will be 'the tree of life;' most likely the same Tree of Life we see in the original Garden of Eden. The tree will bear 'twelve fruits,' and the leaves of the tree will be for 'the healing of the nations.'

Some people think of Revelation 22 as the Garden of Eden 'restored.' I think of it as the Garden of Eden 'expanded.' God will create 'a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away' (Revelation 21:1). The Apostle John, who received this vision from Christ, wrote that the 'tabernacle of God' will be with men, 'and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God' (Revelation 21:3).

This fits quite well with what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4. Some Christians in ancient Thessalonica were concerned about believers who died before Jesus Christ returned from Heaven to ‘seize, catch up’ (rapture) His children. Paul comforted them with these words –

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18*

The key words I want you to notice are the last ones – “And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” God wants to be with us. He wants to ‘dwell’ with us. So why isn’t that happening now?

# Evil

Remember the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ from Genesis 2? God told Adam that he could eat the fruit of any tree in the Garden of Eden ‘except’ for the fruit from the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ Why? ‘... for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’

Question: what’s evil? The Hebrew word is רָע (*ra*). It means ‘adversity, malignant, bad, bringing misery, giving pain, wrong, injurious, wicked.’ Some might say it’s the opposite of ‘good,’ which is טוֹב (*towb*) in the Hebrew. It means ‘pleasant, agreeable, desirable, kind, beautiful, useful, suitable, honest, virtuous.’

It’s interesting to note that when God creates the ‘new heaven and new earth,’ that ‘there shall be more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, no more pain’ (Revelation 21:4). God added that nothing that ‘defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie’ would be allowed into the New Jerusalem – part of the new heaven

and new earth (Revelation 21:7). Evil will be gone – only that which is good will remain.

So, if God is going to rid the universe of evil one day why did He ever let evil exist in the first place? Why plant a 'tree' in the Garden of Eden that would introduce 'evil' to Adam? What was God up to in the Garden?

# Chapter Five

We ended our last study with these questions –

- So, if God is going to rid the universe of evil one day why did He ever let evil exist in the first place?
- Why plant a ‘tree’ in the Garden of Eden that would introduce ‘evil’ to Adam?
- What was God up to in the Garden?

We will find many of the answers to our tough questions in God’s revealed Word – the Bible – but not everything. Here’s why I say that.

Except for a few instances that we know about (e.g. God’s finger writing His Law on tablets of stone, God’s finger writing a warning on the plaster of the wall’s palace in Babylon), God spoke through ‘prophets’ and ‘His Son’ (Hebrews 1:1-2). Moses, one of God’s prophets, wrote Genesis under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God (e.g. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2

Peter 1:21). However, that doesn't mean that God revealed 'everything' to His prophets. Here's what Moses wrote in the Book of Deuteronomy –

*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

*Deuteronomy 29:29*

I will do everything I can do answer your questions, but it's important to know that there are some 'secret things' God has not revealed. Fortunately for us, most of what we need to know for the purpose of this study has been revealed.

# Evil and the Serpent

I'm going to jump ahead a little bit and address two of our primary questions:

- Why is there evil in the world?
- Why did God create the devil?

Evil could not and would not exist if God had not allowed it, so there's a reason for it. The same is true about the devil. The devil could not and would not exist if God had not allowed it, so there's a reason for it.

These are two of the toughest questions people ask Christians. I get it. Wouldn't life be great if evil and the devil didn't exist? I'm afraid that thinking is too small when considering what God has done, is doing, and will do to the heaven and earth He created.

God created humans to ‘reign’ with Him. That sounds good on the surface, but how will humans know how to reign with God? What does it mean to ‘reign’ with God. God’s ways and thoughts are so much higher than our ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). So, how do we gain that kind of knowledge? How do we attain to those types of ‘ruling’ abilities? That’s what this series will address.



## Subdue It

God designed a ‘training plan’ for humans to be able to ‘reign’ with Him. There are so many things humans need to learn about God and how to rule ‘in sync’ with Him. That’s where ‘evil and the devil’ come in.

Let me say at the outset that I am not going to make light of evil or the devil. Jesus said that the devil ‘does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it’ (John 8:44). Jesus also called the devil ‘the great dragon,’ ‘that old serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world’ (Revelation 12:9). I also won’t make light of ‘evil’ because it has caused untold misery in this world. However, there is a reason for both of them existing.

Look at Genesis 1:28 again – this time with a focus on what humans would need to do before they had ‘dominion’ (rule) –

*Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*

Did you notice the word ‘subdue it’ just prior to ‘have dominion over’ it? The Hebrew word for ‘subdue’ is **כָּבַשׁ** (*kabash*) and means ‘to bring under subjection, force into bondage.’ Why would God say that humans would need ‘to bring things under subjection, and force into bondage’ before He said they would ‘rule’ (have dominion) ‘over every living thing that moves on the earth?’

