

# **THE STORY OF MAN'S DESTINY-#1**

## **IN THE BEGINNING**

**GEN. 1:1-31; 2:7-8; 16-17; 3:1-6.**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

“THE STORY OF MAN” in many ways is an intriguing and mysterious story. Yet, in stark reality, it is a story of lost opportunities, failed attempts, squandered privileges, wasted wealth and crumbling empires. Nevertheless, highlighting this story there have been some amazing accomplishments, miraculous movements and storied history. In this entire story, there is one common denominator throughout. All men die and return to the dust from which they were created, regardless as to their background, achievements, fame or fortune.

The following examples will illustrate this for us. Alexander the Great was born in Macedonia about 356 B.C. His father was “Phillip The Macedon”, who along with his mother, were themselves people of prominence. Thus they were able to provide Alexander with many opportunities and privileges others did not have. Alexander was fearless, strong and destined for greatness. At the age of 14 he became a pupil of Aristotle. He was a avid learner; a sportsman; a lover of Greek civilization and a scholar of other countries and races of men. He was a general at the age of 18 and also an ambassador to Athens. He became king of Macedonia at the youthful age of 20. When he was less than 30 years old, he had conquered nearly all the civilized world and set out to organize and administer the vast territories under his control. With the world at his feet; with him one of the greatest generals of history; wealth untold; worshipped as a god and with the prospect of a long life ahead of him to indulge in all of it along with grandiose plans for his future , yet unfulfilled life, he got sick and died. He left it all. He was only 34. He is buried in a beautiful tomb in a gold coffin in Alexandria, Egypt. In spite of all he had going for him, he could not defeat death.

On the other end of the spectrum are the countless human beings, totally unknown to the world; bereft of fame or fortune; abject poverty as their destiny; without opportunity, learning or privilege, they endure the existence of oppression, humiliation and tyranny. And, they get sick and die.

From new born infants to the aged, the story is always the same. We all die and return to the dust from which we came. No exceptions; no discharge; no alternative! Whether a life of pomp and power or of poverty and punishment, we all come to the same end: death! Death, the final punctuation mark of every life, no matter it's status while living. Death, the ignominious end to a life of glory or the tranquil finish to a life of heart break and pain. Death, the silence of corruption where every bone, tissue and organ disintegrates to dust again. Death, that leaves nothing but memory and soon that too is forgotten. Death, the great equalizer of the famous and the failure; the wealthy and the woeful; the strong and the sterile. Death, that sets boundaries of the best made plans; controls the time of everyone's sojourn; and mocks the empires that have advanced unchecked by other foes or powers. Death, the covering cast over every bright future; the ending of every joyous song; and the disruption of the greatest projects of life before they are half finished. Death, the cruel, mocking, most devious and destructive enemy (that is E-N-E-M-Y) of the entire human family. Where did you come from? Why are you here? What is the mystery of your mastery over everything that lives on this earth? The answer to these questions is, on the one hand very simple, while on the other hand very profound. In its origin in the garden of Eden, it has a clear, straight forward answer. As it has been executed throughout the many centuries that have followed, it has multiplied in its complexity and command of all human existence.

### **BACK TO THE BEGINNING.**

Before we get ahead of ourselves in this “Story of Man's destiny” let us first return to the beginning and get at least an over view of God's great work of creation and the sequence of things that followed. Out of that we will better understand the process by which man comes to a tragic and undesirable end. The story of this beginning (and ultimately it's ending) is recorded for us in the

first 3 chapters of Genesis.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. Then God created light and divided light from darkness. God called the light day and the darkness he called night. And the evening and morning were the first day. Then on the second day God created the firmament which he called heaven. On the third day God gathered the waters together into seas and caused the dry land to appear. Also, on this third day, God caused the earth to bring forth grass, herb seed, fruit tree and all vegetation and forests. And God saw that it was good. Then on the fourth day, God created the sun for day light and the moon to give light at night; he made the stars also. With these he controlled the seasons, days and years to govern time on earth. Afterwards God created the fish and fowl and whales and every living creature that moves in the waters and that flies in the air. This was on the fifth day. Next God created the living creatures upon the earth: the cattle and creeping things and the beasts, all after their kind. And it was all very good.

