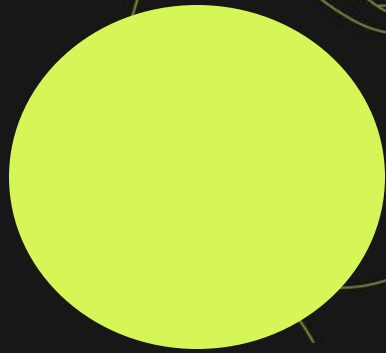


Pastor Mark Carrara

# SUPERNATURAL

SERIES: Part 3



Understanding the Origins of Good, Evil, Sin,  
and Salvation in the Bible

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*Michael the Archangel, Guido Reni 1636*



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## THE GARDEN OF EDEN

But before we look at the rebellion. Let's begin by talking about what God was doing to better understand what impact the rebellion had. In Genesis 2, the first book of the Bible, we have a description of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived.

*And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. **Genesis 2:8-10 (ESV)***

I want to read another passage this one from the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, describing what we would call heaven.

*Then the angel showed me [the Apostle John] the river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. **Revelation 22:1-2 (ESV)***

It doesn't take a lot of effort to see similarities in the description of the garden and the description of heaven. Both have a tree of life and a river of life that flow out of its midst.

It suggests that what God was doing in the garden was somehow connected to what he was doing in heaven, and what he will one day do after the return of Christ. It brings deeper meaning to Jesus' prayer instructions in the **Our Father** when he says, **"On earth as it is in heaven."** For God is working to bring, once again, to earth the righteous rule and reign of heaven. One day God will restore the Eden that was lost in the fall.

***Take-A-Way:** God created the Garden as an "extension" of heaven. He wanted his created earth to be like his created heaven. Sin temporarily put that on pause while God works out his plan of redemption. In time, after the return of Christ, the earth will be like heaven once again.*

## Eden as God's Dwelling Place

We can also conclude **the original Eden was God's abode on earth.** The **Book of Revelation** tells us there is no temple needed in heaven because God is the temple. This could be why there is no temple in Eden, for God was there himself. It's only after the fall, that God gives instructions for an earthly temple. And later Jesus made it clear that, after his death and resurrection, believers will become the Temple of God on earth. So, we could say **the Garden was the "temple"** at the dawn of creation.

- The garden was **where men met with God.**
- It was **a bridge**, of sorts, between heaven and earth.
- The garden was **sacred space** that God wanted Adam and Eve to reproduce in all the earth.
- **Adam was the first High Priest**, charged with maintaining this garden temple ("...be fruitful, multiply, take dominion...").

But the Bible gives us more clues about the Garden. **Ezekiel 28:13,14** refers to the **Garden of God** (or Eden) as **God's holy mountain**. In **Ezekiel 28:2** the prophet refers to it as the "**seat of the gods**." Putting these pieces together we get a picture of God's dwelling place on earth as a garden, called Eden, that was on a mountain and was also the place where God met with his Divine Council (the "gods").

### **In some ways this parallels the Temple in Jerusalem.**

- It was built as the "**House of God**," where his presence would dwell among his people.
- It was also built on a **mountain – Mt. Zion**.
- And, presumably because of sin, **access to the Temple was restricted**.
- The **Holy of Holies** had cherubim statues guarding the Ark of the Covenant, even as we see cherubim described as being around the throne of God in heaven (Eze. 10, Isa. 6).
- The tabernacle and the temple were full of botanical decorations and motif, as a reminder of the garden.
- All mirroring the imagery of the original Garden of Eden.

We also know from scripture that God was in the garden for we are told that he walked in the garden in the cool of day (Genesis 3:8).

**Take-A-Way:** Temples are where men meet God and heaven meets earth.

- The garden was the first temple but is no more.
- The temples in Jerusalem (Solomon's and Herod's) were the second and third temples but are no more.
- We are now the Temple of God.

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? **1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV)***

Jesus, the second Adam, is now our High Priest. He has recommissioned us with the mandate of Genesis to be fruitful and multiply and take dominion. Only this time it is not a garden temple we are to care for and bring to the world. We are the Temple of God, and we are commissioned go into the world.

**Why?** To provide men with a place to meet God and bring heaven to earth. This is how God is fulfilling his plan of redemption and restoring his rule and reign to all of his creation.



## WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF THIS?

**First**, the Garden of Eden was where heaven met earth. It was where the spiritual realm of God's Kingdom met the material realm of God's Kingdom. This theme is repeated in Genesis.

- When Jacob was on the run (Genesis 28:10-18) he had a vision of a stairwell from earth to heaven and saw angels ascending and descending on it and God at the top of it.
- What's significant is what Jacob concluded about his vision: That God was in that place and so he called it Bethel, which is Hebrew for House of God.
- This is what the Temple was called – a dwelling place for God (Acts 7:45-48), a house for my Name (1 Kings 5:4-5), the House of the Lord (1 Kings 8:10-13).
- The garden, like the stairwell in Jacob's vision, was a place of God's presence, his dwelling place (or an extension of it), that bridged heaven and earth, so to speak.
- In Jacob's vision, God promises to bless all the peoples (nations) of the earth through him. This "blessing" would be fulfilled in the salvation of those who would place their hope in the coming Messiah, and the eventual restoration of Eden after the return of Christ.