I believe that learning how to 'subdue' is part of learning how to 'rule.' Why, if humanity was going to exist in a perfect world where they would 'rule and reign' with the God who created the heavens and the earth, would they need to learn how to 'subdue' anything or anyone? Why would bringing things 'under subjection' and 'forcing into bondage' precede 'having dominion' in a 'perfect world?'

## Chapter Six

Words are important. Writers, good writers, use words in a particular order to present their ‘story’ so it’s ‘clear and easy to understand.’ The Holy Spirit, the true Author of the Bible, is the best ‘writer’ in the universe. He chose human authors to inspire to communicate God’s Word so that can understand what God is doing.

That’s why I pointed out in the last part of this study that God made humans in His image and likeness and said – *Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*’ (Genesis 1:28). The Hebrew word *כָּבַשׁ* (*kabash* – subdue) preceded the word *רָדָה* (*radah* – dominion, rule). The question I raised was why would God say that humans would need ‘to bring things under subjection, and force into bondage’ before He said they would ‘rule’ (have dominion) ‘over every living thing that moves on the earth?’

I believe that learning how to 'subdue' is part of learning how to 'rule.' Why, if humanity was going to exist in a perfect world where they would 'rule and reign' with the God who created the heavens and the earth, would they need to learn how to 'subdue' anything or anyone? Why would bringing things 'under subjection' and 'forcing into bondage' precede 'having dominion' in a 'perfect world?' The answer to that question is, I believe, is because the world Adam and his family would live in would NOT be a perfect world.

That leads to the next question: why not? Why didn't God create a perfect world where humans ruled and reigned and had a great life?

# Why?

I think the answer is direct and straightforward, but I know many people won't like it. The reason why God didn't create a perfect world where humans ruled, reigned, and had a great life is because that wasn't His Eternal Plan. That may not be the answer you were hoping to hear, but it's the best one I have. Here's why?

We know several things about God before He created the heavens and the earth – before time began –

1. God the Father LOVED God the Son – “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24)
2. God the Father LOVED the world of humans He was going to create so much that He ‘willed’ that the Son He loved would die for the world – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever

believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

3. God the Father LOVED the world of humans He was going to create so much that He 'willed' that the Son He loved would die by shedding His 'blood for them – “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” (1 Peter 1:18-20)
4. God the Father LOVED the world of humans He was going to create so much that He 'purposed' 'before time began' that some of humans would be saved – “who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and

brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”  
(2 Timothy 1:9-10)

5. God the Father LOVED the world of humans He was going to create so much that ‘promised’ eternal life to some humans ‘before time began.’ (Titus 1:2)
6. God the Father LOVED the world of humans He was going to create so much that He ‘chose’ some ‘before the foundation of the world’ to “be holy and without blame before Him in love.” (Ephesians 1:4)

The fact that God the Father explained in great detail how He planned ‘before time began’ that God the Son would die for our salvation tells me that what the Garden of Eden was never going to be the ‘perfect’ place for Adam and his family to live out a perfect life. Something had to happen to push ‘perfection’ out of the way and make room for ‘imperfection,’ even if for just a brief time. I say ‘brief’ remembering the words of the Apostle Peter – “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Peter 3:8) God exists



outside of time and space, thus He sees things much differently than do we.

## How?

Now that we know the ‘why,’ the next question is ‘how.’ How would God cause ‘perfection’ to become ‘imperfection?’ Easy. Plant a tree in the Garden with the ‘knowledge of good and evil’ and tell humans that was the one tree from which they could eat no fruit. If they did, they would die.

Okay, next question. What if Adam and his family obeyed God and never ate from that ‘knowledge’ tree? I guess that’s possible, though we’ll never know. Why? Because God created a creature that was unlike the humans who had a different agenda. Genesis 3 calls the creature ‘the serpent.’ Revelation 12 calls him – ‘the great dragon, that serpent of old, the Devil and Satan.’

Here's what happened in the Garden after God warned Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, took one of his ribs, closed up the flesh in its place, used the rib to make 'a woman,' then brought her to 'the man.' Adam woke up, looked at her and said – “This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:23-24)

Everyone is now in position to answer the question, HOW. Enter the 'serpent' –

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will*

*not surely die. For God knows that in the day 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, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

*Genesis 3:1-7*

The events that followed included God catching all of them in their disobedience and a series of curses that would lead to a dark and difficult existence for all involved. God did offer a ray of hope as He cursed the serpent and we'll get to that a bit later in our series.

