

Chapter 1: Our Relationship with Creation

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” John 1:3

Stories both describe and change the world. It has always been that way. The Bible is a series of stories about people and supernatural entities as they interact with God, His Son, His Creation, and other human beings. Scripture is ultimately a story about how God intended these relationships to work together so that His Kingdom would be spread across the entire earth.^[1]

For the first forty years of my life, I did not appreciate the gift God had given me in my youth to witness these relationships in action while growing up on a small wheat farm in rural southwest Nebraska. Looking back, I now have a deep appreciation for the relationships we developed with the co-stewards of Creation in our little town. That, along with my love for running our combine and watching a year’s worth of hard work get gobbled up and tucked away in the bin behind me, was the reason I intended to stay on the farm. God, however, had other plans.

Unfortunately, the 1970s was a decade marked by high inflation. Making a living on the farm was difficult. The economic hardship took a toll on my father. He did not see a practical path to transferring our small farm to me and my future family. Instead, he felt that a college education would provide me with a path to a better life.

So, in 1980, I headed off to Kearney State College in central Nebraska. Sadly, my departure from our family farm was part of a growing trend. Over the following decades, countless heirs of family farms walked away from the privilege of interacting with and stewarding Creation to pursue “the American Dream.” This was never God’s intention.

Nurturing the ground, planting seeds, and watching them produce abundant life-sustaining food is nothing short of a miracle. From the beginning of time, God intended that cultivating and keeping Creation would be a primary centering point for every human being to relate to Him, His Son, Creation itself, and our neighbors.

In fact, providing life-giving sustenance to our fellow human beings was meant to be one of the most honored positions anyone could hold in His Kingdom. Support for this rather bold assertion is easy to see when we start...

In the Beginning

Most people default to Genesis 1:1 as the starting point of the biblical narrative. While technically not accurate, it generally causes no harm when developing biblical doctrine. That is not the case for us. To set the proper biblical context for what you are about to read, the correct chronological starting point is critical. And that starting point is the book of John.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

John 1:1-5

These few verses set important context for understanding the Creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2. They also help us interpret other New Testament passages that reveal the critical role Jesus plays in the biblical story prior to His coming to earth. Let's look at two of them.

“[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Colossians 1:15-17

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

Hebrews 1:1-3a

Building on John 1:1-5 and examining the Greek definition of several key words and phrases opens the door to a wonderful discovery. In all three passages, the word “through” in Greek is *dia*, which means “the channel of an act; because of; by occasion of, by reason of, for the sake of.” In Colossians 1:17, the Greek word for “hold together” is *synistaō*, and it means “to place together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together.” Finally, in Hebrews 1:3, the Greek words for “upholds,” “all things,” “word,” and “power” are *pherō*, *pas*, *rhēma*, and *dynamis*. They mean to bring forward and bear up everything through the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, using a spoken word.

There is a lot packed in here that is easily overlooked on a casual reading. However, these verses form the foundation of an exciting narrative about the fullness of what occurred during the act of creation. Combined, they tell us that...

Through the spoken Word of the Father, Creation came into existence for the sake of the Son. It is held together physically and remains in existence today by virtue of who Jesus is and by the power of His Word.

Please read that again. The implications are stunning. Here we have irrefutable evidence that the Father, Son, and Creation are intimately intertwined with one another, and that without Jesus “nothing came into being that has come into being.” Without the presence and power of Jesus, Creation would cease to exist. This gives us a much fuller context to understand the statement:

Jesus is God’s *entire* provision for us.

There is not a faithful Bible teacher, pastor, or follower of Jesus who would not agree that Jesus is God’s “entire provision” to attain eternal spiritual life. However, we now know that the physical universe also is sustained by, through, and for Jesus. That includes your body and mine. It includes every plant and animal on earth that God gave us for food.^[2] In every way imaginable, we depend on Jesus to sustain both our spiritual *and* physical lives. Now consider the following verse with that in mind.

