

THE FIRST CHARGE OR COVENANT: MAN'S PURPOSE UPON THE EARTH GENESIS 02: 15–17

Introduction

Above all other verses in the creation account, these verses show why God created man. Very simply stated, God wants to live with a being who chooses — freely chooses — to live with Him. God wants to live with a being who has the ability to choose to live with Him and who *will choose* to live with Him. God wants to live with a being who has freedom of choice, a being...

- who will choose to know God, to know the goodness and grace of God
- who will choose to serve God
- who will choose to live with God: to love, worship and fellowship with God

God does not want to coerce man; God does not want man to be a robot that has been run off an assembly line and programmed to serve and worship God. God wants man to have freedom of choice, the ability to choose to live either with God or apart from God.

This is clearly seen by looking at the nature of man revealed in these verses.

- => Man is seen *to be highly intelligent and physically strong*. He is made responsible for thinking, planning and cultivating the Garden (v. 15).
 - => Man is seen *to have the ability to communicate* with others. God is seen talking and sharing with him (vv. 16-17).
 - => Man is seen *to have the ability to will and to choose*. He possesses freedom of will (vv. 16-17).
 - => Man is seen *to have needs and drives* that have to be met both by his environment and by God. His environment has to provide work, food and beauty for him. God has to provide instructions, directions, love, worship, fellowship and purpose, meaning and significance for him (vv. 15-17).
 - => Man is seen *to be a spiritual being* who requires spiritual direction and godly fellowship for his life (vv. 15-17).
 - => Man is seen *to be a being who is very capable of responding* to others, of loving and of expressing appreciation to others. God is here interacting with him (vv. 15-17).
 - => Man is seen *to have been a being of perfection and of immortality*, a being who was morally perfect, physically perfect and spiritually perfect. Man was originally a being who was not corrupted and did not die and had never been separated from God.
 - => Man is seen *to be a being who has desires and urges* that push him toward that which appeals to the flesh and which looks attractive and beneficial. The trees in the Garden and the prohibition governing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil show this (vv. 16-17).
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=> Man is seen *to be a being of curiosity* — a being who has the drive to know more and more, even if the knowledge leads to evil (see the development of war weapons) (v. 17).

Much is revealed about the nature of man in these three brief verses, and much more could be added to the list above. But enough has been given to make the point: God has created man with freedom of choice. God wants to live with persons who choose to live with Him. God does not want persons with Him who do not want to be with Him. God wants to share His grace and goodness with those who want to experience His grace and goodness. This is the discussion of this informative passage of Scripture. These verses cover *The First Charge or Covenant: Man's Purpose Upon Earth*.

I. To know the goodness and grace of God (v. 15).

II. To serve God by working and taking care of the Garden (or world) (v. 15).

III. To choose life with God: love, worship and fellowship (vv. 16-17).

GENESIS 02: 15–17 COVENANT

A covenant is a specific agreement between two or more persons. There are three types of covenants seen in the Bible.

1. An agreement between two or more persons who freely agree to the terms of the contract or covenant (Gen 21:32).
2. An agreement imposed by a superior party demanding obedience from the weaker party (Eze 17:13-14). This is also seen when God demands obedience from man by issuing certain commandments (Gen 2:16-17; Jos 23:16).
3. An unconditional agreement or promise — what might be called a covenant of mercy or grace — whereby God obligates Himself to help or to reconcile sinful man (Deu 7:6-8; Psa 89:3-4; see Gen 3:15).

The word covenant is used about 253 times in the Old Testament and twenty times in the New Testament. Many of these are used in reference to the ark of the covenant that sat in the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary of the Jewish tabernacle which was the worship centre of Israel.

H. C. Leupold says that covenants made by God...

- “[Are] the most solemn and binding form of...promise,
- “[Are] given for man's double assurance and because of man's carnal weakness...
- “[Are] not to be put on a parallel with human covenants in which two contracting parties meet on the same level and make mutual pledges...
- “Emanate [come] from God... He makes them, He fixes the terms and the conditions, He in sovereign freedom binds Himself” (H. C. Leupold. *Genesis*, Vol. 1, p. 336.)