God's Eternal Plan did not include human beings remaining in that 'cursed' position forever. If they were to eat from the 'tree of life,' they would 'live forever' in that cursed state. So, God removed Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden 'and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.' (Genesis 3:24)

## Chapter Seven

Given what we read in Genesis 1:27-28 and in Genesis 3, it would seem that God's purpose and plan for humanity had had a great 'fall.' That's probably why many Christians call what happened in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 – 'the great fall' or 'fall into sin.'

The 'deceptive' conversation between the serpent and Adam's wife took about **30 seconds**. Use a stop watch to time just the actual words spoken. What happened next is a bit more difficult to time with a stop watch, but it probably took only a few minutes –

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. Genesis 3:6-7*

The same is true with what happened next. We're not told the length of time between Adam and his wife covering themselves and hearing the 'sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day' (Genesis 3:8). My guess is that it happened within minutes of the serpent's deception.

If we use a stop watch to time the conversation God had with Adam and his wife, and the words He spoke to the serpent, we come up with about **90 seconds**. How long it took God to make tunics of skin and clothe them, then remove Adam and his wife from the Garden, is anyone's guess. I'm thinking an hour or two, but it may be have been longer or shorter.

My point is that from the moment the serpent began his deception of Eve to the moment God 'drove out the man,' and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden with a flaming sword to 'guard the way to the tree of life' would probably occurred in a matter of a few hours – certainly during the same day.

## East of the Garden

*So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

*Genesis 3:24*

Think about direction for just a minute. God created Adam in Eden, then placed him in ‘a garden eastward in Eden’ (Genesis 2:8). After the serpent’s deception and humanity’s ‘fall,’ God placed an angelic guard ‘at the east of the garden of Eden’ so that Adam and his family could never get back in to eat from the ‘tree of life and live forever’ (Genesis 3:22). God moved humanity further from Him in an easterly direction.

We find Adam and Eve living ‘east’ of the Garden of Eden with Adam working the land and Eve raising children. Cain was their first child. Eve thought he might be the promised ‘Seed’ who would fulfill God’s promise from Genesis 3:15. He wasn’t.



Cain grew up to become a ‘murderer.’ The Apostle John explained what happened –

*For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. 1 John 3:11-12*

Notice that Cain ‘was of the wicked one.’ Those words, ‘the wicked one,’ generally refer to the devil.

God knew what Cain planned to do and warned him –

*So the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. Genesis 4:6-7*

Cain did not listen to God and did murder his brother. Interestingly, Genesis 4:7 is the first time the word ‘sin’ is used in the Bible. The Hebrew word is חַטָּאָה (*chatta’ah*). God told Cain that ‘sin’ had a ‘desire’ for him. The word ‘desire’ is the Hebrew word תְּשׁוּקָה (*teshuqah*) and means ‘a longing.’ Then God told Cain that he should ‘rule over it.’ The Hebrew is מָשַׁל (*masha*) and means ‘reign, rule, have dominion.’ The training has begun.

Cain could have chosen to take a deep breath, listen to God, count to a hundred, cool down, and ‘rule’ over the sinful feelings he had toward his brother. However, Cain didn’t do that. He talked with his brother, went out into a field, rose up against Abel and killed him. When God confronted Cain about what he had done, Cain lied and said he didn’t do it – “I do not know. *Am I my brother’s keeper?*” God’s response to Cain’s lie?

*What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your*

*hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth. Genesis 4:10-12*

## *Train to Rule Insights*

We know that the devil (serpent, Satan, dragon, etc) was involved in ‘deceiving’ Cain because of what the Apostle John wrote in his first letter. We know that the devil was involved in ‘deceiving’ Eve because of what we read in Genesis 3 and 1 Timothy 2. God created Adam, Eve, and Cain – the first humans on earth – to ‘subdue’ and ‘have dominion.’ They all failed to do that. None of them ‘subdued’ anything. None of them ‘ruled’ over anything. Keep in mind that Adam and his wife were created without a ‘sinful nature.’ Some theologians call that early period of Genesis 1 and 2 as the Age of Innocence. However, Cain was born with a sinful nature.

So, we have two examples to compare: humans without a sinful nature and humans with a sinful nature. Neither was able to ‘subdue’ (*kabash* – bring into bondage, bring into subjection, force into subjection) or ‘have dominion’ (*radah* – rule, reign over) in their particular challenges.

Humans have a lot to learn about subduing and ruling. It's like someone who walks into a dojo and says, 'I want to learn martial arts.' Do they know martial arts at that point if they had never studied martial arts before? No, they don't. They have to go through a long process that will include sacrifice and pain. They will have to develop patience, humility, bravery, trust, reliance on their training, etc.

