

C H A P T E R 1

THE ANCIENT ENMITY

IN THE BEGINNING

The tragedy of Cain’s act against Abel began not in the field, but in Eden, where the inaugural stain of human blood was founded. These opening pages confront the origin of sin and expose how corruption was born in a creation once declared “very good.” (Gen. 1:31).

In the beginning.

This chronicle opens where all good stories do—in the beginning, though not the very beginning.¹ Upon the completion of the creation

¹ Further exploration of different views regarding the Creation narrative itself is forthcoming in a future volume.

account in Genesis 1–2, the glory of Eden and its eternal purpose unfold. Adam emerged from the dust, crowned the priest-king of the garden with a sacred charge. The enemy crept through the garden seeking to corrupt the image-bearers. The Creator appeared walking and speaking “in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8).

Yet even this is not the full scope of the story.

What follows is more than a biblical narrative linking events across time. It is an invitation to step beyond the limited vantage of the pew and behold the drama from the heavens.

Viewed through a cosmic lens, the enormity of this story comes into focus. It is more than a record of human failure. It is the grand and patient work of God, advancing through rebellion and bloodshed, through exile and empire, until all things are made new. It is within this vast and ancient conflict that humanity has been thrust and where the hope of renewal is forged.

Humanity is not the center of this saga. Neither is the Enemy. Though his schemes and movements are traced with care, this is not his story. The adversary moves but only ever in reaction. He corrupts, but cannot create. He wars, but never governs the outcome.

From beginning to end, this epic is the unfolding revelation of the Son—the image of the invisible God—through whom all things were made and through whom all things will be restored (Col. 1:15–20).

What transpired in the garden was not the genesis of war, but its infiltration of the human realm. Long before humanity was formed from the dust, before blood ever touched the soil, rebellion already sparked in the unseen places of creation. When judgment was pronounced upon the guilty in the garden, a veiled prophecy was spoken—one that set history itself in motion, tracing a bloodstained path through generations, empires, and exile, leading toward Bethlehem.

Toward Christ.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN UNVEILED

Amid the symphony of creation, the biblical narrative presents a grand and deliberate setting. The Creator Himself planted a garden in a place named Eden (Gen. 2:8)—not merely as a showcase of divine creativity, but as a realm ordered for sacred purpose. God fashioned Eden as the place of divine fellowship where He would dwell with His image-bearers.

Eden did not merely stand as a lush sanctuary nestled within the cradle of creation; in the language of ancient cosmology, Eden served as the *axis mundi*—the central axis linking the heavenly realm with the earthly. Thus, Eden functioned as the original temple, the first earthly dwelling place of the Creator.

It was also a mountain.

Genesis signals this reality through geography. A single river is said to flow out of Eden to water the garden, from which it then divides into four headwaters—the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates (Gen. 2:10–14). Rivers do not originate in lowlands; they descend from elevated sources. The imagery presumes height.

Eden did not lie as a sea-level oasis; it rose as an elevated source from which life flowed outward to the earth. This pattern later reappears in Scripture, most notably in Ezekiel’s vision of the river flowing from the temple (Ezek. 47:1–12) and in John’s vision of the river of life issuing from the throne of God (Rev. 22:1–3). Scripture later identifies Eden as “the holy mountain of God” (Ezek. 28:13–14), explicitly uniting garden imagery with sacred elevation.

Throughout the biblical narrative, mountains consistently function as places of divine presence and authority. Sinai trembled as God descended upon it in fire and cloud (Exod. 19:18). Zion is presented as the mountain of the LORD, exalted above all others (Isa. 2:2–3). In the consummation of all things, the New Jerusalem

descends from heaven as a holy mountain-city, once again uniting heaven and earth (Rev. 21:10).²

Therefore, Eden functioned as the prototype. It was the first holy mountain—the pristine sanctuary where God walked in fellowship with humanity (Gen. 3:8). From this elevated sacred space, the Creator commissioned Adam to serve as a priest-king, tasked with guarding and cultivating the garden (Gen. 2:15), and extending God’s ordered rule outward into the surrounding world.