“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19 (emphasis mine)

In this passage, the Greek word for “in” is *en* and it means “a fixed position in place, time, or state.” This reinforces that *all* our needs including the sustenance needed from Creation to keep us physically alive, are quite literally found “in” Jesus. From the beginning, God planned for Jesus to be the source of the physical life our bodies receive through Creation *and* the spiritual life we receive as members of God’s Kingdom. This reality sheds new light and expands the contextual meaning of passages such as the following.

“Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, always give us this bread.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.’”

John 6:32-35

“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me;”

John 14:11a (emphasis mine)

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

John 15:4-5 (emphasis mine)

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

Philippians 3:20-21 (emphasis mine)

Now, consider this expanded context to the following passages:

“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

1 John 4:14 (emphasis mine)

“The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

John 1:29 (emphasis mine)

We have been taught that these verses, and others like them, mean that Jesus takes away the sin of all the *people* on earth. However, the Greek word for “world” used in these verses is *kosmos*, which means “orderly arrangement, i.e., decoration; by implication, the world in a wide or narrow sense, *including [but not exclusively]* its inhabitants.”

Maybe, just as in Philippians 4:19, where “all” means “all,” in these verses “the world” means *the entire earth* as well as its inhabitants. This more literal view makes sense when considering passages such as the following.

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”

Romans 8:19-22

As I read these verses, I can now better empathize with how the Father and Son must feel as they watch Creation groan and suffer under humanity’s mismanagement, in large part due to our ignorance of its intimate relationship with Jesus and its valued place in God’s original plan. Now let me be clear. I am not saying that all of Creation is alive in the literal sense of that word. What I am saying is what Scripture says. God, Jesus, and Creation have a deep relationship with one another that we cannot fully understand.

As we continue to examine the Creation narrative, we will see that God entrusted humanity with the responsibility to properly steward this incredible gift. Understanding the critical nature of this responsibility hinges on the proper chronological sequencing of John 1:1-5, Genesis 2:15, and Genesis 1:28. In other words, to get the beginning of the story right.

Chapter 2: The Covenant

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” Genesis 2:15

God always has a reason for what He does and when He does it. By beginning our examination of the creation narrative in John 1:1-5, we discovered that humanity has a special and intimate relationship with God the Father and Creation through Jesus. Since God is about relationships, it should come as no surprise that the Creation narrative would reveal an economic system that is designed to build His Kingdom based on *relationships* and not *transactions*.

In doing so, God provided humanity with a system capable of managing vast resources that would bless all generations. Therefore, we should expect that the Creation narrative will also reveal to us the foundational principles upon which this system must be managed throughout time. And indeed, it does.

It begins with the first two days of Creation as God brought the heavens and the earth into existence and separated the waters between them. By the end of day two, God had established the foundational building blocks—land and water—from which all resources required to build His Kingdom would be produced. Then came day three.

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them’; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day.”

Genesis 1:11-13

You have probably read these verses countless times. Yet it is easy to overlook the single word that identifies the core design element that enables Creation to provide humanity with the resources necessary to fulfill its purpose.

Seed.

Because of seed, every plant, animal, sea creature, creeping thing, and yes, human, can reproduce. Not just once, but forever. We are only halfway through the first chapter of the Bible and God has revealed the cornerstone

(seed) of the foundation (land and water) that will generate, *in perpetuity*, the resources necessary for humanity to spread His Kingdom throughout the earth. And please do not lose sight of the fact that the power to uphold this system comes through our Lord, Savior, and King – Jesus.

As we continue, take a moment and reflect on what is unfolding here. Already, it is hard to comprehend the genius of God's design. Yet, He is just getting started!

“God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.”

Genesis 1:16-19

On day four, God created a critical component to sustain this new ecosystem. He put the sun in place to activate the process of photosynthesis, which is necessary for plants to grow and reproduce. He placed the moon to govern the cycle of tides, which circulate the ocean waters, so they do not stagnate, and thus, can support life. This “water cycle” moves life-giving water into the sky, where it is carried to the ends of the earth. By the end of day four, God had created a natural hydration system for both plants and land animals. Pretty awesome in my view!

“Then God said, ‘Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.’ God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.”