The same is true for us. If we are going to learn how to do what God has planned for us to do, we will also need to learn similar lessons. The Bible, God's Word to humanity, will be our primary training manual. History, humanity's response to God's Word, will be another part of our training.

## Chapter Eight

Training to do anything takes time. If you want to do something *very* well, training takes even longer. Given that there is no 'time' in eternity (e.g. called 'before time began' by the Apostle Paul), we cannot measure 'how long' God considered creating the universe, everything in it, and giving humans a position of reigning with Him. What we do know is that He did consider it, decided to do it, and put everything in motion to make it happen.

# The Training Program

We covered Genesis chapters 1 – 4 in previous parts of our study, so please review those for background on this next phase of our series.

Adam, Eve, and their first child, Cain, demonstrated that humans would need to go through a serious training program to be able to *subdue* and *have dominion* “over every living thing that moves on the earth.”(Genesis 1:28). The ‘serpent’ (e.g. the devil, Satan, deceiver, liar from the beginning) demonstrated that he would be involved in this training program. We also know from Genesis 3:15 that the ‘seed’ of the serpent would be destroyed at some future date, which fits perfectly with what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:8 –

*He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

Jesus, as we know, is the 'Seed' of the woman who God mentioned in Genesis 3:15. Jesus Christ, the Seed, would come from Heaven to earth, 'that He might destroy the works of the devil.' How would Jesus destroy the works of the devil? His sacrificial dying on the Cross, miraculous rising from the dead, and ascending from earth to Heaven was certainly part of that process, but don't forget the part that humans play in the devil's destruction.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6 that Christians would 'judge the world and angels' in the future. The devil is an angel and according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 is 'the god of this age.' If Christians are going to judge the 'world' and 'angels,' then they will certainly participate in the eventual judgment of the devil.

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. Jesus Christ came from Heaven to earth to 'destroy the works of the devil.' He literally did the 'heavy lifting.' Jesus died and rose from the dead. He is the Eternal Son of God. There is no one else like Him in the universe. His Name is above all names. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Only faith in the atoning



death of Christ can save. Only Jesus Christ has the 'power' to destroy the works of the devil.

However, the Lord Jesus will use humans and other angels to bring the devil's chaotic reign to an end (e.g. Revelation 20). From what I've read in the Bible, the angels who sided with God are well trained to do their part and have been for thousands of years (possibly longer). The challenge is to train up humans so they are able to do their part when the time comes. That's the purpose of this series.

## Two Sides

Cain failed to obey God and killed his brother, Abel, then lied to God about what he did. God told Cain that he would be a 'fugitive and a vagabond' on the earth. Cain told the Lord that his 'punishment' was greater than he could bear. Cain knew he would be 'hidden' from God's face and was afraid that anyone who found him would kill him. God 'set a mark on Cain' and said – "whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold" (Genesis 4:15).

Cain left his father and mother and traveled further east to a place that Moses called 'the land of Nod.' Cain built a city and named it after his son, Enoch. Genesis 4:16-24 gives us the names of some of Cain's descendants. One of them, named Lamech, had two wives and an 'attitude' when it came to what Cain's family thought about God.

*Then Lamech said to his wives: 'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold. Genesis 4:23-24*

That was a direct mocking of God. God promised that if anyone killed Cain, He would take vengeance on them 'sevenfold.' Enoch mocked God by saying that if Cain would be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech would be avenged 'Seventy-sevenfold.' The family of Cain hated God.

So, **side-one humans** (Cain's family) mocked God. What about **side-two humans**? How could there be a side two with Abel dead? God took care of that –

*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, 'For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.' And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord. Genesis 4:25-26*

**Side-two** humans who came from Seth ‘began to call on the name of the Lord.’ The Hebrew word for ‘to call’ is קָרָא (*qara*) means ‘to proclaim.’ Seth and his son Enosh led a revival of worship and proclamation of God’s Word.

[Spoiler Alert - Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman who will defeat the seed of the serpent - came from the lineage of Seth]

## Chapter Nine

I began using the terms ‘side-1 humans’ and ‘side-2 humans’ in the last part of our study for a couple of reasons. First, it is a demarcation for the descendants of Cain (first child of Adam and Eve) and the descendants of Seth (born to Adam and Eve after Cain killed his brother Abel). We’ll go deeper into that in this part of our study.

The second reason I used the terms is that using them will give us an indication throughout the Bible about the lineage of the promised ‘Seed’ of the woman who would destroy the ‘seed’ of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. I’ll explain more how that will work in the next chapter of our study.