Yet, this holy geography would not remain uncontested. The enemy sought to twist Eden’s purpose into counterfeit forms. The pattern of mimicking Eden while inverting its order, would become a primary tool through which the enemy influenced empires and systems of rebellion. This understanding is not a modern invention. Reflections of garden-temples and cosmic mountains appear throughout Scripture, across ancient Near Eastern cultures, and beyond.³

The inversion of Eden’s design reveals humanity’s fractured memory. Eden does not follow the pattern of the ancient world—it established it. Its blueprint, etched into Scripture as sacred geography, stands as the original against which all later imitations are measured.

A brief word before proceeding: this book is not meant to serve as a full archaeological or historical study of ancient Near Eastern structures. That depth of analysis is best left to those who specialize in it.⁴

² See also, Ararat (renewal; Gen. 8:4), Moriah (temple mount; Gen. 22:2; 2 Chr. 3:1), Hermon (cosmic boundary; Ps. 133:3).

³ On Mesoamerican step-pyramids (e.g., Teotihuacan’s Pyramid of the Sun as solar-cosmic axis with subterranean “rivers”); Andean temple-mountains (e.g., Machu Picchu’s elevated sacred groves); and East Asian pagodas atop peaks symbolizing world-mountain (Meru/Kunlun), see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 36–47.

⁴ On Edenic motifs, cosmic mountains, and ancient Near Eastern (ANE) temple parallels, see John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018); Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (New York: HarperOne, 1987); cf. Judd H. Burton Ph.D., *Interview With The Giant: Ethnohistorical Notes on the Nephilim*, 2nd ed. (Burton Beyond Press, 2016).

COUNTERFEITS

Throughout history, sacred groves, mountaintops, “high places” (*bāmôt*), and elaborate structures were used to host pagan worship and “divine” communion. The ancient Near Eastern mountain and garden-temple motifs—preserved in cuneiform texts, inscriptions, and archaeological remnants from the third to the first millennia BC—bear witness to Eden’s enduring influence. One example to be examined further is the Mesopotamian ziggurat.

A ziggurat was a massive, stepped pyramid structure constructed by several ancient Near Eastern cultures. The chief exemplar is the ziggurat of *Etemenanki* in Babylon (ca. 6th century BC under Nebuchadnezzar II). Its receding platforms evoke an image that can be seen as a monumental “stairway to heaven.”⁵ These structures primarily served as *artificial* cosmic mountains—bridging earthly and divine realms. Ancient texts describe how they replicated the primordial hill of creation.⁶

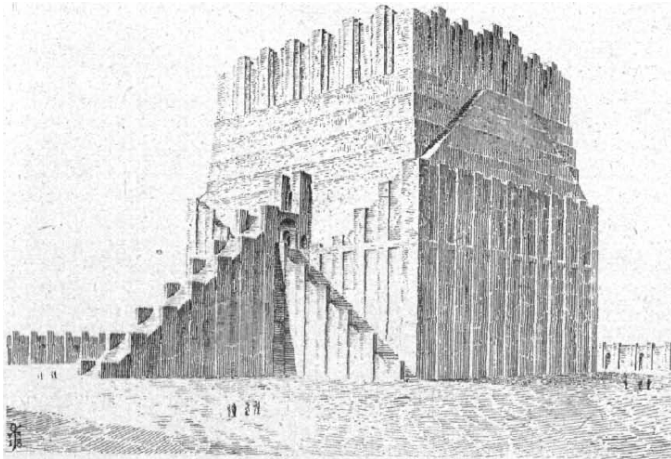


Fig. 1.1—Etemenanki in Babylon (ca. 6th century BC under Nebuchadnezzar II).

⁵ Cf. Gen. 28:12 where “Jacob’s Ladder” echoes this same type of structure and function.

⁶ Tablet VI of the *Enuma Elish* recounts, ziggurats replicated the primordial hill of creation, linking the terrestrial to the celestial.