Genesis 1:20-21,23

On day five, God revealed another key design principle of His Creation. Abundance. This is one of the first clues of the depth of His love for humanity and Creation. The desire of His heart, as expressed by the Son who upholds it in John 10:10, is that we may have life and have it abundantly!^[3]

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind’; and it was so. God made

the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good."

Genesis 1:24-25

God could have been satisfied with a world where land and water produced vegetation that would sustain humanity throughout time. However, God is not about doing just what is necessary. He chose to provide a diversity of life for us to enjoy because He loves His people, His Son, and His Creation. He wants us to enjoy a life of rich diversity in relationships that we can only experience through a life of abundance and a sense of awe and wonder at the love of our Creator!

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;'"

Genesis 1:26a

This is where the Creation narrative begins to reveal why proper stewardship of Creation is critical in God's grand plan to build His Kingdom on earth. To get the chronology right, we must pause at Genesis 1:26a and turn to Genesis 2:7.

"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

Note that God did not create man *ex-nihilo*—that is, out of nothing. The text tells us He created man from the established elements already placed into Creation. This supports the assertion made in the previous chapter about the nature of the relationships God intends us to have. The Father (the breath of life), the earthly, natural world (Creation), and the Son (through whom it occurs and is held together by the power of His Word) all participate in the creation of humans.

The relevant verses that chronologically precede and follow this act identify a critical God-given responsibility that humans were given as participants in this relational bond. The first identifies a problem.

"Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground."

Genesis 2:5

The second identifies the solution to the problem.

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

Genesis 2:15

These two verses explicitly reveal humanity’s primary responsibility in our relationship with Creation. To fully understand it requires examining the Hebrew text.

The word for “cultivate” is *âḇar*. It is used 290 times in Scripture, and its primary root means “to serve.” It is also used several times in the context of “worshipper.” The Hebrew word for “keep” is *šâmar*, meaning to “guard, observe, give heed, have charge of, keep watch and ward, protect, save life.”

Creation needed stewards to serve it, or in other words, to manage it so that it could sustainably produce in amazing abundance. That part seems logical. However, this directive was given before the Fall. Why did God also say Adam needed to “protect it?” In a sinless world, what would it need to be protected from? In hindsight, it seems obvious. God knew the plans of the one who would soon seek to steal, kill, and destroy all that God had created. Therefore, God’s directive came with a specific command that contained an important restriction.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Genesis 2:16-17

God was very clear. Of all My Creation, pay particular attention to “keeping” this tree. Do not come near it. Do not let any other entity come near it. If you fail, it will unleash consequences beyond what you can imagine. With His warning given, God provided Creation with the final, beautiful piece that enabled humanity to fulfill its intended purpose.

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him... So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.”

Genesis 2:18,21-22

When God created Eve by taking her out of Adam’s body, it further demonstrated His commitment to connect man, woman, Creation, and Jesus with Him in the most intimate possible way physically and spiritually. Doing so made her fully “suitable” to become a “helper” just as the Hebrew word describes—part opposite; specifically a counterpart, or mate. Only after creating woman did God declare His Creation was “very good.” It was finished. There was nothing more to add. He had established a human family. Through His Son, and the Creation He upholds, this family had everything they needed to accomplish His purpose, which brings us now to Genesis 1:28.

“God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food’; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Genesis 1:28-2:1-3

To ensure humanity could walk in the fullness of this blessing, God created a universe in which He strategically initiated intimate relationships between Himself, His Son, Creation, and humans. Each became a party to a de facto covenant with one another to establish a global Kingdom on earth.

The word “covenant” is used here very purposefully. It is a serious claim with major implications for honoring the responsibilities we have with the relationships previously described. Therefore, let me take a moment and establish why it qualifies as a covenant.

Bible scholars generally agree that there is a “covenantal framework” in Scripture that contains covenants both declared and undeclared by God. Those that are undeclared contain several key characteristics.