Scholars differ as to the actual number of covenants in the Bible. However, Scripture discusses at least nine covenants or promises and charges.

=> The covenant of Eden whereby God meets man's most basic needs (Gen 2:15-17).

=> The covenant with Adam whereby God promises redemption (Gen 3:15).

=> The covenant with Noah whereby God preserves the human race (Gen 9:8-17).

=> The covenant with Abraham whereby God begins a new race (the Jewish race) to be the chosen line of God's people (Gen 12:1-3; 15:9-21; 17:1-27).

=> The covenant with Moses whereby God promises that Israel can be His chosen people (Exo 19:5-6).

=> The covenant with God's priestly servants whereby God promises to establish an everlasting priesthood (Num 25:12-13; Mal 2:4-5; Eze 44:15).

=> The covenant with Israel whereby God promises to gather Israel back to the promised land (from being scattered all over the earth) (Deu 30:1-3).

=> The covenant with David whereby God promises to send the Messiah through David's family. The Messiah was to be "the Son of David" (2 Sam 7:16; 23:5).

=> The covenant with believers whereby God reconciles man to Himself through Christ (Jer 31:31-34; see Heb 8:6-13, esp. 8. See Isa 42:6; 49:8; 2 Cor 3:6-18; Heb 7:22; 8:6-13.) □

I. Genesis 02:15 To Know the Goodness and Grace of God

Man's purpose is to know the goodness and grace of God. Why did God create man? Why does man exist? What is the purpose of life? As stated, man's purpose is to know the goodness and grace of God. God wants to share the riches of His goodness and grace with man — the overflowing riches of His goodness and grace. This is clearly seen in what God did for the first man, Adam.

God made a paradise — the Garden of Eden — for man. The Garden was the most perfect paradise imaginable. Remember: the earth was perfect, but God wanted a place that would be very, very special for man — a place of unmatched splendour, beauty, provision, fellowship and perfection. The Garden of Eden far exceeded the outside world. Adam could compare the two, for he had lived in the outside world for some time. Just how long is unknown, but he had been there and walked about (Gen 2:8, 15).

But note what happened (v. 15): God took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. He had been outside the Garden, but God wanted him within its boundaries. God wanted Adam to know and experience paradise, the great gift of God, the glorious goodness and grace of God.

The point is this: God created the most glorious home imaginable for man, paradise itself, the Garden of Eden. Man already had a perfect earth, but a perfect earth could not hold nor adequately show the infinite goodness and grace of God. Therefore, God created

paradise itself — a place where man could behold all the splendour, beauty, provision, fellowship and perfection of God's goodness and grace.

Thought 1. God's purpose for man has not been defeated despite the sin of Adam. God will not allow His purpose to be defeated, not ever — not by anything nor by anyone. Everything that was lost by Adam's sin has been regained by Christ. How? By Christ's death. Remember: God's purpose for creating man is to show man the riches of His goodness and grace. No greater love could ever be shown than for God to give His Son to die for the sins of man. This is exactly what happened in the death of Christ. The summit of goodness and grace is seen in this: God gave His Son to bear the condemnation, punishment and judgment for man's sin. When a man believes that *Christ died for him*, God takes that man's belief and counts it as the death of Christ. God counts the man as having died with Christ. The man's punishment has therefore been paid: he has died with Christ. Consequently, he is freed from sin: he stands perfect and acceptable to God. By Christ — by faith in Christ — man is freed from sin; man is able to be restored to perfection and righteousness.

Eph 2:4-7 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Gen 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Gal 3:6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

But how about paradise? How can a perfect earth and a perfect paradise be restored? By the promise and power of God. God has promised to recreate a new heavens and a new earth, to create a paradise throughout the whole universe for man. The day is coming when God will show the riches of His goodness and grace beyond anything we can ask or think. When? In the glorious day of redemption and of eternity.

