

Finding Jesus Christ

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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This book was inspired by the followHIM podcast, hosted by Hank Smith and John Bytheway. FollowHIM was founded by Steve and Shannon Sorensen to be a resource for all to access scholarly minds and their expertise in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We now dedicate this book to all those who strive to follow Jesus Christ and seek to understand the mysteries of heaven. We pray these truths will touch your heart, you will feel the Holy Spirit testify to you of the reality of a living God and your Savior Jesus Christ, and you will feel inspired to find more of Jesus Christ in your own daily life.

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Genesis 1-3

Joshua Sears

| ***Genesis 1:3*** *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

Science and religion are not pitted against each other. Genesis isn't speaking the same language as science; our cosmology is not the same as theirs. The Israelites didn't know what we know. To them, the world was flat. To them, there was water above and water below. Remember when you're reading that they are speaking in comparison to what they know, not to what is science.

So what is God trying to say with Genesis? We typically think it's to teach us how the earth was created, but I don't think that is what God is trying to do here. *I think He is trying to teach us who He is, what His nature is, who people are, our relationship to each other, how we relate to God, and our purpose here on earth.* And Genesis does that beautifully.

In ancient Israel, light was often used to represent a space where God is directly present. So now, God has created this environment *where He is directly present.*

That's what the creation is really teaching us, that *God prepared the earth for us. We are not an afterthought.* We are not just one of many creations, we are special in His sight. *We are fundamentally different from His other creations, as wonderful as they are.*

In ancient Israelite context, creating means you are bringing order to the chaos, so you structure things and give them purpose and meaning. That is why we can see Him taking our stories and our random events and granting us purpose and meaning. He can separate out the noise in our lives. "He can make something magnificent out of something unorganized." *God can give order to our chaos.*

We talked before about water being chaos. But yes, we see once it has its purpose and its function, *it becomes life-giving*.

God is very physically involved in creating the earth. He “formed” “bereaved” and “brought.” It’s kind of fun. He’s down there in the mud making man, and just like He was physically involved then, *He is very physically involved in our lives now*.

One thing we can take away from the story of Adam and Eve is to see their story as an archetype for what we go through. By giving them names, it invites us to put ourselves in their shoes. They started in God’s presence, they were taken out of God’s presence, and we are trying to figure out how to get back to His presence. *Their story is all of our story*.

One of my favorite quotes from Joseph Smith is, All your losses will be made up to you in the resurrection provided you continue faithful. By the vision of the Almighty, I have seen it. In Joseph’s words, that man knew loss, and he knew suffering, but he saw and knew perfectly *that every promised blessing could be ours, whether in this life or the next. So if you’re going through one of those times right now, please do not give up. Trust that Heavenly Father will help you. We have the testimonies of the prophets and the witnesses of people in the Bible who went before us that God will not abandon us or forsake us. We’ll have these Hezekiah, last-minute miracles come into our lives. And it might come later, it might come sooner. But Heavenly Father is someone we can trust. We can have confidence in our trust in Him because He will never break trust with us. I want to share that testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Genesis 3-4

Shon Hopkin

Genesis 3:6 *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took forth the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

There is a very significant difference in our modern worldview to the ancient worldview. *There isn't one viewpoint that is right and one that is wrong. God is God, God doesn't change.* The God we believe in is the same God they believe in, but it can be tricky, as we are reading words written by someone who lived in a very different time and a very different place, to not place our worldview onto *their worldview*.

Watery areas are a realm of chaos that humans don't really control. So when God creates the earth, He brings up order out of that chaos. It's like a watery birth. Just like a baby is born out of water, you get life that comes out of the chaos. So, God is going to bring order to all of that. *He brings life out of death. He brings life out of our chaos.*

I take the stories as literal as they are. These are real people with real lives, *but what I really care about is the why. What is going on? What is being communicated?* We take a very enlightened approach to our storytelling where there has to be an accuracy to the details, but ancient people often were more concerned about the accuracy of the message being conveyed.

The description of Eve is a “help meet.” In Hebrew the word is *ezer kenegdo*, which means *a divine help who is his complimentary opposite, his equal.* God is setting up and showing us the power that comes when two people, *who are different, make a decision to come together and unite as one.*

I think there is some power in leaving the stories multivalent, meaning an ability for them to be seen or interpreted in different ways, from different angles, shedding new light at different times. *In our time, we like to dot the i's and cross the t's so we can stop thinking about it, but that is the power in not knowing — then we keep thinking*

This is where the love story is enhanced. Eve has done something that is hurtful to her partner, and then she very powerfully and vulnerably stands in front of Adam and says, “I have eaten this fruit.” Then Adam, with potential betrayal, looks at her and *he chooses* to see the woman that he loves, and *he decides*, “*We’re in this together.*” We now have a powerful example of a loving relationship. Like Eve, we can strive to be open and honest, and like Adam, we can strive to choose the team.

It is interesting that the concept of working for what we want — “I am going to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow” — is presented as one of the first laws of mortality. Our natural man is always looking for shortcuts. It is looking for ways to get something for nothing, to feel good without putting in the work. But because we are light and truth at our very core, this instinct to use sin as the shortcut warps who we are. *And that is why we need the redemption that comes through the Atonement of Jesus Christ — to remind us who we are, and that we, on our journey to become like the Savior Himself, are not meant to take the easy way.*

There is a Redeemer that turns this story back into gold. Even though Adam and Eve transgressed, even though *we* transgress, *we can return to live with God again. Because God loves us, He has provided a Savior of the world.*

This probably is the first place God teaches them the law of sacrifice. Think of the beauty of this sacrificial animal providing the skins, *the garments*, that are going to cover them as they leave the garden. *This sacrificial animal covers them. Christ covers them. God puts the image of the Atoning One on them to remind them who they are* — to remind them who they can become like. God is dressing them with power and protection as they leave the garden. *The skins serve as a reminder to them of their relationship with God, and that because of Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb, they can return back to the presence of God.*

There comes a moment when we are like, “it’s not perfect,” and there is a Fall, and then God is there to carry the story forward. We are not held captive by former mistakes, because God has offered us covenants just like He offered Moses, Noah, and Enoch.