1. *Covenantal Connection*: The actions in the undeclared covenant are intimately linked with other covenants. For example, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is not directly named by God as a covenant. However, it is directly linked to the Passover. The Passover is a key moment in God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants, marking their deliverance and their subsequent covenantal commitment to God. It should not escape our notice that there is a direct link between growing, harvesting, preparing, and consuming food and these early covenants.
2. *Permanent Ordinance*: The Feast of Unleavened Bread is commanded as a permanent ordinance, to be observed from generation to generation. This perpetual nature aligns with the concept of covenant, which involves ongoing obligations and memorials. The first two chapters have sufficiently established the perpetual need for humanity to be in intimate relationship with God and His Son by serving and protecting Creation.
3. *Covenantal Obedience*: Upholding or failing to uphold a covenant has serious consequences that reach throughout the generations. God’s people must cultivate and keep Creation if they are to walk in His blessing and to “be fruitful and multiply and subdue (establish His Kingdom throughout) the earth.”
4. *Symbolic Significance*: Upholding the terms of the covenant becomes a symbol in other teachings. Growing and consuming food plays a central role throughout Scripture, including and especially in Jesus’ life and teachings. The last relational gathering of Jesus and His disciples before His death gave birth to the permanent ordinance practiced today as the sacrament of communion.

A more familiar example of a covenant that we all recognize but is not named specifically in Scripture is marriage. We refer to it as a covenant, because the defining characteristics of a covenant are inherently present in this relationship between a man and woman.

Similarly, these characteristics are plainly evident in the relationships God established between Himself, Creation, and humanity during the Creation narrative. The intimate and perpetual nature of these relationships, along with the requirement of each party to fulfill specific responsibilities for the

covenant to be enforceable, supports a covenantal view. Finally, covenants must produce a specific outcome that will benefit each of its participants:

1. *God* provides an incredible, diverse natural ecosystem for humanity.
2. *His Son* upholds and sustains this ecosystem by the power of His word.
3. *Humanity* is to cultivate and keep the ecosystem—to serve and protect it.
4. *Creation* will “give up its strength”^[4] to yield an abundance of the human and natural resources necessary to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

All of this was God’s original intent for humanity. It carries the authority of a perpetual covenantal relationship. The remainder of this book reveals how humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve, failed to uphold this critical covenant. The consequences directly and immediately impacted the blessing God had bestowed upon them. In the chaos that followed, subsequent generations lost sight of the covenant. This has allowed Satan to steal, kill, and destroy resources intended for God’s Kingdom on a scale that we can scarcely comprehend. And he has used these stolen resources for a specific purpose.

That, my friend, is where we find ourselves today.

Chapter 3: The Covenant Broken

“You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.” Genesis 3:3b

God is a master strategist. He has always had a plan to accomplish His will through His imperfect image bearers. The covenant established at Creation is how He ensured we would have the material and human resources needed to build a global Kingdom. As I chronicled in Part 1 of *“I Came to Give,”* the principles of cooperation, stewardship, abundance, protection of human identity, and sustainability are the economic framework that God intended for us to adopt so that we could *maintain* that covenant.[5]

Unfortunately, Satan is also a strategist. It is no surprise then, that he directly and strategically created counters to those principles to achieve *his* desired outcomes. Chapter two of *I Came to Give*[6] details how he does this by revealing his motivation and skill set. Knowing this will help followers of Jesus effectively maneuver on today’s economic battlefield. For the purposes of this book, I will provide a highly condensed summary of a profile, with multiple references to Scripture and *I Came to Give*, of the one we call...

The Thief

Ezekiel 27 and 28 reveal that, at one time, Satan occupied a privileged position in God’s inner court.[7] It was there that he developed and perfected his skills in trade.[8] He was cast from heaven because he used those skills to acquire what was not given to him to use for his purposes, rather than God’s.[9] Satan then declared his intent to assume the position, person, and purpose of God *and build a competing kingdom of his own on earth*. [10] Because he owns nothing,[11] he formulated a specific strategy to leverage his skills in trade to steal, kill, and destroy[12] the resources intended to build God’s Kingdom and redirect them for his purposes.