It was also on the sixth day that God said: let us make man in our image and after our likeness. Then he designated that man would have dominion over all the earth and ever thing in it. So God created man from the dust of the ground, ----- and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (oxygen) and man became a living soul (being). After the creation of man, God caused a deep sleep to come over Adam and he took a rib from his side and from this rib he made woman. Then God put man in the garden to dress it, keep it and to have dominion over all the earth.

### SO THIS IS PARADISE!

Gen. 2:8 --- And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put man whom he had formed. There he planted every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The “tree of life” He also planted in the midst of the garden. There was also in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There was a river that went out of Eden to water the garden. And God gave man dominion over the garden to dress it and keep it.

A review of this word garden at first does not suggest any thing of significance. Further examination leads you to the word “paradise” in the N.T. This word has a Hebrew comparison from “pardec” which means a garden, forest or orchard. Over the years we have come to associate something good or happy with “paradise”, even though this is not its primary usage. Nevertheless when I suggest that the garden where God put Adam was a paradise, you get the impression that he was in a wonderfully beautiful place. Even the entire creation of God, when he had finished it, he described it as very good. Moreover, the word Eden is very significant in this regard since it means: “delightful or pleasure”. So God placed Adam in a delightful garden of pleasure: paradise. This “Garden of Eden” must have been awesome beyond description. After all, it would be totally out of character and very unreasonable to think that God’s creation, especially the Garden of Eden, was anything but the very best that could be created. How or why would God do anything less? If you have been privileged to see much of this earth we live on, you know that its beauty and majesty is breath taking. From the mountains, to the plains, to the ocean, to the forests, fowl, fish and every living thing on it, there is a grandeur that only a divine God could have made. Then you look upward to the sky, clouds, sun, moon and stars and all of its vast expanse and you gasp in awe at the wonder of it all. Well did the inspired writer declare: “The heavens declare his glory and the firmament sheweth his handiwork”.

You can well imagine that, as Adam began to observe it all, he was faint from beholding its beauty and privilege. When he saw the vegetation of the earth with its floral display; birds flying with feathers of every color; waters teeming with an endless array of fish; rolling hills and mountains with peaks into the clouds; the brilliance of the sun and the romantic beams of the moon along with a million stars twinkling down at him, how could he help but sing out: “How Great Thou Art”. This new heaven and earth God had created and placed Adam in the midst of could not possibly be any more beautiful and amazing, supplied with an abundance never to diminish. Indeed, I do not think it would have been possible for it to be more beautiful, wonderful, functional and good than God had

made it to be. That is just the way God does things.

In addition to all of this wonder and beauty, you must also add the absolutely charming life God had made for Adam to live. The world functioned properly; he had dominion over it; he had no sickness, burdens, troubles, trials or death. Truly it was a “Garden of Pleasure”, paradise on earth. If God had placed Adam on some other planet beyond the stars; or built him a palace in the ionosphere of the universe or given him dominion of the stars at night it could not possibly have excelled what he had in the Garden of Eden. He was in the “glory land” of God’s handiwork. If Adam had a word in his vocabulary such as “heaven” or “heavenly”, he was in it. With God with him daily and everything he needed at his hands, life was beautiful.

### THE TREES OF THE GARDEN.

In the garden of pleasure where God placed Adam there were trees, many trees. First there was the “tree of life” in the midst of the garden. Then there was the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, also in the midst of the garden. Besides these, the scripture references just trees. Of these trees Adam was told that he may freely eat of them, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This one tree had forbidden fruit. Adam was told not to eat of the fruit of this tree; not even to touch it lest he die. All of the other trees, he could freely eat of.

We have noted that two trees were said to be in the midst of the garden: “The tree of life” (2:9); and, “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (3:3). This does not refer to a geographic location, but that they were in a central position in relation to Adam’s life. That is, they were both very easily accessible. And that is how it is in our lives today also. That which is good is readily available to us if we want to partake of it. Also, that which is evil is daily at our finger tips. The choice is ours as to which we will partake of. These two trees seem to be the ones of paramount importance. We should not think of these two trees as literal trees such as an oak or a pine or a fruit tree. The very names of them suggest otherwise: “tree of life” and “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”.

