



## ORIGIN 1.4

# Garden of Eden

God talks to man



**PART A – First time God talks to man**

**PART B – Is there original sin?**

**PART C – Is there 'spiritual death?'**

**Key points**

## PART A First time God talks to man

### First human encounter with God

The earth had been billions of years in the making. ***Then God comes! And starts establishing personal relationships with humans!!***

He chose one man – Adam – to make the first move from physical life to spiritual life. Man had never encountered God before, and now a whole new quality and dimension was added to human life.

People outside the Garden of Eden lived and died completely unaware of what was happening inside the Garden. As it is even to this day, for reasons we do not understand, God chooses to reveal himself to some people but not to others, mostly a consequence of historical time and geographic place (see 1.6).

### When and where

The story of the **Garden of Eden** – man's first encounter with God – is told in Genesis 2:8 - 3:24.

*'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the Garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'* (Genesis 2:15-17).

The Garden of Eden is both a time and a place.

According to Bible genealogy, and general agreement

According to Bible genealogy, and general agreement among Bible scholars, the time was approximately 4000 BC. (See 1.3.3)

The Bible says that the **Garden of Eden** was at or near the headwaters of four named rivers. Even though the names of two of the rivers have changed and are now impossible to identify precisely, it appears that this garden (special piece of ground) was in **Iraq** (formerly Mesopotamia, known as the *cradle of civilization*).

Year	Person born	World Population	Jews
4000 BC	Adam	7,000,000	0
3000 BC	Noah	14,000,000	0
2000 BC	Abraham	27,000,000	0
1500 BC	Moses	35,000,000	2,000,000
1000 BC	David	50,000,000	2,700,000
500 BC	Nehemiah	100,000,000	2,800,000
4 BC	Jesus	250,000,000	3,000,000
570 AD	Muhammad	230,000,000	3,200,000
1483 AD	Luther	400,000,000	5,000,000
1789 AD	Washington	900,000,000	7,000,000
1862 AD	Roosevelt	1,500,000,000	7,800,000
1946 AD	Trump	2,400,000,000	11,000,000
2019 AD	[Today]	7,700,000,000	15,000,000

**THE TABLE ABOVE** gives perspective for the number of people alive at time of Adam and at various times ever since. Experts who study populations from ancient to modern estimate that more than 100 billion people have already lived on earth.

**Two facts stand out:**

- How fast the world's population is **accelerating**, and
- How few Jews (Israelites, descendants of Jacob) there ever were in the world, with over-size influence, and how their percentage of the world's population is **shrinking** rapidly (now only two-tenths of one percent)

## The Eden story

In the Eden story, God came to earth in person, for the first time ever, and talked to man, establishing a personal relationship and setting rules. The almighty designer-creator God of the universe coming to man! Almost inconceivable!

**The Garden of Eden was a paradise, but not perfect.** God said this garden (special place) needed people to work it, presumably because of the normal aging, death and re-birth that was occurring throughout the earth. God placed Adam (already created) into this garden. Satan was already there.

In ancient times – before writing and books – information was transmitted as stories that could be remembered and passed on from generation to generation. Each part of the story was packed with meaning and was explained over and over again by elders to youth, with stern rebuke and correction for even the most trivial deviation. To the

conclusion for even the most arid deviation. To the ancients, the **meaning** was the most important part of the story.

[See 1.4.1](#) for major elements of the Garden of Eden story.

## Adam's sin

A quick reading of the story indicates that Adam's sin was that he ate forbidden fruit, but a careful study shows that eating the fruit was just the outward manifestation of the real sin. God looks through the action, into the heart, to see the motives.

*'You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when 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 fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked [God saw their motive] ...'* (Genesis 3:4-7)

Adam's sin was that he **wanted to be his own god and follow his own rules**, no longer subject to God's rules.

The consequences of Adam's sin are discussed at length in the Bible study of Romans 5 ([see 1.4.3](#)).

## Real or myth?

Many Christians believe that the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden is a **parable** rather than actual fact.

Jesus used parables often in his teaching, and people are not troubled by whether or not the event actually happened. *Was the Good Samaritan an actual person? The injured man a real person? The words spoken to the innkeeper an exact quotation?*

Effective teaching can be accomplished by telling an **illustrative story** (an allegory) as well by reporting an actual event.

