

International Conversation Cafe

Bible Topic: New Beginnings in Genesis

How do you feel about a new beginning? Sometimes it can be frightening and at other times exhilarating. A good start on a new adventure can set a pattern for things to come. Businesses, for example, plan for their beginning carefully because they want to build a good reputation that others will trust. Hopefully, that will benefit their business in the coming years.

Some beginnings are great, and others are disastrous. Most religions have an explanation for the beginning of the world, evil, families, cities, and nations. The Bible is no exception. This discussion will center on the book of Genesis, which describes the beginning of the world and the origin of evil. You will also have the chance to compare these stories with the stories of beginnings from your own religion and background.

The Creation of the World as described in Genesis 1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

...And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good.

...And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And God saw that it was good.

... Then God said, "Let the land produce plants...God saw that it was good.

...And God said, "Let there be lights in the huge space of the sky...the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God saw that it was good.

...And God said, "Let the seas be filled with living things, and let birds fly above the earth across the huge space of the sky." And God saw that it was good.

...And God said, "Let the land produce every kind of living creature. And God saw that it was good.

... Then God said, "Let us make human beings so that they are like us. Let them rule over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky. Let them rule over the livestock and all the wild animals. And let them rule over all the creatures that move along the ground."

...So God created human beings in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

...God saw everything he had made. And it was very good. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day six.

*After reading this story, what do we know about God from the perspective of Genesis 1?
What are some other creation stories you are familiar with?
How are they the same and how are they different?*

The Beginning of Evil, Genesis 3

There are many ancient stories of the beginning of evil in the world. This is the story found in the Bible.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "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. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 1 and 2

*Tell the story in your own words. Specifically, what was the lie the serpent told the woman?
What other stories tell how evil came into the world?
How are the stories alike and different?*

What do you think are the most important conclusions about God and people that can be made from these stories?

How might these conclusions influence the way we look at the world?

What can we learn from these stories that will help us as we start a new adventure?