Builders integrated lush, exotic plant life into these edifices for royal families and the dedicated deity (or deities) to enjoy. These arboreal gardens had sophisticated irrigation systems fed by waters from surrounding rivers—frequently the Euphrates or its canals—sustaining both pragmatic needs and ritual practices.

Typically, at the apex of the structure arose a sacred shrine (*gigunu* or *papahu*) where deities were believed to descend for ritualized *hieros gamos* (holy marriage),⁷ sacrificial offerings, or divine respite. These profane encounters fostered an earthly ambition: men would erect these artificial cosmic mountains so they could ascend and partake in divinity—perhaps even becoming divine themselves. Interestingly, the local king or royal leader was frequently portrayed as both a *gardener-builder* and emissary of the gods.

All of these ancient structures—whether ziggurat, pyramid, or sacred grove—testify to a single obsession shared across cultures: the desire to bridge heaven and earth on human terms. Scripture paints a different picture. Adam **did not** erect Eden to *ascend* to God; rather, the Creator Himself formed Eden to *descend* for fellowship. That distinction is not cosmetic. It governs everything that follows.

The Creator established the means for communion with humanity, but the narrative continues. Once Eden was formed, then came man.

Adam.

⁷ On *hieros gamos* as distorted Edenic communion, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 57–68.

THE IMAGE BEARER

In Hebrew, the term *ʾādām* (rendered “Adam” in English translations) derives from *ʾādāmâ* (ground), linking the creature explicitly to the soil he was tasked to work (Gen. 2:7; cf. 3:17–19).⁸ Yet Genesis 1:26–27 elevates this creature beyond a mere “earth-dweller”: “Let us make man [*ʾādām*] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion...” Here *ʾādām* encompasses male and female together, commissioned collectively for representative rule.⁹ Yet another phrase emerges, linking humanity to the Creator Himself: “in our image.”

The *imago Dei* (Latin: “the image of God”) is not a static quality dwelling in the soul (as some later traditions emphasized) nor merely a capacity for reason or relationship. In the Pentateuch, it is both functional and relational.¹⁰ Humanity was appointed to visibly reflect the Creator’s wise, benevolent kingship over creation. Dominion (Gen. 1:28) was not autonomous tyranny, but the extension of divine order into the world God declared “very good” (1:31). Adam and Eve were to image God by ruling as His viceregents—mediating His presence, enacting His will, and cultivating the harmony of heaven and earth within the garden.

The mandate carried a priestly dimension as well. In Genesis 2:15, YHWH placed the man in the garden “to work it [*ʾabad*] and keep it [*shāmar*].”¹¹ When these verbs appear together elsewhere, they describe the Levites’ guardianship of the sanctuary and its boundaries (Num. 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6). Thus, Adam was the first priest-king: tending sacred space, guarding its holiness, and mediating divine presence to the creation under his care.

⁸ See Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 21 n 7. Alter notes the definite article on אָדָם in Gen. 2:7, marking it as generic “the human” rather than a proper name

⁹ See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §13.5.1

¹⁰ The Pentateuch is the unifying name for the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

¹¹ For *ʾabad* and *shāmar* as priestly service, see G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2004), 66–70.

Adam’s position was unique—neither fully divine nor merely mortal, but bearing the *imago Dei* with delegated authority from heaven’s throne. He ruled in communion with the Creator, commissioned to extend Eden’s sacred order until all creation mirrored the beauty of the garden-temple.

The Creator established sacred space and sacred identity.

An unseen enemy targeted both.

THE DRAGON

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

(Gen. 3:1)

The serpent.

This name, *nāḥāš* (Hebrew—transliterated: *nachash*, “serpent”), is a term pregnant with overtones of function rather than direct ontology.¹² The term *nachash* functions as a descriptive title, identifying role, activity, and disposition rather than anatomy. The traditional medieval view that the *nāḥāš* of Genesis 3 is primarily a zoological species, reads more into the text than Genesis provides. Scripture never demands such a reading.

