

Jesus in Eden

One of the marks of good writing, especially creative writing, is when we get to the end we remember that it was there all the time. We get to the satisfying end of a novel or movie or story, and we

remember that there was evidence of the end from very early on. We might even go back and *reread* the book or *rewatch* the movie, just so we can verify that the ending was there from the beginning.

This is a technique often used by standup comedians as well. It is not at all unusual for their last joke in a set to include a reference to something early in the set. Those references routinely get big laughs. Comedians refer to the technique as a *callback*. In literature one might say that it is *foreshadowing*.

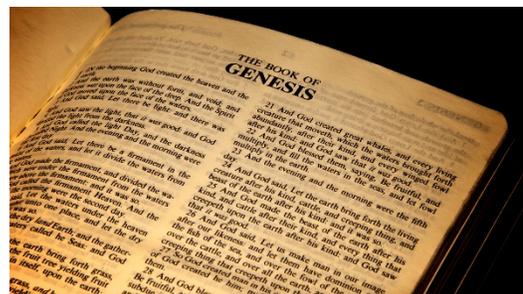
So we shouldn't be surprised that we find such *good writing* in the most famous, best-selling, most read and studied piece of literature on the planet: The Bible. When we read the book, we find that the end of the story was there all along.

When a good writer uses such a technique, while it may be impressive, it is not *remarkable*. We don't ask ourselves the question, "How did they know?" A writer knows because they created it; the story came from their mind. Whether the nuggets at the beginning of the story were written from the beginning, or added during a rewrite, it is not remarkable when such a thing happens from a writer's pen... impressive, but not mysterious or remarkable.

This, of course, is different when we are talking about the Bible.

We'll be reading the first words from the Book of Genesis in a moment. I hold the traditional view that the Book of Genesis was penned by Moses, which would have

been over 3,000 years ago. The books in our New Testaments were penned just under 2,000 years ago by contemporaries of Jesus. So our Bibles were penned over the course of over 1,000 years by many different hands. From



Moses to the Apostle John, prophets, historians, kings, psalmists, doctors, government officials... a host of people were involved in penning the Bible over centuries.

Yet, in this remarkable piece of literature, we can see that the end is found at the beginning... in fact the end is found throughout the Bible.

By the end I mean **Jesus**. Jesus is the culmination of God's plan revealed by God's Word.

It won't be long and we will be celebrating Christmas. Among the images of Christmas we'll find manger scenes, with angels and shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and the Baby Jesus. We'll read the passages from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew about how Jesus came as a baby. But we would be wrong if we think that Jesus first enters the scene at the manger, at the beginning of our New Testament. In the weeks ahead, we are going to see Jesus throughout the Old Testament too... starting with the very beginning.

I've described the Bible as great literature; it is, but it is certainly more than that. There is the fact that our Bible's came to us in this remarkable way, by the pens of many over the course of 1,300 years or so. But the Bible stands out from all other literature for reasons far beyond that.

First, the Bible is not fiction. When a great writer like Tolkien or C.S. Lewis weaves an intricate tale, no matter how thoughtful and detailed, it is still *imaginary*. While the Bible is the product of many *pens*, it is not the product of many *imagination*s. The Bible is Truth.

Furthermore, while the Bible is the product of many pens, we believe that the Bible has but one **author**. Just like a good writer knows the end while writing the beginning because the author is the creator of the story, our Bibles reveal the end even at the beginning because the Author is the Creator; we call the Bible God's Word not merely because the Bible is *about* God, the Bible is *by* God. Through the powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these *many pens* over these *many years* gave us our Bibles, **authored** by God Himself.

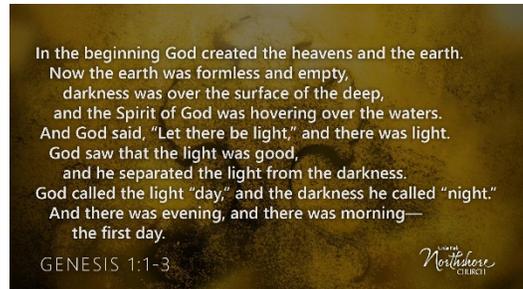
So what might be compared to a literary device like *foreshadowing* if it were from a human writer's imagination, can be read as **promise** because it comes from the mind of God, backed by the power and character of God.

That is exciting! And that is what we'll be studying in these moments on Sunday's for the next few months. We will find God's plan and promise throughout the ancient writings of the Old Testament.

For good measure... let's start at the beginning:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

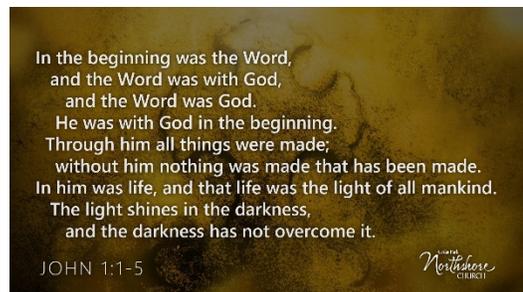
³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.¹



Was Jesus there in the beginning? It appears that the Holy Spirit was present, but there is no mention of Jesus (or the Son, or the Messiah) in the text of these first few verses.