During his time in heaven, Satan had become a master in economic development and trade. This is why God warned Adam to “keep” the garden before the Fall. He knew of Satan’s skills. He knew of his plans. He knew that the only way for Satan to succeed was to undermine the covenant that would provide God’s people with resources in such abundance that Satan stood no chance at accomplishing his objectives.

As we continue examining Scripture, we see in Genesis 3 that Satan wasted no time. He selected his target and put his well-honed skills into practice.

“¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?” ²The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.”’”

Genesis 3:1-3

Notice that in verse three, God defines a specific term of the covenant He established between humanity and Creation in the first two chapters. It a) defines an action (stay away from the tree) and, b) spells out the consequences of violating the action (you will die). Satan’s strategy was to entice Eve to create the greatest possible damage to the relationships between God, Jesus, humanity, and Creation. As we know, he executed it flawlessly.

“The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.’”

Genesis 3:4-6

While in no way do I praise Satan, I must acknowledge the success of his strategy. He used his negotiating skills as a master tradesman to manipulate Eve into breaking the terms of the covenant. Most people believe that Eve first sinned when she bit the fruit. However, the terms of the covenant clearly state that she was not allowed to *touch* it.

Therefore, when Eve reached out and plucked it from the tree, she took control of an item that God did not give her the legal authority to possess. In that moment, she relinquished the principle of *stewardship*, which directs us to use what is given to us for God’s purposes and according to *His* desires. She illegally claimed *ownership* over it, using it for *her* purposes and according to *her* desires. Please do not miss what just happened here.

Satan strategically lured Eve to steal from God, making her what he is—a thief—for the very reason he became one—to “be like God.”

Satan instigated the first act of theft in heaven. It got him banished from heaven. Eve instigated the first act of theft on earth. It got her banished from the Garden. Both violated a covenant between the parties to *steward* what God had given them, setting off a cascading series of events that produced consequences that have reverberated throughout history.

There is enough economic theory, strategy, and execution contained in this one encounter to write an entire book. And indeed, a great deal of *I Came to Give* is dedicated to unpacking it in a manner that any follower of Jesus and easily understand. In it, we see that the immediate consequences of Eve's theft were to simultaneously cause a break in relationship between humanity, Creation, and God. The following excerpt from chapter three of *I Came to Give* explains what happened next.

"God created a world where the first law of thermodynamics and inertia supported the exponential growth of His Kingdom. However, when sin entered the world, there was an immediate and profound change. That brings us to the second law of thermodynamics.

This law states that in the material world, when energy transforms from one form to another, some of it is wasted. Additionally, any structure, system, or machine that is created by transferring energy (create order) will immediately begin to degenerate (disorder). Scientists refer to this process as "entropy."

When Adam and Eve failed to "cultivate" (serve) and "keep" (protect) Creation, they violated the Kingdom Building Principle of stewardship. Their failure to steward it for its highest and best purpose forced a separation between Creation and God's imagers, subjecting it "unwillingly" to "futility." Creation now groans for deliverance from the bondage of entropy.^[13] Therefore, Adam and Eve's consequences were directly tied to their role in bringing about this new reality."

(end excerpt)

Let's recap what we know so far.

1. God established a covenant between Himself, Jesus, Creation, and humanity. Its purpose is to tie all parties of the covenant together relationally to achieve God's desired outcomes.

2. The covenant provides the foundation of an economic system that enables humanity to steward the earth's resources, enjoy the blessings of Genesis 1:28, and build God's Kingdom on earth.
3. God specified the terms of the covenant and gave Adam instructions for maintaining it so that Creation could provide the resources to produce that outcome.
4. Satan declared his intentions to use his skills in economics to build a competing kingdom on earth. This required him to acquire vast human and natural resources that he does not own and has not been given stewardship of.
5. Satan used his skills to entice Eve to break the covenant by stealing God's property. This fractured the relationships between all parties of the covenant, opening the door for Satan to steal, kill, and destroy resources that were intended to build God's Kingdom on earth and instead use them to build his.