## When Sides Line Up

We read about Cain's side of Adam's family (Side 1) in Genesis 4:16-24 where five generations are mentioned from Cain. We read about Seth's side of Adam's family (Side 2) in Genesis 4:25 – 5:32 where eight generations are mentioned from Seth. Genesis 5 opens with these words –

*This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth Genesis 5:1-3*

Interestingly, Cain and his family (Side 2) are not mentioned at all in Genesis 5. Also, we learn how the age of Adam when he became Seth's father and Adam's age when he died. Genesis 5 is specific about when each man 'begot' his son and how old he was when he died. That information is not available about Cain's side of the family.

Keep in mind that Seth and Cain are brothers, though estranged because of God sending Cain away for murdering Abel. That means Seth's children and Cain's children would be cousins. The fifth person mentioned in the lineage of Cain is Lamech, who 'mocked' God. The fifth person mentioned in the lineage of Seth is Enoch, who 'walked' with God. Remember that the line of Seth began 'to call on the name of the Lord' when his son Enoch was born. Jesus Christ, the 'Seed' of the woman, came through the line of Seth (Luke 3:38), not the line of Cain.

One the cousins of Lamech ‘the mocker’ was Enoch ‘the walker.’ He was from the lineage of Seth and Enosh, loved and pleased the Lord, and ‘walked with God.’ Enoch’s relationship with God was so special that he did not experience a physical death. God ‘took him’ –

*Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. Genesis 5:21-24*

*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Hebrews 11:5*



Enoch's son was Methuselah, Methuselah's son was Lamech (a different Lamech than Cain's son), and Lamech had a son named Noah, saying – “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed” (Genesis 5:29).

# When Sides Collide

Genesis 6 introduces us to a world that was in utter chaos.

*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. Genesis 6:5-7*

*The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. Genesis 6:11-12*

It's important to remember that God promised that the 'Seed' of the woman would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent. That had not happened yet, so how would God resolve this problem of a world where both sides of humanity (Side 1 and Side 2) were involved in violence, corruption, and wickedness?

*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Genesis 6:8*

God had a plan to start over with humanity. He decided to destroy every human on earth except for Noah and his family. Noah married a woman when he was 500 years old and they had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Notice that Shem is mentioned first. There's a reason for that and I'll explain in a few minutes. God told Noah to build an 'ark' that would save him and his family from the 'destruction' that was to come. You can read the details in Genesis 6.

In Genesis 7 God told Noah to get himself and his family inside the ark, ‘because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation’ (Genesis 7:1). God also told Noah to take seven each of every clean animal and two each of animals that are unclean – ‘male and female.’ That included birds as well. God said the reason was, ‘to keep the species alive on the face of the earth.’ God said that after seven more days He would cause it to rain on the earth forty days and nights, ‘and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made’ (Genesis 7:4). Noah was 600 years old at the time and did exactly what God commanded him to do.

God was destroying everyone from Cain’s lineage (Side 1) and almost everyone from Seth’s lineage (Side 2), except for Noah, his wife, and sons. The collision of the two sides led to the destruction of the ancient world.

Oh, about Shem. Jesus Christ came through the lineage of Shem (Luke 3:36). God kept His promise. More about that as our series continues.

# Chapter Ten

*And God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'*

*Genesis 6:13*

God did destroy the world with a massive Flood. When the Flood waters finally subsided and Noah's Ark rested 'on the mountains of Ararat' (Genesis 8:4). The human race that started with Adam and Eve failed the test. They did not learn how to 'reign' with God. All of their efforts ended in violence, wickedness, and the destruction of all living things – except for one family and the animals that God had saved with them in an Ark.

# Starting Over

God started again, even though He knew that ‘the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth’ (Genesis 8:21). God made a special covenant with Noah and his family and their future descendants –

*Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’*

God repeated some of the same words to Noah and his sons that He had said to Adam and Eve –

*So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’ Genesis 9:1*

However, this time God added something else that pertained to humanity's training to reign with Him on the earth –

*And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 'Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it. Genesis 8:2-7*

You'll find the complete new 'covenant' (agreement) God made with humans in Genesis chapters 8 and 9. One of the best-known parts of the covenant are these words –

*And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth. Genesis 9:12-17*



## *Train to Reign* **Begins Again**

God's purpose for humanity would not be thwarted, so He began training people how to subdue and rule again. However, this time was a bit different because Noah and his family knew what the pre-Flood world was like. They knew about corruption, violence, wickedness, and death. Those things were foreign to Adam and Eve before they disobeyed God. Noah and his family had some insight into how badly the human race had responded to God in the past. That knowledge would become part of their training to reign with God, but how much would it help them succeed? Not much.