There were other trees in the garden also of which Adam could freely eat. While it is no doubt very true that Adam was surrounded by many natural, literal trees of every kind and fruit for his enjoyment and blessing in life, yet it is difficult to put the trees mentioned here in the category of Adam climbing trees like a monkey to get to their fruit. Genesis is concerned with the story of man’s life and relationship with God and this is far different from the natural trees of the forest. Without intending to simply spiritualize the trees of creation, for this story, let us think of them in such a way that they relate to Adam’s life and relationship with God. In this way, they will also speak to us of our life and relationship with God.

When God created Adam and put him in the garden of pleasure, his purpose was not for him to just “read his Bible and pray” all day. There were other good things for him to do that God had made available to him. For example, God told him to keep the garden; have dominion over the earth and other things. In our own lives there are many duties, opportunities and joys to pursue. I believe God gave Adam a full life; complete in its purposes, satisfaction and productivity. I do not believe Adam was created with a white robe, wings, a halo and a harp with nothing to do but “sing hymns, pray, read” and in the process be so “heavenly that he was of no earthly good”.

Therefore, when Eve said in Gen. 3:2, that they could eat of the tree(s) of the garden, this is certainly not restricted to the idea of natural food. Using our own lives and experiences as examples, let us consider some of the “good” things that life is made up of that we may (and do) freely partake of. Keep in mind the warning of God that in all things we are not to partake of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Also, we should never forget that no matter what all the trees offered, there was only one tree of life that we can eat of and live forever.

For the first tree, let us think of the tree of pleasure. God didn’t create a life of doldrums and somberness for Adam. “Eden” means pleasure and life as God intended it would be blessed with many joys. Now observe as the tree of evil comes into play here. Today we have a pleasure mad

society. We have taken every carnal appetite and indulged it with a total consumption of the pleasures of this life. In so doing we become saturated with carnal satisfaction and the “tree of life” is neglected, ignored and even rejected. God created a beautiful world that can be enjoyed but man through his selfish, sinful, lustful spirit has made pleasure his god. In this, you can see that while you may partake of the joys of life, there is a limit to it if you are going to eat of the tree of life. If you do not limit it, you then become a partaker of the tree with the forbidden fruit.

Then there is the tree of psychology or the study of the mind and behavior. We will call this one education. It is a wonderful tree and so essential to everyone. But it is not a tree that will give eternal life and cannot become a substitute for the “tree of life”.

Next is the tree of purpose or vocation; work. It is very good and very necessary, but when it robs us of eating of the tree of life it becomes a sin to us. And there are many in the world whose only function they think is to work. Even to the point that everything else in life gets put aside.

This is true also of the tree of parenting. Family is wonderful; God created it. And the family needs more support and attention today than ever before. But the family also needs the tree of life. Without it, the family degenerates into serious decline and trouble as it has today.

Likewise with the tree of position and power. Position certainly is not wrong. Great men and women in the Bible have been put in very strategic positions and also have been entrusted with power. Through bringing the tree of life into the arena of every position of life, they can be very useful to the good of mankind. But when controlled by the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, they can erode and destroy your relationship with God.

Thus the trees of the garden were all available for Adam’s life but none could be allowed to come before the tree of life. And this is exactly where Adam failed. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was so inviting; so good and so elevating, that it had the appearance of bringing him good only in spite of God’s warnings to him. With these trees in mind it is easier to see how Adam was tempted to partake of the forbidden fruit of which God had said not to eat of nor touch it lest he die. With their disobedience, the great purposes of God in the entire creation and in their lives were doomed and totally disrupted. For this cause, the ensuing centuries of mankind have been filled with sorrow, sickness, trouble and finally death.

