

GENESIS

TITLE

The Hebrew title for this book is בְּרֵאשִׁית (bereshit).¹ This comes from the first Hebrew word of the first sentence. This follows the ancient near eastern practice of assigning a book's name by its first word(s).² The literal translation is "in the beginning." This is an appropriate title since the book of Genesis is the story of beginnings. The English title "Genesis" is a transliteration of the Latin Vulgate's title. The word genesis has the idea of origins or source. This is fitting since the book of Genesis records the beginning or source of the heavens, the earth, humanity, and the nation of Israel. It is significant to note that absent from this list of beginnings is God. God is eternal and has no beginning.³ As Wenham points out concerning the focus of its contents, "the focus narrows progressively throughout the book."⁴ Genesis begins by recording the creation of the world and all its inhabitants (Gen. 1-2), then restricts its attention to humanity (Gen. 3-11), followed by attention given to Abraham (Gen. 12-23), Abraham's descendants (Gen. 24-26), and finally to one of Abraham's descendants, Jacob, and his line (Gen. 27-50).

¹ The introductory information (title, author, recipients, date and place, purpose, message, theological themes, and archaeology) are used with permission from Paul D Weaver's, *Introducing the Old Testament Books*, 2015. Dr. Weaver is the Academic Dean of the Word of Life Bible Institute.

² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 17.

³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 2.

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), xxi.

AUTHOR

Conservative scholars recognize the author of Genesis, along with the rest of the Pentateuch, to be Moses. Internal (evidence found within the book itself) and external witnesses (evidence found outside the Bible: archaeological discoveries, ancient manuscripts, the writings of church fathers, etc.) affirm this. (1) The Talmud, which contains the earliest tradition of the Jewish people, identifies Moses as its author. (2) Religious Jews during the era of the apostles also held to Mosaic authorship (Acts 15:1).⁵ (3) Jesus and New Testament authors acknowledged Moses to have written the first five books of the Old Testament (Mt. 19:3-12; Lk. 24:27; John 7:22-23). (4) Moses also includes internal clues that the book of Exodus was written by him (Ex. 15:1; 17:14; 24:4; 34:27), and the close connection between the book of Genesis and Exodus is further proof of Mosaic authorship of the book of beginnings.

Moses was raised in the king's court (Ex. 2:10), as a child of the Pharaoh's daughter (Acts 7:21). He had the best education available (Acts 7:22), in contrast, the Hebrew people were slaves and mostly uneducated and probably illiterate. Moses was well suited to record the historical events found within the pages of the book of Genesis. He was an eyewitness and principle character in the events of the other four books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), but was not present during the events of Genesis. He would have depended on sources available to him in written (i.e. genealogies; Gen. 5:1; 10:1; 25:19) and oral forms. This is no surprise since, "The great events of ancient times would certainly have been recalled, recited, and transmitted orally from one generation to the

⁵ The Talmud and the views of the Jews referenced in Acts 15:1 represent the widely accepted teaching of practicing Jews, Moses wrote all of the first five books of the Law.

next. Moses would have had access to this rich legacy. As for documents, many conservative scholars believe that the term “generations” found at a number of critical junctures in Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2), refers to documents, that is, written texts preserved from earlier times.”⁶

In addition to these sources, it must not be forgotten that God revealed Himself **directly** to Moses over a 40 day period on Mount Sinai. During this long period of time, it is reasonable to believe that much of what Moses recorded was given to him directly by God (cf. Ex. 34:28). Archer rightly concludes concerning the Pentateuch, “Mosaic authorship is the one theory which best accords with the surviving historical data.”⁷

DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

Wellhausen, building upon the views of his predecessors and contemporaries, popularized a modern and critical view of the Bible which rejected the internal and external evidence provided above. Instead Wellhausen argued for a developmental view of the Pentateuch often referred to as the J,E,D,P Documentary Theory. He and those following his school of thought contend that the Pentateuch is the product of several writers (none of which are Moses) who wrote, edited, revised, and changed portions which eventually formed the Torah. The J stands for the Jehovists editors, E for the Elohim document, D for the Deuteronomic document, and P for the Priestly Code.

⁶ Charles Dyer and Eugene Merrill, *Nelson’s Old Testament Survey: Discovering the Essence, Background & Meaning About Every Old Testament Book* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1.

