

# KINGS OF THE PAST – KINGS OF THE FUTURE

## Lesson 2

We've had a brief introduction to the Divine Council and we have seen how it is a template for how God works in and through us. How He works with His heavenly family mirrors how things here on earth, in His kingdom. But there is much more to see. We also need to see how Jesus and Satan fit into the plot. And we need to begin to think differently about ourselves and how we fit into God's plan. All of this begins in Eden – at the beginning.

In the beginning, Eden was God's earthly home. You might say it was His home office. But what is the first thing you think about when someone mentions the garden of Eden? Is it Adam and Eve or the fall?

Eden was their home also. God put them there.

### **Gen. 2:15-25**

**15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the**

knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

But what we don't normally think of is that Eden was also God's home. How have we missed this? How can we know this?

Ezekiel refers to Eden as the "garden of God."

**Ez. 28:13a**

**13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;**

**Ez. 31:8,9**

**8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it;**

**The fir trees were not like its boughs,**

**And the chestnut trees were not like its branches;**

**No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty.**

**9 I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches,**

**So that all the trees of Eden envied it,**

**That were in the garden of God.'**

But right after referring to Eden as the garden of God, he then refers to it as, "the mountain of God."

**Ezekiel 28:14**

**14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers;**

**I established you;**

**You were on the holy mountain of God;**

**You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.**

In the ANE context, bountiful gardens and distant mountain tops were seen to be the abode of the gods. As we have seen, the Bible uses this description of Eden. It was all about location, location, location. In an agrarian society where most people lived hand to mouth, it only made sense that the gods lived better than the regular people. After all, they're gods, right? The only people that lived close to this level were kings and priests. And in the minds of the common people, they were chosen by the gods. We see this born out in ancient sites.

Civilization began around rivers such as the Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan and the Nile where there was ample water. This was necessary in an arid climate. Surely the gods lived where there was no lack. Surely, they lived in paradise. Remote mountain peaks touched the heavens. People didn't live there. That was just too much work. And this kept the gods far from pesky humans.

Egypt's temples were covered in images of beautiful gardens. We have all heard of the hanging gardens of Babylon. Israel's temple had images of a lush garden also. It was also built over a spring – running water, signifying a river. And what did the temple represent? It represented the home of God on earth.

Temples in the ANE were built as large complexes. They had large temples known as ziggurats, man-made mountains where heaven and earth overlapped. This was where priests and people went to find the presence of God and the gods. These places were metaphors in stone.

Eden was a lush, well-watered habitation.

### **Gen. 2:10-14**

**10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.**

**11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.**

We tend to think of God's mountain as Zion or Sinai, and they were both spoken of with garden imagery and a watery habitation.

### **Isa. 33:20, 21**

**20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts;  
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home,  
A tabernacle that will not be taken down;  
Not one of its stakes will ever be removed,  
Nor will any of its cords be broken.**

**21 But there the majestic LORD will be for us  
A place of broad rivers and streams,  
In which no galley with oars will sail,  
Nor majestic ships pass by...**

**Also: Ez. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8; Joel 3:18.**

Whether Zion or Sinai, the mountain of God is, in effect, His temple. An ancient Israelite would have had no problem thinking of Eden as the dwelling of God and the place from which God and His council directed the affairs of humanity. This is consistent with how Israel's neighbors in the region thought of their gods and their dwellings. (Not borrowing from the pagans but a polemic.)

But there is additional theological messaging in the biblical account. The message is that this is not only God's dwelling, but that He desires to live among His people and allow them to participate in His rule. Had the fall not occurred, humanity would have been glorified

and made part of the council. But God made a way of salvation in order to bring believers back into the family of God.

### **John 1:12**

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

Eden is described in Ezekiel 28:2 as the “seat of the gods.”

### **Ezekiel 28:2**

**2 “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, “Thus says the Lord GOD:**

**“Because your heart is lifted up,**

**And you say, ‘I am a god,**

**I sit in the seat of gods,**

**In the midst of the seas,’**

**Yet you are a man, and not a god,**

**Though you set your heart as the heart of a god...**

This term, “seat” should be familiar to us. (County seat, congressional seat.) Ezekiel’s words draw attention to Eden as a seat of authority and action. But god had plans for the whole planet, not just Eden.

## God's Imagers

One of the first verses in the Bible tips us off to the fact that both God and His council were in Eden.

### **Genesis 1:26**

**26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."**

Here we have God announcing His intentions to a group. To whom is He speaking? Is He speaking to the other members of the Trinity? Many would say He was, but that can't be the case. Let's put on our thinking caps. It is in this verse that someone else learns of God's intentions. This rules out the Trinity. Why? Because God can't know something they don't. If there is something that God, the Father knows and they don't, then they cannot be omniscient, all – knowing. And if they aren't all – knowing, then they can't be God by the Biblical definition. No one in the Trinity can know anything the others don't. Therefore, God had to be speaking to someone else. The only other option is the council.