Eph 2:7 In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Rom 8:18-22 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Thought 2. Note that God put Adam in the Garden. The greatest thing in all the world is to be called and placed by God. No matter where it is, the place God chooses for us is the best place to be.

II. **Genesis 02:15 To Serve God and Take Care of the Garden**

Man's purpose is to serve God by working and taking care of the Garden — the paradise in which he lives. God had given Adam the Garden — the most perfect, beautiful and bountiful paradise imaginable — and God expected Adam to work and keep up the Garden. Note three significant facts.

1. Man was to look after the Garden. He was to *dress* (abhadh) it. The word means to work, till, cultivate, dress and serve the Garden. Man was also to *keep* (shamar) the Garden. This word means to watch over, to guard, to keep, to look after, to take care of. The point is this: man was made responsible — personally responsible — for the Garden of Eden. The Garden was paradise: it was the most perfect, beautiful and bountiful place imaginable, but it had to be looked after and cared for. This duty was placed upon man. Man was...

- to till and cultivate the land
- to dress the orchards, shrubs and flowers
- to feed and provide for himself
- to keep the growth under control
- to look after and care for the animals

Simply stated, man was to keep paradise as paradise. God had created the Garden, the most perfect, beautiful and bountiful paradise imaginable; it was up to man to keep the Garden perfect, beautiful and bountiful.

2. Man was created to be a responsible person and an active, working person. Man was not made to be irresponsible nor to be inactive, idle, slothful, complacent or lazy. He was made to work and to work hard.

Gen 1:28 *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

Rom 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

Col 3:22-24 *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

2 Thes 3:10 *For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."*

Exo 23:25 *Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

Prov 24:30-31 *I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.*

Eccl 10:18 *Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks.*

3. Man was created to have a strong sense of purpose and of self-worth. Man is a mental and emotional creature. Man needs strong purpose in life, to feel that he is worthwhile, that what he does matters and is significant and counts for something. Man also needs strong self-image, to feel that he is somebody, a person who matters to other people. Both purpose and self-image come — to a great degree — from the work that a man does. If a man's work is significant, then he has a reason for getting up in the morning and living, and he feels worthwhile and has a strong purpose and self-image. This is the way God made man. This is the reason God charged man to work and to look after the Garden and the world. Man needs to think, plan, discover, work and do something profitable. From such mammoth responsibility, man's sense of purpose and self-worth are somewhat met. (Note: mental and emotional needs — purpose and self-worth — are only partially met by the physical world and responsibility within it. The most satisfying sense of purpose and self-worth comes from having one's spiritual needs met. This is discussed in the next note, Gen 2:16-17.)

Thought 1. Paradise has been lost and the earth has been corrupted. Adam's sin and fall destroyed both. But Jesus Christ has promised to restore both. He has promised...

- to recreate a new heavens and earth, a perfect universe.
- to create the most perfect, beautiful and bountiful paradise imaginable — a city that will glisten with all the jewels and glory of God Himself — a city that will be the summit of perfection and provision — a city that will be the very city of God and Christ — a city that will serve as the capital of the universe, and be named the City of God, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

The point is this: every person should make sure he is acceptable to God, that he is to be a citizen of the new heavens and earth, of the coming paradise of God (see outline and notes, Rev 21:1-22:5).

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 21:1-5 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

Isa 34:4 *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.*

Isa 65:17 *"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

Isa 66:22 *"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure."*

Thought 2. Paradise has been lost, and the earth has been corrupted, but the earth has not been destroyed. We still have our minds and bodies and we still have the earth upon which to live. Therefore, the charge of God still stands: man's purpose upon earth is still the same. We are to look after and take care of the earth. We are to cultivate it and keep it, watching ever so closely over its welfare. The earth — its soil, air, water and growth — is to be preserved and protected, both for succeeding generations and for God.