### **THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.**

We do not know how long the process was that ultimately brought Adam and Eve to their fall. It could have been immediate and very quick. Most likely though, there was a process of temptation and seduction and yielding bit by bit that finally resulted in their total disobedience and rejection of the perfect will of God for their lives in the garden. The tree that was forbidden to them was in the midst of the garden; always in view; always in their path. And this was no ugly, obnoxious, scraggly tree. Instead, it was pleasant to the eyes (Gen. 3:6). Neither was it a tree that offered no satisfying fulfilling experience. It was good for food. Further, it was not a tree that debilitated and belittled their self esteem and personal elevation. It was a tree to make one wise. Thus it possessed the 3 characteristics sought after by all the human family down through all the centuries since. That which satisfies our vision; fulfills our carnal appetites and glorifies our feeling of self worth has been the craving, the desire, the passion and the pursuit of all men everywhere. We have taught and elevated these principals of self emolument. We have practiced them from the cradle to the grave. We have glorified, beautified, advertised and even praised their influence upon us. Their power over us is addictive, mighty and enslaving. They caused the first rejection and disobedience to the word of God in Adam; the first murder in Cain; the first evil generation of Noah’s time; the first attempt to build a tower to the “great name” of man and all of the judgments that resulted from each of these. Every spirit of envy, jealousy, hate, malice and bitterness derives from these 3 passions. Every war, every cruelty, every tyrant, every crime and violation of human justice along with every selfish, self willed, self exalted attitude. Every sickness, every sorrow, a world of trouble, trial and tribulation, all have descended from man’s passion and surrender to these forces that actually resulted from

man's abuse of the choices God gave him. He could eat of every tree of the garden except one. God did not stifle, squelch or condemn man's ambition, desire and passion for every good thing he had created for him and made him to have dominion over. God had created man with opportunity, blessing, fulfillment, recognition, acceptance, total freedom and purpose all for Adam's good and enjoyment and to the praise and honor of God. With all of these grand blessings and attributes God did not force his obedience and worship but gave him absolute freedom of his will and choice.

Inherent in this freedom through the exercise of all the opportunities God's vast and beautiful creation made possible, was also the freedom to choose to eat of the fruit of the tree God had warned him against. And it was through the subtle seductiveness of the fruit of this tree that Adam and Eve were so tempted that they came to believe the lie of the serpent rather than the express command of God.

So it was that when Eve saw all the "good" of this tree, Gen. 3:6, tells us she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband and he did eat. Perhaps it is from this terminology of "eating" the fruit of this tree that theology has glibly concluded that this fruit was an apple, etc. If I see a (literal) tree that has apples on it, I judge the tree by that fruit. Likewise, if I see a tree with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, I judge it also by its fruit. The Bible is very clear that this was the fruit of this forbidden tree. Further, in Mt. 4:1-11, and I Jn. 2:15-17, these same 3 characteristics are portrayed as the embodiment of all evil. Beyond all of this, the very realities of life as well as all divine record and history, clearly reveals that it is the lusts and pride of man for his own selfish, carnal aggrandizement that is the root cause of all sin, it's fruit and it's consequences. We are not implying that when someone comes to some trial, sickness or trouble in life that it suggests some specific wrong committed on their part has precipitated such conditions. We are saying that the whole of the human family, with all of its attendant trials, groaning, sicknesses, etc., come from the fallen state of all men and is traceable to the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden. See Rom. 5:12-21.

Thus we are sure that the forbidden fruit is the unbridled lust of the eyes, of the flesh and the pride of life. See James 1:13-15. A very graphic illustration of this truth is found in the sin of David with Bathsheba. First, recall that there were many "trees" of the garden Adam could crave for his own enjoyment and satisfaction that did not violate the law and life of God. In like manner, David had a wife at home and had every right and privilege to indulge his desire and his passion in conjugal relations with her. But he allowed his lusts to completely violate the law of God and the order of life among men and desired, sought and engaged in a "forbidden" lust with another man's wife. And this resulted in lying, murder adultery and more.

### **THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.**

What happened when Adam and Eve sinned in their disobedience to God's command? What process ensued that resulted ultimately in their death? The simple answer is to say that God inflicted a punishment upon them in retribution. And there is, to some degree, an element of this in all that resulted from their sin. But there is much more to the answer.

