

## (6) THE ANCIENT STORY: GENESIS 3-11:9

**Focus Idea:** God created the world good, but greed, pride, and anger marked the first generations of people.

**The Context:** The first eleven chapters of Genesis are called the *Primeval History*. Their vast and vivid stories offer explanations for the world's current conditions.

**The Characters:** This section of the Bible details the activities of the first human beings. Adam, created from dust, and Eve, fashioned from Adam's rib, were present at the Fall. Their descendants, Cain and Abel were the first children to be born in the world. Several generations of long-lived individuals span the gap to Noah, a godly man whose faithfulness and obedience saved his family from a global flood. After another list of people and nations, a community called Babel grew up and challenged God.

Lurking behind and within many of these stories is the Enemy. His deceit and power play havoc in the narrative and are central to the unraveling of human society.

**The Core:** Planet Earth is a broken and pain-filled place. Genesis 3-11 offers an account of how it got that way.

God had placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful and bountiful garden. They were able to enjoy all of the blessings it extended to them...with one exception. The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was restricted from their menu (3:3).

Disguised as a cunning serpent, the Enemy convinced Adam and Eve that they had misunderstood God's instructions regarding the tree. Eating its fruit would not cause them to die; it would allow them to actually become like God (3:4-5). Adam and Eve believed the Serpent more than they believed God. They took from the tree and ate. Immediately, the world changed.

Adam and Eve recognized they were naked, hid from God, and were ultimately driven out of the garden into a world marked by hardship and trouble. Their firstborn son, Cain, whose offering was not as pleasing to God as his younger brother Abel's was, killed Abel in a jealous rage (4:8). Cain was driven away too. But the world's problems were just beginning.

Eventually, sin took control of the world. Everybody was constantly thinking about doing evil (5:5). Dejected at this turn in history, God determined to start over. He began his new creation with Noah – a man blameless in his time (6:9). Obedient to God, Noah built an ark, saving his family and the world's animal population from a massive flood. After the world had been cleansed of its wicked populace, God shone a rainbow over Noah's family and promised to never again destroy all the living creatures (8:21)

Noah's descendants congregated in Shinar and began building a city with a new kind of technology – brick and mortar. Their success in construction compelled their belief that they could build a tower that would reach heaven. God, unimpressed, came down and confused their speech, ending the work and birthing the world's spoken languages.

In the midst of all the gloom and chaos, do not miss Genesis 3:15. This verse, sometimes called the *protoevangelion*, or "first good news," contains God's promise that one day the Enemy would be crushed by a child of Eve. Christians see here the first glimpse of Jesus' ultimate victory.