Gen 1:28 *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

Col 3:23-24 *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

1 Cor 4:2 *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Pet 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Isa 1:19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land.

III. *Genesis 02:16–17 Choosing to Live with God*

Man's purpose is to choose to live with God — to love, worship and fellowship with Him. Why did God create man? Why did God put man upon earth and not immediately into heaven? These two verses show us: God wants a being who chooses — freely chooses — to live with Him. God wants a creature with freedom of choice, a creature who *wills* to live with Him — who wills to love, worship and fellowship with Him *supremely*. Note three significant points.

1. There was the great incentive for man to choose life with God. Man was given every tree in the Garden except one. Man had everything:
 - => a home in paradise
 - => perfection: he was sinless
 - => all the trees and food of paradise
 - => the tree of life, of immortality (Gen 2:9)
 - => the love, presence and fellowship of God

Man had the attraction, the appeal, the pull of all this. Man had the attraction and the right to *all the fruit* in the Garden. There was *only one fruit* he could not touch — only one fruit among *all the fruit*. There was no excuse for man ever choosing any fruit — or anything — over God. Man had the greatest incentive in all the world for choosing God. By choosing God, man had everything: every tree — all of the abundance and benefits of paradise itself.

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

2. There was the great choice — the great test — that had to be made. It involved one simple prohibition. How was God going to *arrange* for man to exercise his freedom of choice, his will? How was God going to test man's choice — his love and loyalty — for God? Man had to be tested to show that he loved God above all else, that he wanted to live with God. The test was essential; otherwise, man would be nothing more than a robot. Note three significant facts.
 - a. There had to be something for man to choose other than God. If a man was to make a choice for God, the opportunity to turn away from God had to be present. Something — some object, some act — had to be chosen for man to exercise his ability or choice

for God and for life with Him. Note this: man was within nature, within the most beautiful Garden of the world. The Garden had the most excellent trees of the world, and the trees bore the most luscious fruit in the world. One of man's basic needs and drives was to satisfy his hunger with the luscious fruit so richly provided. What better way for man to exercise his ability or choice for God than through the flesh, than to have a commandment involving the fruit needed to meet his physical need for food?

In fact, forbidding fruit within such an environment as the Garden of Eden would be the very thing for God to do — the natural, expected thing.

- b. God gave man a choice, a very simple and easy choice. God set *only one* restriction, and that one restriction was *only upon one* tree. Adam could eat from every tree in the Garden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Note: the command in the Hebrew is in the strongest language possible: *you must not, absolutely must not, eat of the tree.*
- c. God gave man this choice for a very specific reason: man is a spiritual being. Man was created with a need for God. Every thinking and honest person knows this, knows it down deep within his heart. But man not only needs God, man has the ability to live with God. Man can have his need met; man can seek after and come to know God. It is a matter of choice: man has to choose to live with God. The decision is up to man.

This is the reason God gave Adam this command. Adam needed God's Word — needed God to speak with him — needed God to fellowship and interact with him. Man needed God's Word, needed God to tell him in simple terms what to do and what not to do. It is in seeking after and in obeying God that man interacts and fellowships with God. This is clearly seen in Adam.

God simply said, "You may eat from every tree in the garden, but you may not eat from this one tree" (Gen 2:16-17). God spoke, set the course for man's life. Adam was to simply do what God said. Adam was to choose the life God had laid out for him.

- => Obeying meant choosing life with God forever; disobeying meant choosing death, separation from God forever (Gen 2:17; see *Death*, Heb 9:27; see Jn. 3:18).
- => Obeying meant choosing fellowship with God; disobeying meant separating oneself from God.
- => Obeying meant choosing to serve God; disobeying meant choosing to serve self and Satan.
- => Obeying meant choosing to acknowledge God; disobeying meant rebelling against and ignoring God.
- => Obeying meant choosing to honour God; disobeying meant dishonouring God.

Thought 1. Adam had to choose; he had to make a decision. The tree was there. If he left the *forbidden* fruit alone, he would be obeying God and choosing to live with God. If he ate the fruit, he would be disobeying God and choosing to walk his own way in life.