⁷ Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 117.

Wellenhausen's critical studies of Scripture were based upon a philosophical presumption of an evolutionary process of religious development similar to Darwin's evolutionary thinking regarding Biology.⁸ Wellenhausen assumed Judaism began as animism (the worship of many gods and spirits), then developed into monotheism which at first only required patriarchal led worship. He believes it grew into a more complex liturgical system. This developed system required priests and a priestly code.

A second presupposition that Wellenhausen and his followers adhered to, was the denial of the supernatural. They lived during the Enlightenment era, and were enlightenment thinkers. Some of the theories of Wellenhausen were proven false by archaeological discoveries, yet he was unwilling to revise his views in light of new discoveries.⁹ Archer correctly recognizes, "There is so much of special pleading, circular reasoning, questionable deductions from unsubstantiated premises, that it is absolutely certain that its methodology would never stand up in a court of law."¹⁰ Dyer's conclusion concerning the Synoptic Problem of the New Testament is also relevant here concerning the J,E,D,P hypothetical sources, "A theory that rests on such extensive invisible evidence should immediately be suspect."¹¹ The Wellenhausen School is still held today by liberal sceptics who are not willing to consider Mosaic authorship, primarily due to their

⁸ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 506.

⁹ Wellenhausen dogmatically stated that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing had not been invented until the time of David. This and other contentions were decisively proven to be a fallacy based upon the archaeological discoveries of ancient early writings: the Rosetta Stone, Behistun Inscription, Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, and the Moabite Stone.

¹⁰ Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 116.

¹¹ Charles Dyer, "Do the Synoptics Depend on Each Other?" in *Vital New Testament Issues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 22.

anti-supernatural convictions and despite the fact that Mosaic authorship has both internal and external evidence on its side. No other view can satisfactorily answer the available data.¹²

RECIPIENTS

Moses recorded the book of beginnings for the Hebrew people who went down to Egypt as a family but exited Egypt as a nation. While intended specifically for the Jewish nation, it certainly was in the mind of God a provision for His children, from the time of Moses until the return of the Lord. It provides answers to many questions of origins (origin of: the earth, creatures, people, nations, and Israel).

DATE AND PLACE

Since Moses is the author of Genesis as well as the remainder of the Pentateuch, these books must have been written prior to 1406 BC, when it is believed that Moses died. Moses lived 120 years (Deut. 34:7). The first 40 years he lived in Egypt (Acts 7:22-23), the last 40 years he was in the wilderness with the Hebrews (Deut. 8:2), leaving approximately 40 years that he lived while in Midian (Ex. 2:15). It is reasonable to believe that Moses recorded the book of Genesis while on Mount Sinai or shortly thereafter. This would have occurred soon after God revealed this information to him. This places the date of writing just after the Exodus from Egypt, which occurred in 1446 BC.

¹² For a clear and concise description of the Documentary Theory and its fallacies, see Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 113-116. For an even more thorough development see Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 516-531.

PURPOSE

Moses records for the people of Israel their history. He describes the origin, purpose, and destiny of the people of Israel according to God's plan. They must have wondered why humanity was created, why Abraham was called out, why they were chosen as a "peculiar" people, (Ex. 19:5), and why they can be certain that God will remain steadfastly loyal to the covenant that He made with their father Abraham (Gen. 12, 15). By recounting the history of God's interactions with man, specifically with Abraham and his descendants, it becomes clear that God has chosen their nation for a purpose, to establish a kingdom on Earth through his "Image-bearers" (Gen. 1:27-28).

MESSAGE

Yahweh is a creator-God and a purposeful God. He has a plan and purpose for creating mankind, to rule and reign on the earth as His image-bearers (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Although this plan was temporarily interrupted because of man's failure and the effects of sin on the world, God will ultimately accomplish His purpose and plan for mankind generally, and the descendants of Abraham specifically (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:1-21). This will involve electing a nation (Israel) as a kingdom of priests, and sending a Messiah who will redeem mankind and reverse the effects of the fall (Gen. 3:15).