Consider the semantic range. The root letters *n-h-š* appear elsewhere in Scripture with clear connotations of divination, enchantment, and whispered manipulation. Joseph’s cup is associated

¹² Hebrew נָחָשׁ (*hannāḥāš*, “the serpent”; transliterated *nachash* in scholarly convention). See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Academic, 2010), 638 [hereafter cited a *BDB*]; Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, 2 Volume Set*, vols. 1–2, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2001), 690 [hereafter cited as *HALOT*]; Society of Biblical Literature, *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2014), §5.1.1.

with *nāḥēš*—divination (Gen. 44:5, 15). Balaam declares that there is no *nāḥaš*—no enchantment or whispered curse—against Jacob (Num. 23:23). The term extends well beyond the image of a crawling animal and into the realm of subversive spiritual influence.

Genesis 3 contains no explanatory marker for the serpent’s speech. When Balaam’s donkey spoke, the narrative explicitly notes that “the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey” (Num. 22:28). No such justification appears in Eden. The text does not pause to explain how the *nachash* spoke because the author does not present this encounter as an animal behaving unnaturally, but as a hostile intelligence intruding into sacred space.

The dialogue between the woman and the *nachash* is therefore not casual conversation but ritual subversion—a *leḥaš*, a murmured incantation (cf. Isa. 3:3; Eccl. 10:11). The Creator’s word was not denied outright but reframed, narrowed, bent. Truth was reinterpreted. This became the chief tactic that defined the Dragon’s strategy throughout Scripture.

The *nachash* of Eden is best understood as a rebellious member of the heavenly host operating through deception, exploiting humanity’s vocation by twisting the word of God within the very sanctuary where that word was entrusted.

Later biblical writers identify this figure unambiguously. He is “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:9), a designation that preserves the Edenic imagery without reducing the figure to a mere reptile. The serpent language functions symbolically and polemically, evoking chaos, cunning, and rebellion—traits long associated with divine adversaries in the ancient world.

Still, the narrative begs the question:

Who truly is this enemy?

Who is this “serpent” that dared subvert the instructions of the Creator? Scripture withholds a proper name but offers titles that converge on one primary rebel: The Satan (Heb. *ha-Satan*), Devil, and traditionally, Lucifer (Isa. 14:12; Heb. *Helel ben Shachar*). Following the language of John in the book of Revelation, this work will adopt the title “*the Dragon*.”¹³

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

(Rev. 12:9)

The Dragon is shrouded in mystery. His very presence in the garden-temple of Eden reveals deeper questions of divine sovereignty and cosmic rebellion. The lack of a clear proper name in Scripture suggests that the Creator expunged much of his origins (and identity) from the annals of history due to his apostasy.

While there are many uncertainties surrounding his identity and nature, what is certain is this: the Dragon is a created being and not a rival deity of equal power. He is not omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent. Scripture offers little detail of how the Dragon came to be in his sinful state, but there are hints.

There are several prophetic scenes that appear to identify the Dragon (often equating him with an earthly king or ruler) and recollect the events of his primordial rebellion. These narratives indicate that the Dragon unfurled his wings of pride against the Creator and was cast down in a blaze of fiery defeat (Isa. 14:12–15; cf. Ezek. 28:12–19). Jesus Himself describes witnessing Satan fall “like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). This once-exalted entity in the throne room of the Ancient of Days defected from the kingdom, taking a third of the heavenly host with him in rebellion (Rev. 12:4, 7–9).

¹³ See also, Timothy Alberino, *Birthright: The Coming Posthuman Apocalypse and the Usurpation of Adam’s Dominion on Planet Earth* (Bozeman, MT: Alberino Publishing, 2020), 37–38.

That he is described as *fallen* indicates he was not always in rebellion. He was, at one point, functioning in his correct capacity as a servant of the Most High (cf. Ezek. 28:13–15; Job 1:6–7; 2:1). Prior to his monumental apostasy, the Dragon is presumably described in the book of Ezekiel as “the anointed cherub who covers” (Ezek. 28:14; cf. Exod. 25:18–20). There, he stood in unblemished glory and splendor upon the holy mountain of God, amid blazing stones of fire.¹⁴

As a ceremonial guardian to the throne, he was positioned in perpetual adoration and defense of divine holiness. Likenesses of such heavenly beings are later crafted, at the direction of God Himself, to adorn the top of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25:18–20).