It was not long before Noah's sons led their families from the mountains of Ararat to a plain in the land of Shinar. We know the area as ancient Babylon (currently Iraq). One problem with all of humanity moving together was that they were not obeying God's command for them to be 'fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' Another problem was that they wanted to establish themselves as their own gods – a type of 'self religion' –

*Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. Genesis 11:1-4*

Notice the last words here – “let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” They wanted to make ‘a name’ for themselves. Why? ‘... lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’ They did not like God’s plan for humanity and were determined to do everything they could to keep His plan from succeeding. Did it? No, it did not –

*But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. Genesis 11:5-9*

God put a stop to humanity's disobedience by confusing the languages among families, then 'scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth.' They would not accept God's training, so He handled it another way. You can read Genesis 10 to learn more about the families that were scattered.

## The Lineage of the 'Seed'

It's important as we study the Bible and think about how God is training us to reign with Him to remember that He made a promise to Eve that the 'Seed' of the woman would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent. We know that Jesus Christ is the 'Seed' of the woman, and that He 'was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8). So, how would God keep His promise to do that after confusing the languages and scattering families abroad over the face of all the earth?

God chose one of Noah's sons to be the physical conduit for the Son of God to come into the world to destroy the works of the devil. That son was Shem. Genesis 11:10-32 introduces us to Shem and several generations of his descendants. The last people mentioned in the list are Terah, his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law Sarai.

*And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.*

*Genesis 11:31-32*

## Chapter Eleven

God continued His training of humans to 'rule' with Him by selecting a man from the lineage of Shem. The man's name was Abram (Abraham). He grew up in Ur of the Chaldeans, which many archaeologists believe was located in southern Iraq. Abram's father moved much farther north to Haran, taking some of his family with him.

*And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.*  
*Genesis 11:31-32*

We learn later in the Genesis account that some of Terah's family remained in Haran, but God had other plans for Abram and Sarai –

*Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. Genesis 12:1-2*

Out of all of the people living in the world at that time, God chose one man and his wife who carry forward the promised 'Seed' of the woman who would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent. In addition, they and their descendants would learn many valuable lessons about how to 'subdue and rule.'

# Choosing, Training, Testing

Reading through the life of Abram and Sarai is part of an amazing 'manual' of how God 'chooses' people, then 'trains' them through a process of 'testing.' That process hasn't changed in thousands of years. It's how God 'trains to reign.' God told Abram and Sarai that 'kings shall come from you' (Genesis 17:6, 16). God said the same thing to their grandson Jacob (Israel) many years later (Genesis 35:11). Developing a lineage of 'ruling' was always part of God's plan. The 'Seed' of the woman (Jesus Christ) who would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent (the devil) is the 'King of kings' (Revelation 17:14). Jesus will rule forever with those who follow Him (e.g. Revelation 20:6; 22:5).



God chose Abram and Sarai to leave Haran and travel south to the land of Canaan. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. God promised to give 'this land' to Abram's descendants. Abram built an altar to the Lord, then moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel. Abram build another altar to the Lord 'with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east' and called on the name of the Lord. Abram then continued his journey going South. (Genesis 12:4-9). That was just the beginning of Abram's training.

*Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you. Genesis 12:10-13*

We learn some important things about Abram through this ‘testing’ process. Famines in ancient times often moved family groups to other countries to find food. It’s interesting that this particular famine was ‘severe’ and occurred soon after God called Abram to leave Haran and travel to the land of Canaan. This was a ‘test’ and part of Abram’s training. We learn that Abram was afraid of what might happen to him in Egypt. He had good reason to fear based on how ‘foreigners’ were often treated. What Abram did not do was ‘rely’ on God’s power to fulfill His promise to Abram. Abram did well when he obeyed God’s call to leave Haran for the land of Canaan, but he did poorly when he was tested in Egypt. However, and this is important to note, God blessed Abram and his family even when Abram failed the test –

*Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the*

*altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord. Genesis 13:1-4*

I don't believe God blessed Abram because he 'failed' a test, but because of God's plan for Abram. Remember that God called Abram to leave his father's house and go to 'a land that I will show you.' God's plan for Abram to 'make of you a great nation' (Genesis 12:1). God also promised Abram that He would make his name 'great,' would 'bless him,' and that all of the families of the earth 'shall be blessed' (Genesis 12:2-3).

That particular promise is known as an 'unconditional' covenant. God did not place any 'conditions' on Abram in order for God to keep His promise. Abram had a lot of things to learn about becoming the person through whom 'all of the families of the earth shall be blessed,' but God was going to protect Abram and Sarai.