The same is true with us. We have to choose; we have to make a decision. Jesus Christ, God's Son, has come to earth. He is there. If we ignore, neglect, deny or rebel against Him, we disobey God and choose to live without God. If we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we obey God and choose to live with God.

John 1:12 *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

1 John 3:23 *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*

Deu 30:19 *"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."*

Josh 24:15 *"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."*

Psa 31:14 *But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God."*

Thought 2. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes out of the mouth of God. Life — true fellowship, worship and service — with God is found by living in the Word of God and letting the Word live itself out in us.

Mat 4:4 *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

2 Tim 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

Psa 119:30 *I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws.*

3. There was the result of disobedience: death. The Hebrew literally says, "Dying, you shall die." If man disobeys God — fails to choose life with God — he dies. Death is sure, absolute, certain. It cannot be stopped.

In the Bible death means separation — separation from God. (See *Death*, Gen 2:17.) If a man chooses to live without God, then he will not live with God. He will die — be separated, cut off from God. This is exactly what Adam chose. He turned away from God — away from God's Word — and turned to his own will and way in life. He did his own thing. As a result, he died.

Mat 7:22-23 *“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!”*

Thought 1. Note that death is to be feared by those who choose not to live with God. God warns man time and again.

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*

Mat 7:23 *“Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!”*

Mat 8:12 *“But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Mat 13:41 *“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.”*

Mat 22:13 *“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

Mat 24:51 *“He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Mat 25:46 *“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

Mark 9:43, 45, 47 *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out... It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”*

Rom 2:8 *But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.*

1 Cor 3:17 *If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.*

2 Th 1:9 *They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

2 Pet 3:7 *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

Jude 1:13 *They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

Rev 20:15 *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death. ■*

GENESIS 02:16–17 NATURE OF MAN; MEANING OF SIN

There are at least six more significant facts that need to be looked at in this brief passage.

1. Adam's nature. Adam had been created *innocent*, with an innocent human nature. He did not know evil. He had never tasted or experienced evil; therefore, the pull and taste of evil from experience was not within him. Adam had no idea what evil would taste or feel like. He was innocent, perfectly innocent; therefore, he did not know the difference between good and evil.

The point is this: God created Adam with the ability, the power, the capacity not to sin. True, Adam had the power to sin, but he also had the power not to sin.

But if Adam chose to sin, he would then know good and evil; he would lose the power not to sin. How? By sinning. By sinning he would become a sinful being. He could never again be innocent or perfect. He would be a being who had fallen below what God wanted, a being with a fallen human nature — a nature that is corruptible and that dies (see *Perishable — Imperishable*, Mt. 6:19; note, 1 Cor 15:50; *Sin, Death, Corruption*, 2 Pet 1:4).

2. Adam's moral nature. Adam was given a choice. He had free choice, freedom of will. He was a *free being*. But more than this, Adam was a free *moral being*. His morality is seen in the decision he had to make. If he obeyed God, he was moral and just; if he disobeyed God, he was immoral and unjust.
3. The nature of sin, morality and justice. Morality and justice are essentially obeying God. Sin — immorality and injustice — is essentially disobeying God.
4. Man's need for God's Word. Man needs God's Word, desperately needs it. Living by God's Word is the only way man can ever live abundantly and eternally. This is the reason God had to give man (Adam) His Word, His commandment. This is clearly seen by noting the difference between animals and man. Animals are soulish beings (see *Soul, Nephesh*, Gen 1:20). They are not given God's Word to live by. They are not spiritual beings. They are not immortal nor do they have the choice — drive and ability — to live with God. Animals do not have the capacity to love, worship or fellowship with God. They act only as the physical — their flesh, mind and urges — dictate. They desire only this world and are driven to live

and act only for this world. Therefore, they never know anything but this world.

But not so man. God made man a spiritual being, that is...