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

The Theocratic Kingdom

Understanding the concept of God’s theocratic kingdom is one that is of utmost importance in order to have a clear view of the whole of Scripture. It is also a concept that starts from the very beginning. The book of Genesis records God’s stated purpose and plan for human history. Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records God’s purpose for humanity (Gen. 1:27-28). Humans are the only created beings that God says were created “in His image.” It is even more accurate to translate the Hebrew phrase “as the image” of God, rather than “in the image.”¹³ “As the image of God” includes not only form but also function. Humanity is not only like God in our attributes/form (able to reason, able to love, able to be creative, etc.), but also like God in our function (to rule). As Merrill states, “Just as images or statues represented deities and kings in the ancient Near East, so much so that they were virtually interchangeable, so man as the image of God was created to represent God Himself as the sovereign over all creation.”¹⁴ From the very beginning, Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to rule over the animals and to subdue the earth (1:26-28). As God’s image-bearers, man was created by God to rule in His stead. This was the beginning of a theocratic kingdom, God ruling through His image-bearers. As Merrill states, “Eden then became the microcosmic expression for kingdom territory, the place where God dwelt on earth in a unique way and where He had fellowship with His image, His vice-regent.”¹⁵ God created man with this intended purpose, to rule as His image-bearers on earth.

¹³ Eugene Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 28.

The purpose of God for humanity was temporarily thwarted by the fall, thus requiring the redemption of mankind. Redemption therefore, although extremely important, is not the end-all. Redemption (of mankind as well as the created order) is necessary to fulfill God's stated purpose for humanity, for us to rule as His image-bearers on earth.¹⁶ The purpose of God for humanity will finally be realized when man rules and reigns with Christ in the coming theocratic kingdom on earth, often referred to as the millennial kingdom (cf. Rev. 5:10; 20:1-6; Rom. 8:16-17; 2 Tim. 2:12). During the millennial kingdom, not only will man be redeemed, but the created order will also be restored. The wolf will lie down with the lamb (Isa. 11:6; 65:25). Children will play with snakes and not be bitten (Isa. 11:8). People will again live long lives (Isa. 65:20; Zech. 8:4), and animals, fruits, and vegetation will be in an abundance (Ezek. 47:8-12).

Redemption of Man

Soon after the fall and the consequences of sin entered into the world (death, pain, suffering, thorns, etc.), God announced His plan to redeem mankind. Theologians refer to this as the proto-evangelium (Gen. 3:15), which means, the first gospel. It is here that God promises that one will come from the seed of woman who will be in opposition to the serpent

¹⁶ Covenant Theologians argue that in eternity past, God the Father made a covenant with God the Son to bring about the redemption of "the elect." Many of them contend that this is God's main purpose for human history. They often point to Exodus 19 as their biblical rationale. However, Exodus 19 is not God's stated purpose for all of humanity, but instead it identifies the function of the nation of Israel. The view that the purpose of God for human history is the salvation of the elect, is not broad enough to include the commands of Genesis 1:27-28, to subdue the earth and rule over it, since this command preceded the fall. You do not need salvation if you do not have sin. Therefore, the purpose of God for human history must precede the fall. The purpose of God for human history is to establish His theocratic kingdom on earth, using man to rule in His stead, which requires redeeming mankind.

(Satan). While the serpent will strike the seed of the woman's heel, the seed of woman will crush the serpent's head. This is a Messianic prophecy speaking of the coming of Jesus Christ who will die (the striking of the serpent), but who will redeem man from the curse of the fall (a devastating blow to the serpent's head). The rest of Scripture includes this narrative, God has a plan to redeem mankind, and Satan seeks (unsuccessfully) to thwart that plan.