But listen to this parallel passage from the first verses of the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.²



In the Creation narrative in Genesis 1, it was **God speaking** that caused things to be; through The Word all things were made. And the first thing that was created was light, *created* light that reflected the eternal light of God.

¹ The New International Version. (2011). (Ge 1:1–5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² The New International Version. (2011). (Jn 1:1–5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The Word of God and the Light of God there at the beginning... that Word and Light is the Son, Jesus. Jesus is God, there before time was created, and this same Jesus set aside His mighty power and became flesh.

Let's also look further into the account of creation, when it came time to create humans:

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

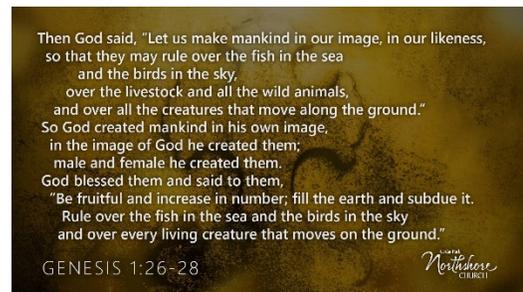
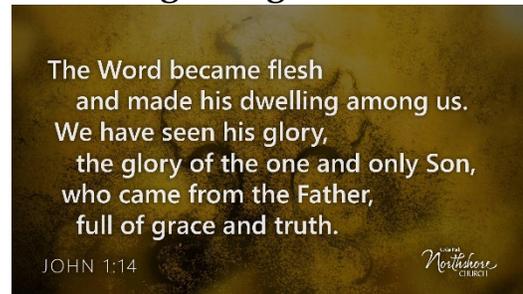
²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."³

Who is **us**? When God said, "Let us make mankind in our image," who is us? This is another indication of the presence of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God in three persons before all Creation, always existing, even before time.

Since humans were created in the image of God, when Jesus set aside His mighty power and took on human flesh, it would have been familiar. God took on the form of the created image of God.

These are interesting and important passages from the beginning, but the clearest promise of Jesus is found in Genesis 3:15. Theologians have a special word for this passage: the *protoevangelium* (first Gospel). In this passage we find a statement of the Gospel, and a promise of the Son, the Messiah, the Christ.



³ The New International Version. (2011). (Ge 1:26–28). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The first chapters of Genesis can be summarized like this: Creation, Fall, and Promise. After creation, humans followed the deception of Satan (called the serpent) disobeying God.

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

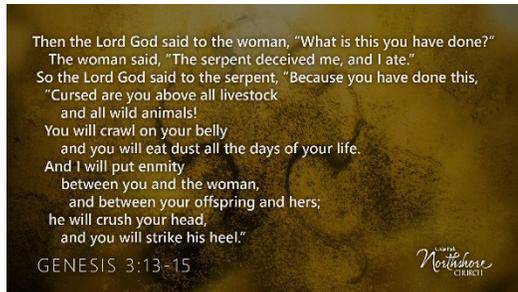
The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring ^a and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.” ⁴



“I will put enmity,” God declared to Satan. Satan was declared the enemy of Eve in that moment, and the enemy of all her offspring. I think of all the various names given to him, The Enemy may be the best. He is our enemy, only wanting death and destruction for us... only wanting to separate us from God.

This was a moment of defeat. Who lost? We might think humanity lost at that moment of the fall; there is no denying that there *was* a great loss, breaking humanities face-to-face relationship with God and forfeiting Eden. But the biggest defeat pronounced in that moment was the defeat of our enemy. He was humiliated, forced faced down in the dirt to crawl and eat dust. And there was the promise of ultimate, complete defeat.

Verse 15 says, “He will crush your head.” Who is He; He is the Son, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

Notice the tenses (that are actually more pronounced in the original Hebrew and lots of other languages; English stinks for tenses). The enmity starts between Eve and our enemy, and then broadens to all humanity and

⁴ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Ge 3:13–15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

all under the rule of the enemy, but then the tenses return to singular. He, a singular hero, will crush the head of the enemy, and all the enemy will be able to do is bruise our hero's heel.

From the very beginning God's plan and promise are evident. Notice that it doesn't say that humanity will overcome the enemy, that someday through technology or morality, buy force or by law, that humanity would crush the enemy. No, in spite of humanities failure (sin), what humanity could not accomplish for ourselves will be accomplished by God's promised one, the Victor, Jesus Christ. When the sickness of sin was introduced, God had the antidote.

There it is, the end of things told right up front at the beginning.

It is, of course, more than merely good literature.

It is not just some story; it is God's promise. It was not just some abstract theory or interesting plot point; it is God's personal promise to us... to you and to me.

God knew us then and knows us now. **We** are right there in the *protoevanglium*, that first Gospel in the beginning of God's Word, the promise was for Eve, and Adam, and all who would follow... and the promise is for us.

In a very real way, it wasn't only Jesus who was there in Eden, we were there too. Not only in the disobedience of Adam and Eve, but far more importantly... we were there in the mind and heart and plan of God.



Can we believe it today? Can we see God's plan from the beginning? Can we know that God had a plan for us from the very foundation?

This is the call of God today, to believe. Friend, God loves you, and made a way. At the moment of humanities failure, God had the answer. And in our moments of failure, despair, pain, or sickness... God is our answer too.

Before we were born, God knew us. Before our first failure, and every subsequent failure, God knows us and has made a way for us. Trust God and believe today.