The 'Seed' of the woman who would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent would come through the lineage of Abram and Sarai. Even though Abram lied to the Pharaoh of Egypt about Sarai, God 'plagued Pharaoh and his house because of Sarai, Abram's wife' (Genesis 12:17). Even though Abram lied about his relationship with Sarai and Pharaoh took Sarai to his palace to have sexual relations with her, God would not allow it. The plagues stopped Pharaoh before he could touch her sexually. That's a strong demonstration of God's protecting His plan and promises. It would become another powerful lesson for Abram in his training to reign.

## Chapter Twelve

I remember standing in long lines of other young men boarding planes. We were going off to war. That war was almost ten thousand miles away from where we lived, but before any of us could go to war we had to travel less than a thousand miles by air to ‘train’ for our ‘mission’ in that war. It reminds me now of something King David wrote three thousand years ago –

*Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle— Psalm 144:1*

# Basic Training

Basic Military Training (BMT) is an important part of every branch of the military. No matter what ‘specialty’ we signed up to do in the military, we first had to go through ‘basic’ training. The same is true for God’s people. We all need to ‘train to reign.’

Some of the primary characters we’ve met so far in this series are Adam, Eve, Seth, Enoch, Noah and his family, Abram, and Sarai. Each of them were called by God to represent Him on earth – to ‘fill and subdue’ the earth and ‘have dominion’ (rule) according to God’s eternal design.

Even as I and hundreds of thousands of other young men went through BMT in the 1960s, the men and women who believed in and served God thousands of years ago also went through a period of training. There are many areas of ‘Basic Training’ that God has for His people, but I’ve chosen five as examples. This spiritual training, just like military training, is not a ‘cafeteria’ where you can pick-and-choose what you

want to learn. They are all necessary for the spiritual warfare that awaits everyone who follows God seriously.

1. Believe in the Only True God (Monotheism)
2. Fear God and Obey Him
3. Worship God and Serve Him
4. Listen to God and Trust Him
5. Love God and Devote Your Life to Him

As you read through the life of Abram you'll see how God leads him through this 'basic' training process. Abram came from a family of 'idol worshippers' before God called him (e.g. Joshua 24:14; Genesis 31:30-32; 35:2-4). Like most people of his time (late 3rd Millennium to early 2nd Millennium), people worshipped many gods (polytheism). Some of them were 'national' gods, while others were 'regional' gods. Many were known as 'household' gods. Humans made these 'gods' (idols) from wood, stone, and other earthly materials. These 'household gods' were very important to people, including Abram's close family members –

*And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, 'Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me.' And he searched but did not find the household idols. Genesis 31:33-35*

People believed that household idols represented 'gods' that would bring blessings on their household. These human-made images had no power to bring blessings on anyone, which makes God's promises to Abram even more interesting given the context. The 'One True God' who created the heavens and earth called Abram to leave his father's house (filled with pagan idols) and go to a 'land' He would show him. God's promise was that He would make of Abram – 'a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.'



Receiving a blessing from ‘the gods’ was a serious desire of people living during Abram’s time. However, only the ‘One True God’ can actually bring blessings to a family, city, or nation. Even though Abram was 75 years old and spent his life worshipping idols, he ‘departed as the Lord had spoken to him.’ Abram left pagan idol worship and became a believer in the One True God. He began the process of looking to the God of Heaven for family blessings. Interestingly, God expanded the promise to say – ‘I will make you a great nation ... And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ The day Abram left Haran for Canaan was the day he began his ‘basic training’ as a follower of God.

What happens after ‘Basic Training?’ It is often a longer period of time in the military known as ‘Advanced Individual Training’ (AIT). That’s where military training became individualized depending on a person’s speciality (what role they would play in the military). The time spent in AIT could be weeks or even months. Once a trainee completes their BMT and AIT, they are usually sent to a post or base to begin participating in their assigned mission.

# Chapter Thirteen

I'd like to conclude this first volume of our study by sharing a couple of early examples from the Bible that might help us see how God 'trains' His people to 'reign.'

## Noah

God called Noah for a specific 'mission' – to build an Ark that would protect his family and many of the animal, reptile, and bird species from the Flood that God would use to destroy most life on earth. Genesis 6 tells us that 'Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations' and that he 'walked with God.' Noah 'found grace in the eyes of the Lord' and received his assignment from God.

Why would God destroy most of the people on earth?

*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Genesis 6:5*

The 'wickedness of man' being great in the earth, and 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart' being evil 'continually,' didn't happen overnight. Read back through the end of Genesis 4 and into Genesis 5 and you'll meet the descendants of Adam and Eve through their sons Cain and Seth. Cain was wicked and so were his descendants. Seth was apparently not wicked because when his son Enosh was born *men* began to call (אָרָא – *qara* – proclaim) 'on the name of the Lord' (Genesis 4:26).