I do not need to worry about my past because of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I do not need to worry about my future because of the power of covenants. *I know God is going to be there for me because He has promised He will be there for me.*

Digging deeper into the academic study of the Bible has only enhanced my understanding of the richness of what we are provided in the Restoration of the gospel. Where else are we living out these ancient stories? *They are alive, powerful, and applicable today.* We are making covenants. We're emphasizing covenants. We are listening to prophets. As Moses said, Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets. I feel I've come to know God better as I've been guided toward him. *And as strange as it may sound to some listeners, the teachings of the Old Testament have helped me be a better man. There's a long way to go on that journey, but the Old Testament has only enhanced my relationships with others and the Lord.*

Genesis 5

Jenet Erickson

Genesis 5:1-2 *In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*

Repentance is so difficult because of all the things Satan wants to distort. It is sin, repentance, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and salvation. Repentance is often taught to be something to fear and avoid. *We even view repentance as punishment.* But what we have learned is that the Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, meaning a change of mind, heart, and spirit, even breath. *When Jesus asks us to repent, it is all about growth, a change of mind and heart, and becoming, even healing — not penalty.*

This chapter shows us that we had to leave our Heavenly Parents so we could experience oppositional choices, so we could taste the bitter, so we could learn to prize the sweetness of what is good and pure. *That bitterness is sin, or weakness or transgression, and we taste it so we can know the sweet that is Christ*

When we see Christ as our Advocate in our personal life, not the Advocate *as in He takes the beating for us, but in our growth. That in our agony, He works in us and with us to overcome that — the shame, the fear, the weakness, and the predisposition to sin.* He heals that beautiful relationship as our Advocate.

The idea that we need to do it all right interferes with intimacy. It interferes with our relationships with ourselves and our children. *As long as we are hiding behind a false idea that there is some perfect way that we either should have been or should be, we have blocked intimacy.* The moment we can be honest in our fallibility to others and our children, when we are unafraid because we know Christ is our Advocate, they can trust us. Then we have given them the greatest gift: *to be comfortable in their fallibility, with Christ as their Advocate.*

This is the journey. *The moment we can turn and say, "I have failed you because I am a fallible person, and He is my Redeemer and He is yours."* Then we have entered into that space of a new level of intimacy.

That is what Adam starts with right here. We tear that mask off. *I need Christ, you need Christ. I am fallible, you are fallible. You are loved, I am loved, and His work is to help us grow and become.*

Agency is real. Cain made choices. And here is Adam, unafraid to say, "These are the problems in our family. *It is not something to hide from. It means there is the possibility of change.*" Every family has real significant challenges, because that is the whole point: to learn and grow.

Parents, just like Adam and Eve, wrote their story through scripture. *Write your stories of repentance, of the Lord hearing your cry and answering your prayers, helping you, and giving you strength.*

There is power in identity. And that's why the Lord teaches it right here with Adam and Eve. Because knowing *I am a child of God, and you are a child of God, is the only absolutely secure and true identity we can have.*

The Lord never gives up. He keeps inviting His people to come back, turn, and repent.

I love that we get to read that God was angry. God is teaching us that anger has a rightful place. *All emotions and passions are given to us as gifts to teach us. Anger can lead us to see the truth of moral violations.* What we are to be careful of is when anger is coming from “me, me, me.” *When it is no longer in service to other people, it is no longer in the bounds of the Lord.*

When we are honest about who we are, in our fallibility, and in our need for God, *He can be honest with us about who we can become.* But when we hide and fear our own weaknesses, we cannot hear Him say what we can become.

The Savior doesn’t say, “your sins are not a big deal.” He says, “*Come! Don’t be afraid of your transgressions, I will heal you.*”

Eating the fruit wasn’t a mistake. Your mistakes are not a mistake. *Falling is THE plan so that we can use our agency to turn to Him to raise us up.* Agency is the very thing that enables us to become like Him.

Why does God spend *so much time talking about creation* and why did He give us so many beautiful, stunning, creations? Because He is reminding us, “*I am creating YOU.*”

We have an epidemic of blame toward parents, and it’s Satan. He’s trying to tell people that, “You have no agency. You are locked into this.” And that is not the path of repentance or healing for that child either. *When we are blaming another, we have given another power over our own journey with Christ. He is saying, “Come, this is all a journey for all of us, working together.”* Forgiveness and compassion for parents is the way to healing as a person yourself.

I think I came into motherhood with the list of things I was going to do, and these little people were going to just go right along with what I wanted and my working out their salvation. I knew all the right things. Then I realized my perfectionism blocked my experience of my children and our experience of Christ together. This is not me having them experience Christ my way, it is us experiencing the redemption of Christ together. My efforts to have my kids feel and experience the gifts of the Holy Ghost through my own repentant heart and their experiencing that vulnerability and openness from me, just learning that instead of my list of things that I'm going to do and make happen has been such a journey of growth. So, I'm so thankful for the Redeemer. This is what it's taught me: I need him. We need him