**Second**, The garden was where God and other lesser elohim (spirit beings) could interact with human beings, in some way.

- *God placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. **Genesis 3:24 (ESV)***
- *You were in Eden, the garden of God... You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God... **Ezekiel 28:13, 14 (ESV)***
- The first passage describes cherubim, who were elohim (spirit beings), as being in the Garden of Eden. The second refers to what many theologians believe may be Satan, also an elohim in the garden. To say it another way, both human beings and God's Divine Council had access to Eden.
- This may be why the Bible gives no indication that Adam or Eve were neither frightened nor surprised to see the "serpent" and why they spoke with him. (More on that next week.)

**Third**, Eden was not the whole earth. It was but "a" place on the earth. God wanted the garden to be "expanded" over the whole of the earth, but the fall prevented that from happening. After the fall Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of God unable to return.

***FYI: Whatever happened to the Garden, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?*** *The Bible doesn't tell us. It may be that the Garden was destroyed in the flood. There is a Tree of Life in the Apostle John's vision of Heaven. It may be the same one that was in the Garden, but there is no way to know for sure. As for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we do not know what happened to it.*

## WHY WOULD GOD CREATE A PLACE LIKE EDEN WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET?

To answer this question let's go back to Genesis 1.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*

**Genesis 1:26 (ESV)**

There is no doubt that the words "us" and "our" in this verse are plural. God is speaking to others. But who? The traditional view is that God is speaking to himself, or other members of the Trinity. But there are some problems with this view.

- For one thing, the concept of the Trinity would not have been understood by the writer of Genesis as it is to us today, making it unlikely he had that in mind.
- For another thing it would just be odd for God to speak to himself. There are other ways he could tell us what he was thinking.
- But most importantly, modern scholarship surrounding ancient Hebrew tells us that it is best understood as God speaking to one or more "beings," other than himself.

The only other "beings" we know of that God could be speaking to would be the *elohim*, or the Divine Council. If God is speaking to them and declaring "*let us make man in **OUR** image,*" it implies that **the *elohim* are also made in God's image** - in some way. If the *elohim* were not made in God's image, God would have to say "my" image, not "our" image.

This does not mean that the elohim had a hand in creating mankind, for in **Genesis 1:27** the Bible is clear that **“God created (singular) mankind...”** God is the only one acting in the creation of mankind. But apparently, he has already created the elohim in his image, albeit very different from us.

If, therefore, we understand Genesis 1 to mean that both elohim and humans are made in the image of God we can better understand a few things about Eden and what it means to be created in the image of God.

1. If the elohim are created in God’s image, we can understand why they are referred to **“bene elohim”** or **“the sons of God.”** They are sons in that they bear his image, even as believers are “sons and daughters of God,” and bear his image.
2. It helps to explain why God would create Eden as a “bridge” between heaven and earth. He wanted his divine and human families to live together **with him** in harmony.
3. It helps explain why the rebellions are that much more heartbreaking to God, for it is both his divine and human families that are rebelling against him.
4. It also helps us better understand what it means to be an image bearer of God, to be “like God,” and what makes both the elohim and humans different from the rest of creation.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN IMAGE BEARER

If we believe that the elohim are image bearers of God, even as human beings are, we can see how certain traditional views of what it means to be an image bearer must be reevaluated. Traditionally we think of bearing God's image as having some capacity or ability as humans that other living things do not have.

It could be anything from intelligence, to awareness, to language, to emotions, etc. But there are problems with these ideas. For one thing, many of these things can be found in animals so they cannot refer to what being an image bearer is all about. If they were we could say that a dog or a cat was created in the image of God, but that is not what the Bible says. Being an image bearer of God is more than ability.

Some say it is because we have a soul or a spirit. However, the Old Testament does not make a distinction between the term's soul and spirit. Additionally, the word translated soul is used to describe other living creatures in Genesis, so it cannot be the unique differentiator for human beings we would expect an image bearer would have. So, what is it?

**WHAT IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND ELOHIM THAT SETS US APART FROM THE REST OF CREATION AS BEING MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, YET ALSO EXPLAINS HOW DIFFERENT WE ARE FROM ONE ANOTHER?**

To be **created in God's image** is **not an ability**, but **a status**. We are his imagers in that we have been **created to be his representatives on earth**.

**This is also our common connection with the elohim.**

- Humans were created to be God's representatives on earth. Elohim were created to be God's representatives in the heavens.
- God gave humans authority over the material realm. God gave the elohim authority over the heavenly realm.
- Humans were created to administer God's material creation. The elohim were created to administer God's spiritual creation.
- In this sense we are both imagers of God yet are quite different from one another.
- The fact that humans and elohim may both be created in the image of God does not take anything away from humanity. Many parents have multiple children. No one assumes that a parent can only love one of them. Both men and women are created in God's image and we are certainly very different from one another.