Even five generations from Seth we find that Enoch 'walked with God' (Genesis 5:24) and that God 'took him away' so that Enoch 'did not see death' (Hebrews 11:5). Five generations from Cain we find that Enoch's cousin Lamech killed a man and mocked God for how He had treated Cain. However, fast-forward just a few generations from Enoch and we find that the earth was filled with violence and 'corrupt before God' (Genesis 6:11).

How did that happen so fast? It's important to remember that God made a promise to Eve that the 'Seed' of the woman would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent. The 'Seed' is Jesus Christ, who 'was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8). I think the devil was involved in bringing about the somewhat rapid decline of the human civilization to the point that the promised 'Seed' of the woman might be compromised or corrupted. That led to God making His next move. He would destroy the human race except for one man and his family. God would bring the 'Seed' through the lineage of Noah and his son Shem.

God said that His Spirit would 'not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years' (Genesis 6:3). At some point during that time God called Noah and assigned him to build the Ark. God told Noah exactly how to build the Ark. Noah believed, listened and obeyed. Noah may have gone through a period of 'basic training' before his mission, though we're not given specifics. What we know is this –

*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Hebrews 11:7*

Notice that Noah was ‘divinely warned’ and ‘moved with godly fear.’ Those are important aspects of being trained for any mission God gives to us.

Based on the number of years mentioned in Noah’s life in Genesis 5 and 7, building the Ark may have taken about a hundred years. Noah was five hundred years old and became the father of three sons. He was six hundred years old ‘when the floodwaters were on the earth.’

The bottom line with Noah is that he was thrown into the primary ‘battle’ for which God had called him soon after choosing him. He may have had a period of 20 years to prepare before building the Ark ( $120-20=100$ ), but we’re not told specifically.

Here's one other example.

## Abram

Abram's father was named Terah. Terah was 70 years old when he became a father. He had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Abram married Sarai, but they had no children because she was barren. Haran had a son named Lot, but 'Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans' (Genesis 11:28).

Noah had three sons prior to the Flood: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the Flood (Genesis 10:1). Genesis 10 gives quite a bit of detail about each of the sons of Noah and their descendants. However, because the 'Seed' would come through Shem's lineage (Luke 3:23-38), we'll focus our attention on Shem's descendants.

Shem had a son named Arphaxad, who had a son named Salah, who had a son named Eber, who had a son named Peleg, who had a son named Reu, who had a son named Serug, who had a son named Nahor, who had a son named Terah, who had a son named Abram – (from Genesis 11:10-26). That means that Abram was ten generations from Noah (nine from Shem).

Terah went out from ‘Ur of the Chaldeans go to the land of Canaan’ with his family, including Noah, Sarai and Lot. It may have been at some point after Haran died because Terah settled in a place called ‘Haran,’ located in the northern part of Mesopotamia. That was about 400 miles north of where God planned to send Abram. Terah died in Haran. Many members of his family remained there, but God called Abram to leave his father’s house and travel to ‘a land that I will show you.’

Abram was 75 years old when he ‘departed as the Lord had spoken to him’ (Genesis 12:4). That’s important to note because Abram had spent his entire life worshiping ‘other gods’ (idol worship). However, ‘gods of wood and stone’ don’t talk because people make them with their hands. Abram heard the voice of God, believed Him, feared Him, and obeyed Him. That was the beginning of Abram’s ‘basic training.’



## Completing the Mission

Noah and Abram completed the missions that God trained them to do. Noah built the Ark and saved his family, including the son who would carry forward the future 'Seed.' Abram obeyed God even in the face of being asked to kill his son Isaac (Genesis 22). God provided a sacrifice in Isaac's place and the lineage of the 'Seed' continued moving toward the day when the Son of God would 'become flesh.'

Interestingly, the Son of God (called the Angel of the Lord in Genesis 22) provided the sacrifice in Isaac's place, even as He would become the 'sacrifice' one day on the Cross –

*But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So*

*Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.' Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. Genesis 22:11-18*

We know that Abraham made many mistakes during his earthly journey, but he followed his training and successfully completed the work God had given him to do. Both Abraham and Noah believed in the only true God, they feared and obeyed Him, they worshiped and served Him, they listened and trusted Him, and loved and devoted their lives to Him. They completed their training and 'reigned.'

## Next eBook

Isaac went on to become the father of Jacob, who God renamed 'Israel.' We will look at how God trained Israel to reign in the next part of our series – *Train to Reign*.

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