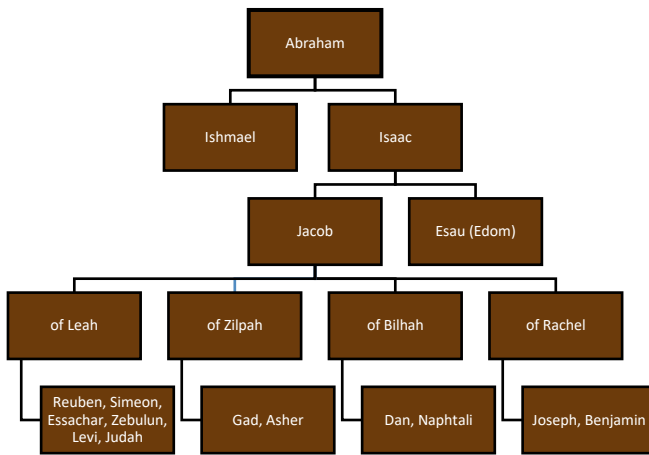
The Abrahamic Covenant

The plan of God becomes clear as God elects Abram (later renamed Abraham) to form a nation through which the nations of the earth will be blessed. God's plan has always been universal, but His means to bring it about is through a specific nation, the nation which would come from the descendants of Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him three things: (1) a land, (2) a seed, and (3) a blessing. These three promises will be found throughout the rest of Scripture as God's plan to establish His theocratic kingdom unfolds.¹⁷

A Land

Abraham was told to leave his home and his family to go to a land that God had promised to him (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:18). This land would be "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." The land

¹⁷ It is important to realize that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional. As Enns rightly argues, "There are no conditions attached to the covenants and as such they unequivocally promise Israel a future land, a Messianic rule, and spiritual blessings. (1) The Abrahamic covenant. Described in Genesis 12:1–3, the Abrahamic covenant promised a *land* (v.1; cf. 13:14–17; further developed in the Palestinian covenant); numerous *descendants* involving a nation, dynasty, and a throne (v. 2; cf. 13:16; 17:2–6; further developed in the Davidic covenant); and *redemption* (v. 3; cf. 22:18; further developed in the New Covenant). Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 390.



promise was never fully possessed and God’s theocratic kingdom was never established; therefore, “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:8-9). As Waltke states, “This land promise is fulfilled progressively several times but never consummated. God initially fulfills the promise through Joshua (Josh. 21:43-45), but not completely (Josh. 13:1-7); through David and Solomon (1 Kings 4:20-25; Neh. 9:8), but still not completely (see Ps. 95:11; Heb. 4:6-8; 11:39-40).¹⁸

Seed

God makes a promise to Abraham, while he was still without children, and when his wife was barren, to make a great nation from his descendants. They would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore (Gen. 12:2; 15:5). From Abraham’s grandson Esau, would come the nation of Edom, and from his grandson Jacob, would come the nation of Israel.

In His sovereign plan, God chooses to use one from the seed of the woman, to redeem man (Gen. 3:15). The book of Genesis includes the history of that line from which the Messiah will come, the line of Abraham through Judah. Satan sought to destroy this line in the book of Genesis on

¹⁸ Waltke, Bruce K. *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 48-49.

numerous occasions (Cain killing Abel, the corruption of mankind which necessitated the flood, the famine in the land, the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, etc.).

However, God preserved a line from which the Messiah would come and through whom the nations would be blessed. This aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, the seed, will be expanded further in what is called the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chr. 17), when God promises that a descendant of David’s will rule forever.¹⁹ Due to the extreme importance of this promised seed, Genesis records the genealogy from which the seed/Messiah would come (see below).²⁰

Name	Years Lived	Biblical Reference
Adam	930	Gen. 5:3-5
Seth	912	Gen. 5:6-8
Enosh	905	Gen. 5 :9-11
Kenan	910	Gen. 5:12-14
Mahalalel	895	Gen. 5:15-17
Jared	962	Gen. 5:18-20
Enoch	365	Gen. 5:21-24
Methuselah	969	Gen. 5:25-27
Lamech	777	Gen. 5:28-31
Noah	950	Gen. 7:11; 9:29
Shem	600	Gen. 11:10-11

¹⁹ This of course will be fulfilled when Christ rules on the throne of David from the city of Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom.

²⁰ The name assigned to those who believe that the creation account of the book of Genesis involves six literal days of creation (like this author) are called “young earth” creationists. Some young earth creationists accept the genealogy of Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 as complete, while others believe there are gaps within the genealogical record. Those who see no gap in the genealogical data date the creation account to around 4,000 BC. This is able to be established based upon the genealogical records in Genesis as well as other fixed dates from Scripture. See Eugene H. Merrill, “Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (July-September, 1980): 241-251. Those who hold to some intended gaps by the author in the genealogical record but still believe in six literal days of creation date creation as late as 10,000 BC. See <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/adam-and-eve/creation-date-of-adam-from-young-earth-creationism-perspective/> (accessed, 6/26/2015).