Whether actual event or allegory, the teaching in this story is clear either way.

**THE VIEWPOINT ON THIS SITE** is that the Garden of Eden was a **real place at a real time with real people**, for these reasons:

- **No clues.** The story gives no clues that it is anything other than a historical account.
- **Jesus' family tree.** The Bible's family tree goes back as far as Eve, where the recorded history begins. The **genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3** ([see 1.3.3](#)) link the life of Jesus in a whole line of male succession from Eve through Seth, Abraham, Joseph, David, dozens of others, and ultimately to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. It would make no sense for Luke to name real person after real person but have it all start with a mythical person.
- **New Testament references.** The New Testament refers to Adam extensively in Romans 5 and I Corinthians 15 and **contrasts him to Jesus**. It is clear that this is a contrast between two real persons, not just two literary figures.
- **Location.** Genesis 2:8-14 describes the location of the **'garden in the east, in Eden'** where there are four rivers (Piston, which winds through Havilah where there is gold, aromatic resin and onyx; Gihon, which winds through land of Cush; Tigris, which runs along the east

side of Asshur; and the Euphrates.) After six thousand years, the smaller rivers Piston and Gihon are no longer recognizable, but the Tigris and Euphrates are still flowing the course to the Persian Gulf. This seems to be a description of a real place, not a mythical place.

The Eden story is written in the simple way of ancients, not the way we report events today with sophisticated language. Back then, ethereal concepts were often represented symbolically, a type of shorthand:

- **Serpent** represented evil. There may not have been an actual talking snake, but a strong temptation to violate God's rule.
- **God walking** in the garden may not have been actual movement on legs and feet, but God's spirit present throughout the garden (can't hide from Him).
- **Angel** with flaming sword guarding the entrance may be a way of saying that God will no longer let anyone have access to the Tree of Life in the garden.

These symbols have visual impact that aid comprehension and memory retention.

Whether or not the story contains symbolic elements or figurative people, the essential meaning is clear. Satan's temptation resulted in the first deliberate act of defiance to God – *'the trespass'* of Romans 5, trying take God's place – and punishment was denial of access to eternal life. ([See 1.4.3](#))

## Q&A about the story

There are many questions about what happened in the Garden of Eden that require discussion too long to include on this page, including:

- Who wrote Genesis?
- Who initially recorded the words and events?
- Was Eve the first miracle?
- Was this the first marriage?
- Who sinned first?
- Was Adam doomed to hell?

[See 1.4.2](#) for discussion of these questions and more.

## Outline of Bible themes

The story of the **Garden of Eden** is an outline of the major themes of the Bible. The themes are introduced in this story but developed more fully throughout other parts of the Bible ([see 1.4.1](#)).

## Doctrinal issues

The story of the **Garden of Eden** raises some of the most fundamental and controversial issues of the Christian faith, including [age of earth](#), [first human](#), [cause of death](#), [original sin](#) and [spiritual death](#).

Problem doctrinal issues throughout this site are marked with a **red exclamation point (!)** – as immediately below – and discussed as they arise in time sequence.





- > that there's original sin (we bear guilt of Adam's sin)
- > that there's 'spiritual death' (burning in hell forever)

## PART B

### Is there original sin?

#### *What's the difference?*

**ORIGINAL SIN** = Born guilty because of Adam's sin

– OR –

**SIN NATURE** = Become guilty because of our own sins

The dictionary definition of sin is '***an act considered to be a transgression against divine law.***' That is an adequate definition for this page, but **see 2.7** for a full discussion of sin and salvation.

The story of Adam and Eve raises an important theological question:

***Does God ever hold a person guilty for the sins of another?***

How we answer that question here sets the pattern for how we understand sin and eternal life in all parts the Bible.

#### Common interpretation

Many Christians – probably a majority – believe that the guilt for Adam's sin has been placed on everyone ... that everyone is born with this '**original sin**' ... and that, without salvation through Jesus Christ, everyone will burn in hell forever because of his sin.

This is also known as '**inherited sin**' or '**transmitted sin.**'

**THE INTERPRETATION ON THIS SITE** regarding sin is that everyone has a **sin nature** but **NOT original sin** ... that **we are NOT guilty for Adam's sin** ... that we are guilty only for our own sins.

The term '**original sin**' does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Theologians invented the term.