## THREE TAKE-A-WAYS FROM THESE IDEAS

1. The **Divine Council** is where the elohim go **to confer with their creator God**, and **report on their administration** of the spiritual realm or whatever God has placed under their authority.
2. **God walking in the Garden** in the cool of day may have been God's version of **an earthly council meeting** with Adam and Eve.
3. To be an image bearer of God we MUST be about the Father's business in this life. We cannot IMAGE God to the world around us if we are not doing what he has called us to do – being what he has called us to be.
  - *“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”* **Luke 4:49 (NKJV)**
  - Brings new meaning to Jesus' comment that he was going about the Father's business. How else could he be the ultimate or express image of God (Heb. 1:3)?
  - **How much more important is it for us to go about God's business if we call ourselves image bearers of God?**
4. It also helps us understand why God gives us his Word including his commandments, and statutes, and laws, and ways, etc.
  - Such things are not given to burden us. They are given so that we will know who he is and how to best IMAGE him to the world around us.

It's ironic that the first rebellion in Genesis 3 was about becoming “like God.” After all Adam and Eve were already created in the image of God. How much more “like God” did they want to become?

Perhaps Adam and Eve didn't understand just how much "like God" they already were? Or maybe they wanted to be more like "the gods," the elohim they saw in the garden. Or maybe the temptation to be "like God" was more about self-determination, bearing their "own" image, rather than bearing the image of God.

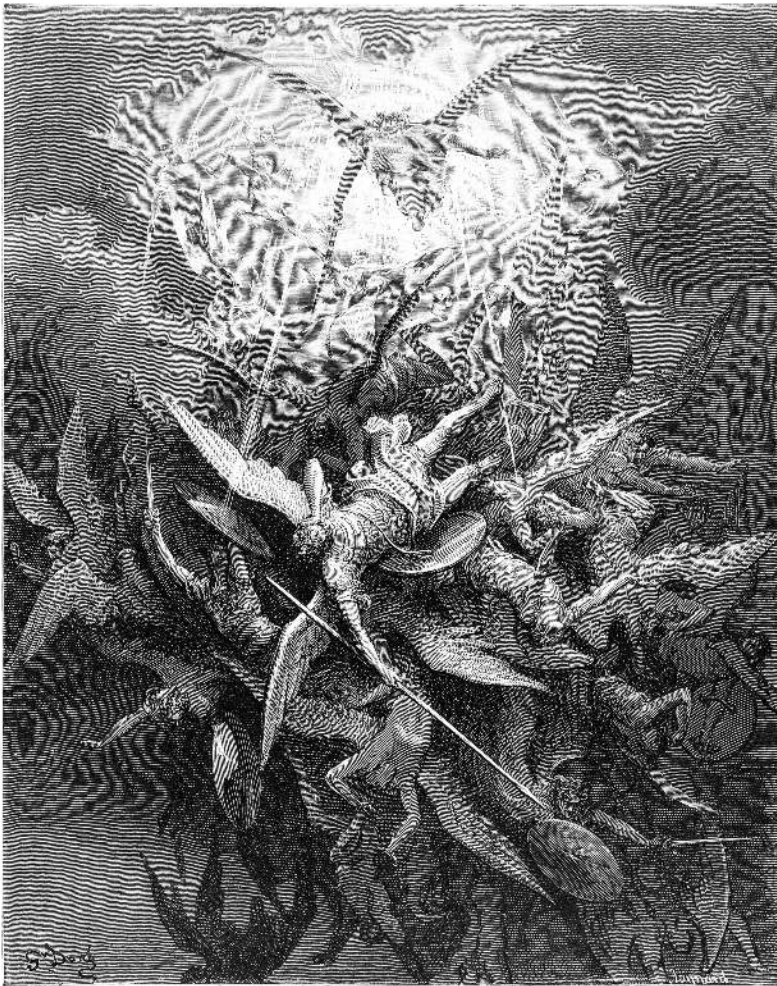
Either way the first rebellion of humans and elohim together had devastating effects on earth and in heaven, on mankind, and on the elohim. It fractured God's divine and human families and opened the door for more tragedy to come.

Next week we'll see what we can learn from this first rebellion by looking at the interaction between Adam, Eve, and the serpent at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Who was this serpent? Where did he come from? How did he get in the garden?

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT...**

- How well are you living as an image bearer of God?
- When people look at your life do they see a proper representation of God?
- How well are you "functioning" as a temple of God in the world helping others meet God?
- How effective are you at being an agent of God to bring heaven to earth?





## FOR FURTHER STUDY

For more detailed information on the topics presented in this study I recommend four books by **Dr. Michael Heiser** *Angels, Demons, The Unseen Realm, and Supernatural*. A significant number of insights into the study presented here, especially on the three rebellions, the Divine Council, and the Tower of Babel can be found in far more detail in his books and were drawn from various material of his. I highly recommend them to anyone wanting to dig deeper into the realm of supernatural in the bible. I will recommend additional resources as the study progresses.