Name	Years Lived	Biblical Reference
Arpachshad	438	Gen. 11:12-13
Shelah	433	Gen. 11:14-15
Eber	464	Gen. 11:16-17
Peleg	239	Gen. 11:18-19
Reu	239	Gen. 11:20-21
Serug	230	Gen. 11:22-23
Nahor	148	Gen. 11:24-25
Terah	205	Gen. 11:26-32
Abraham	175	Gen. 25:7-8
Isaac	180	Gen. 35:28-29
Jacob	147	Gen. 47:28; 49:33

A Blessing

God promises to bless those who bless Abraham and to curse those who curse him (Gen. 12:3a).²¹ God also promises to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:3b). This certainly includes the coming of the Messiah who will appease the wrath of God and provide atonement for sin. It also entails the function of Israel as a kingdom of priests who will be the agency by which God will reconcile the world to Himself.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND GENESIS

Enuma Elish

The Enuma Elish is a Babylonian Assyrian creation account which was discovered in several different locations including: Ashur, Kish, Sultantepe, and Ninevah.²² This mythological account of creation receives its name from

²¹ The abundance of the household of Potiphar when Joseph was in charge is an example of this blessing (Gen. 39:5), and the plagues upon Pharaoh when he took Sarah into his household is an example of the cursing (Gen. 12:17).

²² <http://www.ancient.eu.com/article/225/>. (accessed, 1/20/2014).

the first phrase found in it, translated “when on high.”²³ It is one of the oldest discovered creation accounts.

It is not surprising to find creation accounts in other ancient civilizations because all people want to answer the key questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? Since the culture of the Israelites is similar to other ancient civilizations we should not be surprised to see similarities in accounts. When we see similarities there are three possibilities: 1) one is mocking the other, 2) one is copying the other, or 3) they have common cultural traits.²⁴

There are some similarities;²⁵ however, there are far more dissimilarities. The most striking difference is the character of the creator God/gods. The gods of Enuma Elish are angry, fighting, power-hungry gods and the God of Genesis is a personal loving God. The gods of Enuma Elish act like childish human beings. They are depicted in the image of man. The God of Genesis transcends man, not brought down to the level of man.

The Nuzi and Mari Tablets

Over time writings and artifacts decompose and with them clues to history and culture. However, despite this limitation, in the past sixty years a plethora of archaeological artifacts have been discovered. While artifacts may not “prove” the narratives of the Old Testament, they do provide a lot of information that helps to better understand the manners and customs of

²³ Alfred Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 186.

²⁴ <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/02/19/Correlating-the-Texts-of-Ancient-Literature-with-the-Old-Testament.aspx>. (accessed, 1/20/2014).

²⁵ In the Genesis account there are six days of creation, in the Babylonian account there are six generations of gods. Both accounts begin with a watery “chaos.” Both accounts finish with God or the gods resting. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 187.

the given period.²⁶ The Nuzi tablets and the Mari archive are two such discoveries.



Pictured above are three of the Nuzi tablets (located in the Semitic Museum, Harvard). The Nuzi tablets were discovered close to Kirkuk, Iraq. Here 5,000 archives that span six generations were uncovered.²⁷ Some of the inscribed customs which are especially enlightening to the stories surrounding Abraham and Sarah are: adoption, inheritance rights, marriage arrangements, household gods, and adoption of wives as sisters.²⁸ Unger lists several of these guidelines:

- A childless couple frequently adopted a free born person or slave to look after them when they were old, bury them, and inherit their possessions.
- If someone who has adopted a child should have a son later, the birth son would become the heir.
- If a wife is barren, she must provide her husband with a slave-wife.

²⁶ Merrill F. Unger, “Archaeology and the Age of Abraham” in *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume unknown, 299.

²⁷ Bryant G. Wood, “Great Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology: The Nuzi Tablets,” <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2006/02/Great-Discoveries-in-Biblical-Archaeology-The-Nuzi-Tablets.aspx>, (accessed, 1/22/2014).

²⁸ Ibid.