Because God is just, the consequences of our poor choices are directly related to the sin committed. The first consequence prescribed for Eve relates to her part in breaking the covenant with Creation. From that day forward, every woman is reminded of Eve's sin as they bring into the world the human family needed to steward Creation and build God's Kingdom.

Her second consequence is related to taking control of the fruit to use it for her own purposes. She "ruled over" Creation in a manner God did not intend. As a result, she would be subject to Adam's desire to "rule over" her in a manner God did not intend.^[14]

Adam's consequences were similarly related to the role he played in breaking the covenant. Stewarding Creation to provide for our families and build His Kingdom is orders of magnitude more difficult than God intended.

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:17b-19

Now, let's take a moment to address something that may seem trivial, but I assure you, it is not. Note that in describing the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin, I did not use the word "curse." That is because when we hear that word we associate it with its definition: "An appeal or prayer for evil or misfortune to befall someone or something."^[15] This implies that God appealed to a higher being or prayed for misfortune to befall Adam and Eve.

The most obvious problem with this is that God is the ultimate authority. He had no one to "appeal" or "pray" to. Second, God loves His human family! He did not use His power to *intentionally* cause evil and misfortune to befall them. Instead, He was greatly grieved that they sinned. Their hardship was not a result of God's "curse" but rather a natural consequence of their actions.

The following demonstrates why every "jot and tittle" in Scripture is so important. God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you..." The Hebrew word used is *ârar*. Grammatically, it can be used a number of ways. In this instance, it is a passive participle,^[16] which describes something upon which *an action was previously taken*. For example, in the sentence "The broken window was repaired," the word "broken" is a passive participle because the window didn't break itself—*something happened to it*.

This distinction is important because in this verse it means God did not "curse" the ground in the *active* sense that the modern definition implies. Nor did God curse Adam or Eve. Read those verses again. Adam, Eve, and the ground were subjected to "evil and misfortune" *because of what Adam and Eve did*, which was to fail to honor their covenant with Creation.

I am concerned that many followers of Jesus believe that God, out of His anger, used His power to cause evil and misfortune to befall Adam, Eve, and Creation. I believe this contributes to our modern culture's view that it is better to do nearly anything other than become a steward of Creation. Instead, like me, they go to universities and cities to find "a better life," and pursue "the American Dream."

As a result, today, many people take our farmers and ranchers for granted. Others see them like the shepherds in biblical times—as second-class citizens. Yet these beloved stewards provide our food, without which we would all die and there would be no such thing as "economic activity" and no Kingdom to build.

The Path Forward

Although we cannot return to the pre-Fall state of Creation, we can mitigate many of the consequences humanity has lived with since then. To do so, the body of Christ must understand Satan's strategy to steal, kill, and destroy God's Kingdom by controlling the systems that manage economic activity. *I Came to Give*, documents how, from Genesis to today, this strategy has been successful beyond Satan's wildest dreams. It has enabled him to inflict the maximum possible damage to humanity's relationship with God, Jesus, *and* Creation, clearing the path to continue his quest to build the dominant kingdom on earth and achieve his goal to "be like the Most High."[\[17\]](#)

The economic system we live with today is built according to a set of principles that directly oppose God's principles of cooperation, stewardship, abundance, protecting our identity as His image bearers, and sustainability. These "basic principles of the world"[\[18\]](#) are competition, ownership, scarcity, stealing, killing, and destroying our identity as God's image bearers, and efficiency.

Satan's principles have formed the cornerstone of his economic strategy from the moment he entered the Garden of Eden and lured Adam and Eve into using food to make an illegal trade and usher in the Fall. Over the entire course of human history, these principles have enabled the kings of the earth to insert themselves as a third party into every exchange of value between human beings and steal some, or all, of that value.

What follows is a brief overview of how these principles became entrenched in the world, dating all the way back to Genesis 4. This is where Satan first reveals his commitment to his strategy, and we discover the generational consequences of perpetuating our broken covenant. It will serve as a springboard to the next chapter, where we begin to count the cost of Satan's success over the millennia.