Interestingly, these same beings were replicated throughout ancient Near Eastern cultures and iconography. Egyptian temple reliefs show the winged *uraei*—fiery serpents with apparent solar disks—flanking the pharaohs, guarding them against chaos. Assyrian palace gates feature colossal *lamassu* with similar serpentine features that would shield sacred spaces.



Fig. 1.2—Egyptian *uraei*

¹⁴ Hebrew בֹּרֵךְ־תָּא תְּשַׁמֵּם בֹּרֵךְ־תָּא (‘*att-kerûb mîmšāḥ hassōkēk*), literally “you [were] the cherub of the anointing/extending [one], the one who covers,” traditionally rendered “the anointed cherub who covers” (NASB, ESV, NRSV mg, NIV); cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, 603, 697; Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, vols. 1–2, 2:587, 745.

Some interpretations view the Dragon as the leader of celestial worship among all the heavenly host, and perhaps the primary voice of praise among the morning stars during the creation of the cosmos (Job 38:7). Regardless of the extent of his role and function, he was cast out because of his corruption.

While Scripture does not specify the timing of his fall, the narrative sequence suggests he was already in rebellion by the time he approached Eve in the garden. The voice and skills once used for glorifying the Creator turned toward dark divinations—whispered in the ears of men on earth and, as later chapters will explore, potentially other heavenly beings.

His banishment to earth appears to have fueled his hatred for the Creator. His actions revealed a creature consumed by rage. He saw Adam as a rival image-bearer and launched his first sabotage. His lies sought to corrupt the very nature and identity the Creator gave Adam by invoking a heavenly term:

elohim.

THE PROMISE OF DIVINITY

Unlike the ancient Near Eastern viceroy “gardeners” who erected garden-temples to claim divinity, Adam—the first priest-king—was *placed* in the garden-temple to “work and keep it.” The Dragon attacked this very identity and vocation by the cunning inversion of the Creator’s original instruction:

“For God [**Heb. *elohim***] knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God [**Heb. *elohim***], knowing good and evil.”

(Gen. 3:5; emphasis added)

The serpent’s promise was calculated: he did not say “you will be like YHWH”—that would have been transparently absurd. Instead, he used the plural-capable term *elohim*, suggesting Adam and Eve could

ascend to the status of heavenly beings with knowledge and authority beyond their created station.

This deception blurred the line between YHWH and lesser celestial beings. While *elohim* most frequently refers to the one true LORD God (Deut. 6:4), the term itself is grammatically plural and scripturally flexible—encompassing a spectrum of heavenly beings who exist under YHWH’s unchallenged supremacy.¹⁵

The term *elohim* appears throughout Scripture with a range of meanings:

1. **YHWH Elohim:** “LORD God”—The uncreated Creator who is “species unique” in ontology—eternal and alone supreme (Gen. 2:4; Exod. 3:14).
2. **Bene Elohim:** “Sons of God”—Created celestial attendants, loyal or apostate (Job 1:6; Gen. 6:2; Deut. 32:8–9 LXX/DSS).¹⁶
3. **The Divine Council:** The corrupt “gods” doomed to “die as men” (Ps. 82:1, 6–7).
4. **Human Proxies:** Judges embodying divine authority (Exod. 21:6).¹⁷

This spectrum is not theological confusion—it is precise terminology for a populated spiritual realm. *Elohim* functions as a term of residence (the heavens) rather than rank (divine supremacy). YHWH dwells among *elohim*, but He alone is uncreated, unrivaled,

¹⁵ On the plural of majesty (or intensification) for אֱלֹהִים, see H. F. W. Gesenius, J. Euting, and M. Lidzbarski, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), §124d–e (with §124g).

¹⁶ DSS (4QDeutj) and LXX preserve bene elohim; Masoretic “sons of Israel” likely harmonizes post-exile. Cf. Emanuel Tov, trans., *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition, Revised and Expanded* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 248–49.