- One was forbidden to cast out the second wife, should the formerly barren wife have a child latter.
- Possession of household gods meant leadership of the family.²⁹



Picture by M0tty/Wikimedia Commons/
Courtesy of Louvre Museum

The Mari texts (one is pictured above) are named after the ancient city in which they were discovered in northern Syria. They contained an archive of 15,000 texts which included legal documents, letters, treaties, as well as other literary and religious writings.³⁰ Here such customs were listed that also shed light on the patriarchal period:

- Slaughtering of animals for covenants
- Adoption practices
- Inheritance practices
- List of gods which are named in the Hebrew Scripture
- Cities mentioned in the Bible are also referenced (Nahur, Haran, Hazor, Laish)³¹

None of these discoveries controvert the biblical accounts of the patriarchs. In fact, they support and shed light on these narratives and are

²⁹ Unger, “Archaeology and the Age of Abraham,” 300-302.

³⁰ Bryant G. Wood, “Great Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology: The Mari Archive,” <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2006/02/06/Great-Discoveries-in-Biblical-Archaeology-The-Mari-Archive.aspx>, (accessed, 1/22/2014).

³¹ Ibid.

helpful to the modern preacher and teacher as they seek to bring the ancient text alive to a contemporary audience.

The Ebla Tablets and the Cities of the Plain



Atlastours/Wikimedia Commons

The Ebla tablets were discovered at the Tell Mardikh in what was the ancient city of Eblah, Syria. These tablets date to ca. 2500 BC. These tablets are housed in the Syrian museums of [Aleppo](#), [Damascus](#), and [Idlib](#).

Critics of the Bible have denied the historicity of the cities of the Plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar) and the victory of Abraham over the kings of the five cities. The Ebla archives supports the biblical account by referencing all five cities, affirming their historicity. What is even more interesting, one tablet lists all five cities in the exact same sequence that they are found in Genesis 14. The other historical information found in these tablets is also consistent with the Genesis record.

OUTLINE OF GENESIS 1-11

- I. Creation (1:1-2:25)³²
 - A. The Days of Creation (1:1-31)
 - 1. Day One: heaven, earth, light, and darkness (1:1-5)
 - 2. Day Two: separation of waters (1:6-8)
 - 3. Day Three: dry land and vegetation (1:9-13)
 - 4. Day Four: sun, moon, and stars (1:14-19)
 - 5. Day Five: marine animals and birds (1:20-23)
 - 6. Day Six (part one): land animals and insects (1:24-25)
 - 7. Day Six (part two): Adam and Eve (1:26-31)
 - B. The Pinnacle of Creation (2:1-25)
 - 1. The creation of Adam explained (2:1-7)
 - 2. The Garden of Eden (2:8-17)
 - 3. The creation of Eve explained (2:18-25)
- II. Catastrophe (3:1-8:22)
 - A. The Fall (3:1-5:32)
 - 1. The fall of Adam's race (3:1-24)
 - 2. The evil of Adam's race (4:1-26)
 - 3. The children of Adam's race (5:1-32)
 - B. The Flood (6:1-8:22)
 - 1. Preparation for the flood (6:1-22)
 - 2. Destruction of the flood (7:1-24)
 - 3. Recovery from the flood (8:1-22)
- III. Cultures (9:1-11:32)
 - A. Source of Nations (9:1-29)
 - 1. God's instructions (9:1-7)
 - 2. God's covenant promise (9:8-17)
 - 3. Noah's blessings and curses (9:18-29)
 - B. Table of Nations (10:1-32)
 - C. Scattering of Nations (11:1-32)

³² The outline of Genesis, along with the following survey, was written by Mark Strout, Executive Dean of the Word of Life Global Bible Institute. It is a chapter from a book soon to be published by the name of *Surveying the Pentateuch*. This book is part of a series entitled *Surveying the Old and New Testament*. All contributors to this upcoming book are resident and adjunct faculty of the Word of Life Global Bible Institute.

I. Creation (1:1-2:25)

God's account of how He created the known universe is one of the most contested portions of His Word. It stands in stark contrast to man's theory of evolution as an explanation of how all things began. Both present a worldview; a set of beliefs which ultimately defines how one views and interprets all of reality. Man's theory of evolution proposes an explanation of the universe based on the idea that natural laws and slow, random processes have continued largely uninterrupted over millions of years. This is known as naturalistic uniformitarianism. Genesis however presents a worldview based on supernatural creation followed by both a spiritual and a physical catastrophe on a global scale. God's account cannot be reconciled with man's theories without distorting the plain meaning of what we find in these chapters. If we mess with meaning, we end up with a meaningless mess. If we cannot take God at His word here, we cannot do so anywhere else in the Bible and remain consistent in the way we handle Scripture.

