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## Day 1 - January 1

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### **Beginning of Early Humankind (Creation to 2100 BCE)**

#### ***The Beginning***

#### ***Adam and Eve***

**Readings: *Genesis 1:1-3:24***

#### ***Reflections:***

- The opening text of Genesis establishes God as the sole creator of everything. Ultimate, love, power and wisdom combine to create all that we see. Creation and even humanity, although marred by sin, still cannot escape its fundamental blueprint of being wonderfully and beautifully made.
- The first poem was radical within the ancient context and incredibly subversive to an ancient religion that worshipped the gods of creation - the sun, moon, animals, fish, trees and rivers. All the ancient "gods" were declared in these first verses as not being gods but simply created works of the one true God. Within a few verses of this library we see all ancient world religions being undermined.
- Two of the most significant words are "God said..." God's creative power is unleashed just by him speaking. When God speaks everything happens. This becomes important in the future because when God speaks he expects his people to believe that what he has said will be accomplished. He speaks, it happens. That is how it works.
- Creation gets progressively more complex, more wonderful, and more beautiful. This leads to the male/female as the image of God being the most wonderful of all creation, particularly the female. You could argue she is the highest of all creation. Because of the fall, many of the natural orders are reversed and we see a pattern emerge that the stronger will serve the weaker. Genesis 25:23 is the first time this is mentioned. Anyways, woman being submitted to man rather than co-equal as originally intended may have a dimension of her actually having been the higher of the two created.
- The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are symbolic of two ways to approach life. Listening and following what God says represented eating from the tree of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil could be translated, "The tree of 'I'll decide/judge for myself what is good and evil.'" This tree represented the freedom man and woman had to be the lord of their own lives. They could decide for themselves what they thought would be good or evil. They are warned by God this tree would lead to death. The whole book of Genesis is

based on this comparison. What does it mean to trust God as compared to trusting yourself? There is a long list of case studies for us to review: Cain and Abel, Abram and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brother, Judah and Tamar. These are all contrasted at points to show the difference between trusting God and trusting yourself. This is the theme of Genesis and of humanity.

- Woman being called a helpmeet for man is a high term, not a low term. It is the word God uses to describe how he helps humanity. So, woman helps man like God helps us. And so we see again that the female is highly exalted.
- Male and female intimacy is described as one flesh, both naked and feeling no shame. This is ultimate intimacy and vulnerability with complete confidence and security; spiritual, emotional and physical intimacy. God's desire is for this type of experience for his children and it reflects the intimacy he desires for us to have with him. Complete abandonment and trust.
- Satan enters the story with no reference point. It takes a long time into the story to find out the basics about who Satan is or where he came from. Even then what we learn is somewhat cryptic. God doesn't seem interested in us knowing a lot about this adversary. The story is about God, not about us or Satan. We can conclude that Satan is there but basically don't pay him too much attention. We should note one thing. In Genesis 2:15, God commands Adam to "maintain and keep" the garden. This final word, "to keep" can also be translated, "to guard." This may suggest that God commanded Adam to guard the garden against enemies. This may be a reference to set up the later entry of the serpent.
- Eve did not receive the direct command from God, but Adam did and therefore the reader should notice that he added his own additional commands. "Do not even touch the fruit." Adam and Eve are sinless at this point, but they add this to what God says. As we progress in the story we will see that there is a human tendency to add to what God has said and in turn, to get into trouble by inserting our own traditions and rules. God gives a basic command, "Don't eat the fruit," but then Adam adds "Don't even touch it." This additional boundary represents our human attempts to improve on what God has said, to be extra careful and clear. But this is not what God said and what we see is that the extra rule did nothing to stop their ultimate decision to disregard God's command. This underscores the importance of two things. First, we must be careful not to add our own rules on top of what God has said. It doesn't help. In fact, it weakens our clarity to truly grasp what God is saying by diverting our attention from the main point God is communicating to a human tradition or rule. Second, it highlights how important it is for every person to hear God speak so that we are not always relying on someone else's relationship with God. Now having said this, God still expected Eve to trust his word through Adam. If God speaks, regardless of the source, we are expected to believe what God says. We will see this to be true even when a donkey speaks or crazy prophets speak.
- The primary work of Satan is to get us to question, doubt and ultimately reject what God has said. It is how he destroys our relationship and intimacy with God. He doesn't focus on temptation but on doubting what God has said. We will see this in how he tests Jesus in the wilderness. If we reject what God says, we can't help but start to go in the wrong direction!

- Knowing good and evil can be translated “being the master of good and evil” in other words, “I get to decide for myself what will be good and evil for me or for someone else. I get to be my own judge.” This is the core sin of humanity, separating ourselves from God and deciding to be our own gods. This in turn sets the stage for our addiction to religion, the systems we create to save ourselves. You see, if God is our God, we would let him save us. Unfortunately, we want to be our own god and so religion is where we make it look like we are relying on God when in reality we are running the show ourselves.
- So what is the impact of the fall? Man and woman immediately realize their vulnerability (nakedness) and try to hide from God and each other. It is okay to be vulnerable but the fall made them want to reject their vulnerability. This is the first sign of attempting to save themselves. Self-centeredness had crept in and now they only trust themselves.
- The key statement of this section: “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid.” We see here a basic progression. Feel fear => Feel vulnerable => Hide our true selves. Does that sound familiar to your own experience? It is the core reality we must all face. From the junior high student trying to wear all the right clothes so they will be accepted to the business executive making sure they say all the right things to impress their co-workers, the human heart has a default setting for hiding our true selves. Deep down each person thinks that if people really knew the “real me” there is no way I would be accepted. And so we each put on some form of “leaves” to hide what we truly feel and think. Sin has made us all feel defective at some very fundamental level and so we hide hoping nobody will find us out.
- What happens? When God does find them and they are caught, what do they immediately do? Point the finger. That’s right. Blame is the next natural self-defense. Adam abdicates his responsibility and blames Eve. “This woman you created!” You’ve got to love that one. This sets a trend where men seem to consistently abdicate. Some Christian thinkers believe that the fall may have impacted women to tip towards control and men towards abdication as a general rule. I don’t know if this is true. I know lots of abdicating women and controlling men, but it is an interesting theory.
- The curse or impact of the fall? Broken relationship, pain, struggle, creation out of order. Notice that God indicates that he will deal with Satan himself. This is significant in that all the effects of the fall that cause us to suffer, God deals with. We don’t need to save ourselves. The question then, is will we let God be God? That is all. Will we let him be our God, our Savior, our Lord, and simply trust him? That is all we must do. This we find is the basis for all that will unfold in terms of God working towards a plan of salvation and calling his people to simply trust him.