Scripture is silent on why Adam and Eve taught Cain and Abel to make offerings to God. A logical, yet admitted, speculation is that Adam and Eve were devastated by the consequences of breaking the covenant. They lived in a world where the blessings of the covenant surrounded them. One can only imagine the sorrow they experienced when that world disappeared before their eyes as a result of their actions.

Therefore, in repentance, they intentionally passed a ritual to the next generation that reminded them of the principles that would enable future generations to restore the covenant by cultivating and keeping Creation. They were to give thanks to the Creator and worship Him in awe and mercy for designing Creation to produce the abundance required to build His Kingdom despite the consequences of their sin.

Consider the fact that Cain's offering to God represented the abundance produced by stewarding day five of Creation, the land that produced plants to feed humanity and animals. Abel's offering represented the abundance produced by stewarding day six of Creation, the animals that would feed and clothe humanity. The three pre-Fall economic principles of cooperation, stewardship, and abundance would enable Cain and Abel to honor the covenant and make their offerings.

It is hard to imagine how difficult those first years of spiritual warfare were. Adam and Eve had spent time fully under God's protection. Suddenly, it was gone. Satan had just won a major victory. He was emboldened. He was skilled. He was determined to assume God's position, purpose, and person and "be like the Most High."^[19] Yet, now he had at his disposal two new ruthless spirits—control and competition—to unleash and wreak havoc on the first family.

"Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

Genesis 4:9-12

This passage contains several hidden, yet important, revelations. First, Satan's attack on the second generation was designed to continue undermining humanity's ability to keep the covenant. Second, when Cain killed Abel, it further defiled the land. The Hebrew word *ârar* is used again in this passage as a passive participle, indicating that this too was a self-inflicted "curse." Finally, note that God did not hear about the innocent blood Cain had shed from His human family, *but from the land*. We do not know how this communication actually happened, however, it does provide additional evidence of the active and intimate relationship God and Jesus have with Creation.

Unfortunately, unlike his parents, Cain remained unrepentant. Therefore, as he worked to cultivate and keep his garden, it did not produce the abundance it was capable of. Satan was thrilled with the success of his strategy. The covenant had been broken and Creation struggled to produce the resources needed to build God's Kingdom. From that point on, Satan had his primary method of operation set.

Driving a wedge between the participants of the covenant *by any means necessary* became his primary economic strategy to steal, kill, and destroy the value produced by God's people. Fast forward some two thousand years and, unfortunately, we see further evidence of his continued success.

"Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

Genesis 6:1-4

It is tempting to take some time and more fully explore Dr. Michael Heiser's teaching on the Nephilim in his book, *The Unseen Realm*.^[20] However, for our purposes, it is sufficient to know that he references the book of Enoch, which describes how the "watchers" taught humanity to make weapons for war. This one act exponentially increased the ability of human beings to follow Cain's lead and defile Creation on a massive scale with innocent human blood. It also led both God and humanity to a point of no return.

"Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

Genesis 6:11-12

These two verses are a concise depiction of the state of the world after the successful execution of Satan's strategy for two thousand years. The amount of blood shed was enormous. Can you imagine the cacophony in God's ears of

the cries from the blood that soaked the land? Along with groaning for redemption, *it demanded justice*. And God responded accordingly.

“Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.’”

Genesis 6:13

We are all familiar with what happened next.

[1] Matthew 6:10

[2] Genesis 1:29

[3] John 10:10

[4] Genesis 4:12

[5] *I Came to Give* and *My Ways*, Doug Tjaden

[6] *I Came to Give*, Chapter 2, “I Will...”, Doug Tjaden

[7] Ezekiel 28:14-15

[8] Ezekiel 27:2-3a; Ezekiel 28:1-5

[9] Ezekiel 28:14-16

[10] Isaiah 14:13-14

[11] Psalm 50:10-12

[12] John 10:10

[13] Romans 8:19-23

[14] Genesis 3:16

[15] Websters Dictionary

[16] <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/779.htm>

[17] Isaiah 14:13-14

[18] Colossians 2:8 NKVJ

[19] Isaiah 14:13,14

[20] Dr. Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*