- a being who is *immortal*
- a being with the choice — the need, drive and ability — to choose life with God, both now and eternally (see *Creation of Man, Spirit*, Gen 1:26).

God meets man's spiritual need by giving man God's Word: "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" (Gen 2:16-17). By this Word from God, man exercises his ability to choose to live with God. He keeps his spirit alive by obeying and doing what God says. In doing what God says, man lives with God — loves, worships and fellowships with Him. Consequently, God gives man life, both now and eternally.

5. God's great love and care for man is shown in these verses.
 - a. Man was placed in the most beautiful surrounding and environment imaginable. The surroundings clearly showed man just how good it was to live in fellowship with God, and the beautiful surroundings attracted and pulled man to God (v. 15).
 - b. Man had every need met by God through his environment and the commandment (the Word of God) given him (vv. 15-17).
 - c. Man was given every tree in the Garden. Only one tree was withheld (vv. 16-17).
 - d. Man was clearly told the consequences of his behaviour. The warning of death was given if he rejected God (v. 17).
 - e. Man was given a magnificent opportunity to respond, to love and show appreciation to God (v. 16-17). He could have chosen God, chosen to live with God and to love, worship and fellowship with God.
6. What God did for man. Up to this point, three significant steps have been taken with man since his creation.
 - a. Man was created a spiritual being; that is, he was created in the image and likeness of God. This means at least two things:
 - => Man has the need and drive for immortality.
 - => Man has the need and ability (choice) to live with God — to love, worship and fellowship with God.
 - b. Man was placed in an environment that met his needs. To varying degrees his environment met his physical, mental and spiritual needs.
 - c. Man was given God's Word to live by. God's Word was the course man was to follow throughout his life. In obeying God's Word, man was to exercise and keep his spirit alive and active. The vehicle chosen for God's Word and commandment was that which was most natural to man — his environment — the fruit from one of the trees for which he was responsible. □

GENESIS 02: 17 DEATH

“But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” Genesis 02:17

The basic meaning of death is *separation*. Death does not mean what some people think: ceasing to exist. Death never means extinction, annihilation, non-existence or inactivity.

The Bible speaks of three deaths.

1. Physical death: the *separation* of a man's spirit or life from the body. This is what men commonly call death. It is when a person ceases to exist on this earth and is buried (1 Cor 15:21-22; Heb 9:27).

1 Cor 15:21-22 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 all will be made alive.

Heb 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

2. Spiritual death: the *separation* of man's spirit from God while he is still living and walking upon earth. This death is the *natural state* of a man on earth without Christ. Man is seen as still in his sins and *dead* to God (Eph 2:1; 4:18; 1 Jn. 5:12).
Spiritual death speaks of a person who is dead while he still lives (1 Tim 5:6). He is a natural man living in this present world, but he is said to be dead to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God and to spiritual matters.

- a. A person who wastes his life in riotous living is spiritually dead.

Luke 15:32 “But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

- b. A person who has not partaken of Christ — allowed Christ to live within him — is spiritually dead.

John 6:53-55 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

- c. A person who does not have the Spirit of Christ is said to be spiritually dead.

Rom 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

- d. A person who lives in sin is said to be spiritually dead.

Eph 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

Col 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

Eph 4:18-19 *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

- f. A person who sleeps in sin is spiritually dead.

Eph 5:14 *This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

- g. A person who lives in sinful pleasure is spiritually dead, dead while he lives.

1 Tim 5:6 *But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

- h. A person who does not have the Son of God is spiritually dead.

1 John 5:12 *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

- i. A person who does great religious works but does the wrong works is spiritually dead.

Rev 3:1 *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

3. Eternal death: the *separation* of man from God's presence forever. This is the second death, an eternal state of being *dead to God* (1 Cor 6:9-10; 2 Th 1:9). It is spiritual death, separation from God, that is prolonged beyond the death of the body. It is called the “second death” or eternal death.

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

2 Th 1:7-9 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

Rev 20:15 *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. □*