¹⁷ The term אֱלֹהִים in Exod. 21:6 (and 22:7–8) is widely understood as referring to human judges functioning as God’s representatives; see Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 47–48; William H. Propp, *Exodus 19–40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by William H.C. Propp* (New York: Anchor Bible, 2006), 204–5; Dr Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), see excursus on “God and the Gods”.

and supreme. The Dragon exploited this flexibility. When he promised “you will be like *elohim*” (Gen. 3:5), he was not offering equality with the Creator but dangling the prospect of ascending to a status reserved for celestial beings, not for humanity. The lie was not that *elohim* exist; the lie was that humanity could become them by seizing forbidden knowledge.

The concept of a plurality of celestial beings under a supreme deity is not borrowed from ancient Near Eastern mythology. Rather, Scripture presents the original reality that pagan cultures later distorted. Eden was the true cosmic mountain where YHWH convened with His heavenly host.¹⁸ The polytheistic pantheons of surrounding nations are corrupted echoes of this truth.¹⁹

This pattern appears across ancient Near Eastern cultures, but twisted: Mesopotamia’s *Anunnaki* assembly contesting in *Atrahasis*, Canaan’s 70 “sons of El” (*bn il*) violently allotting domains in the presence of the storm-god Baal (KTU 1.2.I).²⁰ These mythological “gods” battle for thrones, produce mutinous offspring, and barter for domains—a chaotic parody of YHWH’s ordered divine council.

Yet these “gods” were not merely mythological inventions. They are real rebellious *elohim* who defected and received worship under false names. The mythologies are saturated with falsehood and propaganda, but Scripture treats the beings themselves as real (Ps. 82:1; Deut. 32:8–9), rebellious, and destined for judgment.²¹

If this hierarchy is misunderstood, everything that follows will fracture. The biblical writers were not blurring God into a pantheon. They were doing the opposite—drawing sharp boundaries within a populated spiritual realm.

¹⁸ Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 1972), 98–160

¹⁹ Beale and Carson, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 68–80.

²⁰ *Atrahasis* I.1–40 (Old Babylonian version); translation in Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, Md: CDL Press, 2005), 227–28. For Ugaritic, see Mark Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Introduction With Text, Translation and Commentary of Ktu 1.1.-1.2* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 2009), 225–30.

²¹ This concept is explored further in chapters 4–6, 8, and 11.

YHWH alone is uncreated.

All other *elohim*—even rebellious ones—are creatures.

This distinction is not a footnote. It is the axis on which the Dragon’s deception turned. He promised Eve divine status, but not divine nature. He offered a category she could never truly enter. Yet, he did so while omitting the most crucial clarifier needed for any *elohim*: the Name—**YHWH**.

YHWH

The biblical writers wield *elohim* with multiple meanings to depict a heavenly hierarchy, yet YHWH’s name marks Him as “species unique.”²² This distinction is not incidental—it is the hinge on which all theology turns.

The compound title “**YHWH Elohim**,” appearing 20 times in Genesis 2–3, functions as a deliberate rhetorical hammer forging YHWH’s unique ontological subsistence.²³ Each occurrence insists: YHWH is *elohim*, but not merely *an* *elohim*. He is the eternal “**I AM**” (Exod. 3:14)—self-existent, uncreated, owing His being to no one.²⁴

Every other *elohim* exists because YHWH spoke them into being. Angels, cherubim, even the Dragon—all are contingent creatures who derive their existence from Him. YHWH alone is absolute, eternal, independent. When the serpent promised “you will be like *elohim*,” he exploited the term’s flexibility while carefully avoiding the one Name that would have exposed his lie: **YHWH**. That Name meant uncreated being—an impossibility for any creature.

²² Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 42, 49.

²³ The combination מִיְהוָה הֵיחָדָשׁ (twenty times in Gen. 2–3) deliberately joins Israel’s covenant name with the generic “gods” term to assert YHWH’s incomparable ontological uniqueness; see Heiser, 49–50; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker Publishing Group, 1997), 112–13; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 1992), 82–84.