Do not forget that up to this time, none of the sad, troubling and chaotic judgments and penalties we now experience in human life was present in the world. God did not make them a part of his creating acts. God did not want man to fall under such penalties. God wanted man to eat of the tree of life and live forever. Whatever consequences and destructive forces mankind subsequently experienced, came as a direct result of man's fall through his own choice and sin against God.

We know from Gen. 2:17, that God had fore - warned Adam that if he ate of the forbidden fruit that he would die. We also know from Gen. 5:5, that Adam lived 930 years, and he died. Further, in Rom. 5:12-21, we see that death was the direct consequence of Adam's sin. The question is this: Did God "zap" him with death as a retribution for his sin or did the act of his sin cause a biological degeneration of his entire system, that resulted in death? The truth is, Adam made his own choice that resulted in the corrupting of his life processes and ultimately death. When death came to Adam

it was not and intervention by God to carry Adam to “heaven” (as some modern preacher undoubtedly would declare if they were preaching Adam’s funeral today). It was no “gate to glory”; it was not a friend and death was not a door to a brighter world above. When Adam died, he was not immediately in the presence of God and angels enjoying eternal bliss. Death was the result of his sin, not the result of God’s grace! It was the enemy of all that was good and of all that God had intended for Adam’s life to be. All succeeding history bears obvious testimony to the fact that the death of Adam and subsequently all of the human family because of his sin, is the most horrific, tragic, terminal and sad end to what otherwise could have been a life of glory with eternal duration.

We know that the blood, which we receive from our earthly parents, is corrupted blood. We also know that the life of the flesh is in the blood; that is, the blood is the means of transporting life (breath, oxygen) throughout our bodies. (Lev. 17:11). That is why we need the sinless blood of Jesus to remove our sin nature. But as a biological process and fact, our blood has a corrupting element in it. From this comes the dissolution and death of every human organ, function and being of man. From birth, we begin an inexorable decline into death. A graphic illustration of this concept is the AID’s disease. God does not “zap” certain members of the human family with this relentless and horrible disease. Medical science will tell you that at least 80% of AIDS victims contracted the disease either through an act of promiscuous (contaminated) sexual activity, or contaminated drug injections. From these “choices of man” a process of AIDs takes over and with a relentless process brings death. What a wonderful marvel it would be if through research and development, a cure could be found for everyone afflicted with Aids. There is no pill or vaccine that can cure our choices to sin. Until then (and beyond) the common sense remedy is not to partake of those activities that we know will cause 80% of the problem. In other words, the activities of sexual promiscuity and the use of drugs through contaminated injections are “forbidden fruit” that we are forewarned ahead of the action as to the consequence. The power of lust and desire and passion is such that, without an enabling power contrariwise, human nature cannot safely resist the temptation to these activities, tragic results notwithstanding. We seem to prefer to listen to the voice of the “serpent”, as it were, that says: go ahead, it won’t really happen to you. But then it does. Adam and Eve knew that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that it would kill them. They ate of it any way. And it killed them!

#### **END OF THE BEGINNING. (BUT NOT THE END OF THE CONSEQUENCES).**

It is hard to imagine how or why Adam would disobey God and bring such dire consequences upon his life. It is equally hard to imagine how through his sin, all of his posterity has been brought under the same judgment. And maybe it is even harder still to imagine how God could and would love mankind still, in spite of his sin. Everything he had created now has a change of purpose. Everything he did with such power, wisdom, beauty and love, now is affected by an element of sin and death. A pall is cast over creation. The image of God in which Adam had been made he has now lost. He is not like God anymore; he is after the likeness of a sinful desire and will. The wonderful purpose God had created the world for Adam to enjoy and be blessed by was disrupted. The glory that accrued to God through his great creation was marred and disfigured. The plan God had for Adam to eat of the tree of life and live forever was spoiled. Sin had entered the “Garden of Paradise”. Trouble, trial, sorrow, woe, separation from God and finally death had entered the “Paradise” God had created. God had been rejected, disobeyed and disbelieved.

**ADAM AND EVE WERE LOST!!** And such is the condition and plight of every one born into the family of Adam. It is the first chapter in “THE STORY OF MAN’S DESTINY”, but unfortunately it is not the last. We are in this story too.