#### Trace to Saint Augustine about 400 AD

The concept of original sin was originated long after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and formation of the early church. The doctrine did not originate from Jesus' teachings but rather from the way some theologians began interpreting a few verses in the 5th chapter of Romans.

The first known mention of this concept was by Irenaeus in the 2nd century. In the 5th century it was popularized by Saint Augustine and gradually became church doctrine.

[See 1.1.1](#) for why we are able to interpret scripture more accurately today than Saint Augustine could interpret it sixteen hundred years ago, and why we come to different conclusions, all based on the same original Greek text.

## Problems with 'original sin'

- **GOD SAID EVERYTHING IS GOOD.** *'God saw all he had made, and it was very good'* (Genesis 1:31). It is blasphemous to say that God didn't know what he was doing, couldn't foresee the future, or that one man could completely foul His master plan.
- **FREE WILL.** Responsibility and punishment for personal choices as taught throughout the Bible are meaningless if we are born with maximum guilt and already subject to maximum punishment.
- **JUSTICE.** We can no longer claim that God is just. It is difficult to conceive of anything more **unjust** than to condemn billions of people to eternal torment for something they did not do and not to offer a means of salvation known and understood by them.
- **GOD'S WILL.** *'He [God] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'* (2 Peter 2:9). Then why would God design life so that everyone is doomed to perish from the moment of birth? And how do we repent for something we did not do or even know about?
- **REPRESENTATIVE OF HUMAN RACE.** Many Christians argue that Adam was the first person and federal head of the entire human race, and therefore all of his descendants must also bear the guilt for his sin. Actually, Adam was not the first human ([see 1.3B](#)), and nowhere does the Bible say that God appointed him to be head of the human race. Furthermore, nowhere does the Bible say that people are individually guilty (even though they may suffer worldly consequences) for the sins of their leader.
- **GUILT OF PARENTS.** *'The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father'* (Deuteronomy 24:16). *'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers'* (Ezekiel 18:20). The Bible teaches that people will stand before God at judgment for their own sins, not for sins of their fathers.

## Romans 5 is key scripture

**Genesis 2-3 must be studied together with Romans 5**, which is the portion of scripture upon which the doctrine **original sin** has been built.

Romans was written by the Apostle Paul about 1,500 years later than the book of Genesis and incorporates greater understanding coming through the life and teaching of Jesus.

Tap the **Deep Bible Study** below to see that Romans 5 **DOES NOT SAY** that *everyone is born guilty of Adam's sin and will burn in hell forever (except those who accept Jesus as Savior)*.



**TAP HERE to see what Bible  
actually says (or doesn't say)  
about original sin**

## Other 'proof texts'

Many people over-reach with these additional 'proof-texts' to support the concept of original sin:

- *'For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive' (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).* That is the same as what Paul wrote in Romans 5 and what is answered in Deep Bible Study above. That doesn't make a case for inheriting the guilt for Adam's sin or burning forever in hell. Those verses simply say that people die, but through Christ can be resurrected to new life.
- *'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me' (Psalm 51:5).* That doesn't make a case for the universal guilt of Adam's sin. The verse simply says that King David was born into a sinful world and that his mother, like everyone, was a sinner.
- *'Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies' (Psalm 58:3).* That doesn't make a case for the universal guilt of Adam's sin. The verse simply says that people have free will and a sin nature which become evident at a very early age (obviously not at birth because newborn babies don't spread lies).
- *'Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath' (Ephesians 2:3).* That doesn't make a case for the universal guilt of Adam's sin. The verse simply says that everyone has a sinful nature (necessary for free will) ... the sinful nature is why everyone sins ... for which everyone deserves punishment.

## The logic (or illogic) of 'original sin'

**God claims to be just and loving,**

so

**If Adam's guilt is placed on everyone (original sin),**

then

**Most people will be sent to hell as punishment for something they knew nothing about,**

and since

**Over 100 billion people have lived on earth so far (table above),**

and

**The great majority of people have never had an opportunity to hear clearly about God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ,**

then

**Torturing 100 billion people forever for a wrong**

they never committed, and knew nothing about, would be the most monstrous injustice and lack of love that anyone can image,

therefore

**GOD IS NOT JUST AND LOVING, BUT A CRUEL MONSTER.**

**THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT WE HAVE A SIN NATURE:** 'For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I

agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in *my sinful nature*.' (Apostle Paul, Romans 7:15-18)

## CONCLUSION



**YES**

**Sin nature**

*Guilty only because of our own sins*



**NO**

**Original sin**

*Guilty because of Adam's sin*

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## IMPORTANT

[See 1.4.3](#) for a deep Bible study covering the scripture passages in Romans 5 used to support the doctrine of **original sin**.