²⁴ The *’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh* revelation (Exod. 3:14) is widely understood as an affirmation of self-existence denied to all lesser *elohim* (cf. Isa. 43:10; 44:6; John 8:58). See also, Chapter 8, *The Name* for further examination.

THE FALL

Before proceeding, an important note on human agency: we are *not* puppets of the Dragon or YHWH. While I hold steadfast to God's sovereignty in all things, human agency is still a reality that must be wrestled with. I do not seek to plumb the depths of free will and divine omnipotence here, but it must be understood that while the Dragon tempts and seduces, he cannot compel sin.²⁵ The temptation in the garden unfolded through deception, not compulsion.

There, in the beauty of the garden, Adam and Eve were presented with two distinct scenarios. First: the Creator—YHWH—was a liar. The Dragon questioned if they could eat the fruit (Gen. 3:1), and that YHWH would punish them (Gen. 3:4). Second: YHWH was withholding something from them. There was hidden knowledge they did not have, and with this knowledge they could become ... *more*—no longer *'ādām* (man/human), but rather *elohim* (god). The Dragon dangled this false elevation to *elohim* rank, like his own, while subtly obscuring YHWH's singularity. The Dragon replicated his own rebellion by enticing *'ādām* to attempt forbidden elevation.

He succeeded.

The text records the moment with devastating simplicity:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

(Gen. 3:6)

Adam and Eve surrendered to the temptation and chose to trade their *'ādām* (humanity) in hopes of reaching *elohim* (god) status. The fruit was taken, and sin entered the sacred space of Eden. This

²⁵ Augustine, *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5.10. Quoted in Latin: "*Diabolus enim suggerit, non necessitat et ideo non peccatur nisi volendo*"—"The devil suggests, but does not necessitate; therefore sin occurs only by willing."

rebellion, which breached the covenant between YHWH and Adam, was not a mere isolated folly. With the consumption of the forbidden fruit, the corruption of the human species was triggered.

It was both physical and spiritual (Rom. 5:12–13). Mortality loomed (Gen. 3:19) as their bodies began to break down. Birthing pains increased, hard labor was imposed, and the ground itself was cursed (Gen. 3:16–18). Yet, more devastatingly, the sacred, holy communion man had with YHWH was now severed. Adam—and all humanity after him—could no longer dwell in harmony with the Creator.

The image-bearers abdicated their royal position. Their allegiance shifted, although momentarily, to another. Adam's failure to guard Eden would echo across the ages: at Sinai, in the conquest of Canaan, through apostate kings who abandoned their calling. The pattern was established in the garden, and it would repeat until Another came—the True Image Bearer, the faithful Guardian—to reverse what the first Adam failed to do.

Yet, YHWH's sovereignty endured. He descended upon the cosmic mountain of Eden and walked through the garden and found the priest-king in his guilt (Gen. 3:8). The Creator came, not for divine fellowship, but rather divine judgment. A proverbial thick cloud of darkness spread over Eden, yet a promise of redemption would spark a glimmer of hope (Gen. 3:15).

The *protoevangelium* ignited.

THE PROTOEVANGELIUM

Eden, once the temple-garden of unmarred fellowship with the Creator, now served as an open-air tribunal. If Ezekiel's vision is any guide (Ezek. 31:3–18), the trees themselves may represent the silent witnesses—members of YHWH's divine council (Ps. 82:1; Job 1:6) observing judgment pronounced. The forbidden fruit was taken. Justice was now required for all guilty parties: Adam, Eve, and the serpent. In the cool of the day, the Sovereign Judge spoke (Gen. 3:8). The judicial declaration in Genesis 3:14 stands as the pivotal turn, not only in the Eden narrative, but for all of humanity moving forward.

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.”

(Gen. 3:14)

The Creator presents Himself in a new way; not merely as sovereign but as the singular Judge, pronouncing His sentence with the weight of eternity. The text deliberately layers His identity: “The **LORD** God said to the serpent...” (Gen. 3:14; emphasis added). Here, LORD (*YHWH*) fused with the plural-yet-singular God (*elohim*). This signals a profound distinction from the Dragon's earlier deception.