Think of it this way. I say to a group, “Let’s go get some burgers.” That is clear enough. Now, hold that thought because we need to look at something else in the verse. While God makes His intentions known to someone else, He doesn’t include the group in bringing His decision to fruition. In other council meetings, the council participates, (King Ahab). But here, when humanity is created, (Gen. 1:27) God is the only one creating. Creation is something God handled Himself. Now, let’s get back to the burgers.

If, after announcing, “Let’s go get some burgers,” I drive to the burger joint and insist on paying, I’d be the one doing all the work. That’s what we have here in Genesis. It makes sense that God is the only one creating humanity. The council doesn’t have that kind of power. They are created beings themselves. Does this then beg the question? What happened to the “our image” wording in verse 26? This exchange between verses 26 and 27 reveals a fascinating point. When God says, “Let US make mankind in OUR image,” – it means that He and the ones to whom He is speaking have/ share something in common. And whatever that is, humans will also share it once they are created. Not only are we like God in some way, we are also like the council members!

**That “something” is communicated by the phrase,  
“image of God.”**

**To be human is to be God’s imager!**

We are God’s representatives, so to speak.

## DEFINING IMAGER

The image of God isn’t an ability given to us by God, like intelligence. We can lose abilities, but we, as humans, cannot lose the status of being God’s imagers. That would require not being human. Every human from conception to death, will always be human and will always be God’s imager. This is why ALL human life is sacred.

## **So how do we represent God?**

We’ve already seen that God shares His authority with the divine beings of the council. He does the same with us.

- God is the high king of all things visible and invisible. He rules the council and shares that rule with the council and humans.

- God eventually showed us how to represent/ image Him with the example of Jesus. He is called the image of the invisible God -
- **Colossians 1:15**  
**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.**

And He is the exact image of God.

### **Hebrews 1:3**

**3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

And we are to imitate Jesus for this reason.

### **2 Corinthians 3:18**

**18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

### **Romans 8:29**

**29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

We will deal with the phrases, “firstborn” and “predestined” later.

Are you picking up what I’m putting down? Humans are basically God’s administration here on earth. We were made to enjoy Him and serve Him forever. Our role parallels the role of the council, God’s heavenly family. This all goes back to the dominion mandate given to Adam and Eve – the mission of His imagers. They were to serve God as steward-kings over creation. They were to multiply over the entire planet and thereby grow the kingdom of God. (Gospel of the kingdom). But Adam and Eve failed, as did their children. Had that never happened, eventually the whole planet would have become a global Eden and we would have enjoyed that reality.

Because He loved his creation God forgave Adam and Eve but all of mankind was destined to follow the pattern. We all have sinned and without God’s intervention, deserve death. **Romans 6:23**

All of this helps to explain many amazing things in the Bible, such as:

- **Why the Bible refers to believers as the “sons of God” or “children of God.” (Jn 1:12; 11:52; Gal. 3:26; 1 Jn 3:1-3)**
- **Why believers are described as being adopted into the family of God. (Gal. 4:5,6; Rom. 8:14 -16)**
- **Why we are said to be “heirs” of God and His kingdom. (Gal. 4:7; Titus 3:7; James 2:50)**
- **Why we are partakers of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4; 1 Jn 3:2)**
- **Why after Jesus returns, He says He will grant to believers, “to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” (Rev. 2:7)**
- **Why He has promised to share the rule of the nations with us. (Rev. 2:26-28)**
- **To share His throne. (Rev. 3:21)**

This is what we will do in a global Eden, in eternity. We won't be playing harps, 24/7. We will inhabit, enjoy, relish and rule in an unblemished creation.

WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER (application)

- Living consciously in the knowledge that our lives represent God and further His plans- even if we don't yet see that plan in its fruition, should change the way we approach each day.
- The dominion mandate wasn't forgotten after the fall. It was repeated after the flood. (Gen. 8:17; 9:1)
- Eden was lost but God wants it to be restored – and it will be.
- Ultimately, His kingdom will return in its full scope and glory when Jesus returns. And that will look a lot like Eden. (Rev. 21,22)
- Until that happens, we spread the Gospel of the kingdom everywhere.
- We represent God to everyone, everywhere. We are God's agents to restore Eden to some degree looking forward to when Jesus returns to re-establish Eden in its full glory as only He can.
- Consciously thinking of ourselves as in this manner – as God's imagers, means the decisions we make really do matter. As Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, we can fulfill His plans for us.
- The knowledge that all human life is sacred, since all humans are imagers, helps us to see life as the sacred thing it is. This should impact how we see everyone. Injustice, racism, the abuse of power, anywhere, in any context, has no place in the

kingdom of God. It isn't how God dealt with His children in Eden.

- Lastly, representing God means that every job that honors Him is a spiritual calling. Each day and every job or task can be part of moving back towards Eden and blessing fellow imagers – or not. Being in ministry does not put anyone on a higher plane. God cares how each of us represent Him, whenever and wherever we are. The opportunity doesn't need to be flashy or spectacular – it only needs to be taken.

But as awesome as God's plan and original intent was, it quickly fizzled in the hands of man. Only God is perfect. Freedom in the hands of imperfect beings – even divine ones can have disastrous results. Tune in next week!