In addition to Romans 5, [see 3.5.1](#) for a deep Bible study covering all explicit scripture passages on **death and hell**.

## PART C

### Is there 'spiritual death?'

#### *What's the difference?*

**SPIRITUAL DEATH** = Burn forever in hell

– OR –

**FINAL DEATH** = Deserved punishment in hell, then end of existence

Now comes an important theological point that requires a decision regarding interpretation for the meaning **death**.

God said to Adam:

*'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you*



*must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, FOR WHEN YOU EAT OF IT YOU WILL SURELY DIE.*' (Genesis 2:16-17)

How we interpret '**die**' in this story sets the pattern for how we interpret death and eternal life in other parts of the Bible.

### **What does 'DIE' mean?**

#### **Common interpretation**

Many Christians – probably most church-goers – interpret the word '**die**' as spoken above by God to Adam to mean '**spiritual death**,' which they believe is equivalent to **burn in hell forever**.

However, **THE INTERPRETATION ON THIS SITE** is that '**die**' means simply what it says: *final end of existence* (after judgment and hell). The only exception to final death is salvation offered through Jesus. [See 3.5.1](#) for Bible study that examines this subject and concludes that **people do not burn in hell forever**.

The term '**spiritual death**' does not appear anywhere in the Bible. It is a contrived term.

#### **Problems with 'spiritual death:'**

Here are some problems with the common interpretation:

- **OXYMORON.** It doesn't make sense to redefine '**death**' to mean '**doesn't die**.' The concepts of *no existence* and *burning forever* are mutually exclusive.
- **LIFE PRECEDES DEATH.** It doesn't make sense to say that a person can have **spiritual death** without first having **spiritual life**.
- **COMPREHENSION.** Adam could not have comprehended anything other than the ordinary death he observed before he sinned.
- **DEATH IS NOT PUNISHMENT.** Birth-aging-death is the natural order of all life, existing before sin, a necessity to make room for new growth and improvement. Even stars and planets die, unrelated to decisions about good and evil ([see 1.3](#)).
- **COMPLETE IGNORANCE.** There were many millions of people who lived before Adam sinned (see table above). *On what basis would they have eternal life in heaven? On what basis would they burn forever in hell? They simply didn't know anything about what God was doing. Who can say with scriptural certainty that they don't just die (end of existence)?*

Deep  
Bible  
Study



**DO PEOPLE BURN IN  
HELL FOREVER?**

**TAP HERE to see what Bible  
actually says about death  
and hell**

## The logic (or illogic) of 'spiritual death'

God claims to be all-good,

and

If, at time of Garden of Eden, God holds all people outside the Garden guilty for a sin Adam committed inside the Garden,

and

If God condemns them to eternal hell for something they knew nothing about,

and since

God had not appeared to them or given them any means of salvation,

then

God is NOT GOOD, and is a liar,

therefore

**NOTHING THAT GOD SAYS IS TRUSTWORTHY.**

## CONCLUSION



**YES**

**Final death**

*Deserved punishment in hell, then end of existence*



**NO**

**Spiritual death**

*Burn in hell forever*

## KEY POINTS

- **First encounter with God.** The Garden of Eden is the first time and place that man encounters God.
- **First law.** God gives his first commandment (law) to man, very clear and simple.
- **First culpable sin.** Man commits the first sin for which there is accountability and punishment, a clear violation of God's law, with intent to become like god. There was no guilt before the law.
- **First punishment.** Man is punished for his sin by being denied access to eternal life.
- **First marriage.** Man and woman are united as one flesh in marriage.
- **First promise.** Satan's punishment contained a promise about Jesus, who would come as Savior.
- **First themes.** This Eden story introduces the major themes of Christianity, to be understood later from the

life and teachings of Jesus.

- **First theology.** This story raises controversial issues about basic Christian theology – as the difference between *spiritual death* and *final death*, between *original sin* and *sin nature* – which can only be resolved by careful study of New Testament scriptures.

## GOING DEEPER

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