The divine combination of names, **YHWH Elohim**, does more than establish the protoevangelium's cosmic authority; it ensures its eternal outcome. The consummation of this curse of enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the usurping *elohim* (the Dragon) is guaranteed by YHWH Himself. Eden's courtroom, therefore, reveals the Creator not as a *primus inter pares* (first among equals), but as the unoriginated Judge. The judgment handed down was severe and long-reaching, yet amid the curses, a prophecy emerged.

The *protoevangelium*: the first, primal gospel decree.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

(Gen. 3:15 NKJV)²⁶

This prophecy was crafted with deliberate ambiguity to shroud its messianic fulfillment. This decree established the ancient enmity between the serpent and the woman that extended between the seed of the serpent and the *Seed* of the woman: a singular “*He*” from her line who will crush the serpent’s head while enduring a heel strike. No chronology was given, no lineage was foretold, only the inexorable promise. The promise that heralded the Coming One, the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8), whose triumph, though wound-bearing, will shatter the Dragon and his children.

Upon the proclamation of this oracle, the ancient wars were rekindled from the ashes of the rebellion ages before. The Dragon, understanding his fate but blinded to its hour, launched an unrelenting assault on the woman’s Seed. With each generation in Eve’s lineage came the threat of the Promised One. For the Dragon, this enmity gave birth to a shadowed conspiracy to stop the fulfillment of the prophecy. For YHWH, it initiated a redemptive war that threads through history toward His greatest mystery that was hidden for ages.

Immanuel.

²⁶ The NKJV is used here for its handling of the word Seed in treating it as a proper noun for the coming Christ.

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

The weight of this episode deepens immeasurably when we examine more closely and recognize the Judge Himself. The Creator, YHWH, who walked in the garden (Gen. 3:8), who called to the man, who interrogated, cursed, and prophesied, appeared here in visible, anthropomorphic form. While some interpreters understand “the LORD God” in Gen. 3:8 as God the Father, the consistent Old Testament pattern of the visible YHWH as the pre-incarnate Son (cf. John 1:18; 8:58; the Angel of the LORD tradition) supports reading this as a *Christophany*.

Scripture repeatedly unveils such occurrences: the Angel of YHWH who is YHWH (Exod. 3:2–6; Judg. 13:18–22), the Commander of the Lord’s army (Josh. 5:13–15), the Word who was with God and was God (John 1:1), now in Eden’s cool shadows confronting the Dragon face to face.²⁷ When the Creator called out to the man (Gen. 3:9), and when the judgment itself was handed down, it was no distant decree from a body-less voice in the heavens, but the pre-incarnate Christ Himself, the second Person of the Trinity, stepping into His creation to render judgment and offer the promise of redemption.

Early church fathers like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus saw these theophanies as *Christophanies*, the Son revealing the Father through His own presence.²⁸ The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians seals this: “*He is the image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15), the one through whom “*all things were created*” (Col. 1:16) and in whom “*the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*” (Col. 1:19). If the Son is the visible YHWH of the Old Testament, then the voice cursing the serpent and promising the Seed is none other than the coming Seed Himself. Christ pronounced victory over the Dragon before the war had even fully begun.

²⁷ For extended treatment of the Angel of YHWH as the preincarnate Christ, especially on Edenic theophanies, see Douglas Van Dorn and Matt Foreman, *The Angel of the LORD: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Dacono, Colorado: Waters of Creation Publishing, 2020), chaps. 3–4.

²⁸ See A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vols. 1–10, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pub, 2012), Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 59–60, 227–28; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.6.1, 418.

The protoevangelium is not merely a divine oracle; it is the Judge's self-guarantee, spoken from the mercy seat in the temple-garden, that He will one day fulfill the prophecy. It is the sealed death warrant for the Dragon and a declaration of war on all who come from and follow him. From this moment, the Dragon wages a shadowed crusade of malevolence and murder. He prowls Eve's line like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8), hunting for his first victim, who is mistaken for the promised Seed.

The Dragon's fate is doomed.

The Seed's triumph is secured.