A. The Days of Creation (1:1-31)

The very first chapter of the Bible lays down the foundation for all of human history. When understood plainly, it affirms in detail the existence of a God who created the heavens and the earth with all that they contain in six regular (essentially 24-hour) days.

1. Day One: heaven, earth, light, and darkness (1:1-5)

The very first verse in the Bible simply assumes the existence of God without seeking to explain it. God is uncreated and eternal; without beginning or end (Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2). As the great "I Am" (Ex. 3:14), He exists outside of time which makes all discussion about "when" He began a

true waste of time. Creation, on the other hand, did have a beginning and God was its originator.

God did not use existing material to fashion the known universe but simply spoke it into existence from nothing (Ps. 33:6-9; John 1:1-3; Heb. 11:3). God personally fashioned Adam and Eve from dust and from a human rib, respectively. Angels had already been created and were present to witness and celebrate the founding of the earth (Job 38:4-7).

When created, the earth was not yet suitable for habitation but God clearly intended to make it so (cf. Isa. 45:18). It was initially covered in a vast shoreless ocean because God had not yet caused dry land to appear (v.9). Darkness prevailed, not because something was wrong (cf. Ps. 104:20), but because God had not yet created light. When God did speak light into existence, it was not coming from the sun since the sun was not created until day four (1:16). However, God must have caused light to originate from a specific location to allow for the first day/night cycle.³³

2. Day Two: separation of waters (1:6-8)

Before dry land even appeared, God committed an entire day (17% of the six days of creation) to a water separation project. This was an important component of God's intended design. Some believe that He lifted great quantities of water above the earth's atmosphere to create a type of water or vapor canopy that encircled the globe and provided a warm, stable climate on the entire earth including the poles. Others argue that the firmament or

³³ Nothing in the plain meaning of the text would lead the reader to conclude that the days of creation were anything other than regular days. The use of the normal Hebrew word for "day" paired with a number along with continual references to the evening and morning cycle (5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) demonstrate that God intended us to understand these to be regular days. In fact, what more could He have said that would make this any clearer? Since the dividing of each day into 24 hours did not begin until much later in history, God did not describe it in this way.

expanse refers to outer space (Gen. 1:16-17; Ps. 148:4; 19:1). In this scenario, the water was lifted to the edge of the universe. This could be consistent with a cosmology involving God stretching out the heavens when He created the stars inside the expanse (Isa. 40:22; Jer. 10:12; Ps.104:2).

3. Day Three: dry land and vegetation (1:9-13)

The water left below the expanse was then gathered into one place so that the dry land would appear. This would suggest that there was initially only one landmass making it feasible for humans and animals to fill the earth (1:28). According to the Bible, vegetation was the first created form of life.³⁴

4. Day Four: sun, moon, and stars (1:14-19)

The celestial bodies were then created in the expanse beginning with the sun and the moon followed by the stars. Not only were these intended to provide light by day and night but also to point to God's greatness (Ps. 19:1-6) and to provide a means of timekeeping on earth. All of this indicates that they were immediately visible from the earth.

5. Day Five: marine animals and birds (1:20-23)

On day five, aquatic animals and birds were created. The first generation of marine animals and birds was created in a fully functional state as opposed to being born and growing up.³⁵

³⁴ If the days of creation were actually thousands or millions of years as some suggest, then vegetation would have had to survive without sunlight and without the pollination provided by insects for long ages since these were not created until days four and six respectively.

³⁵ Some have argued that it is dishonest on God's part to have created with an appearance of age but not so, if He told us that this is the way He did it.

6. Day Six (part one): land animals and insects (1:24-25)

On day six, God created animals and insects.³⁶ God limited the procreation of animals to fixed kinds (1:21).³⁷

7. Day Six (part two): Adam and Eve (1:26-31)

Finally, God created man and woman. Gender was clearly part of God's intended design from the very beginning.³⁸

These verses are critical in helping us to understand three key concepts. First, that God is fundamentally a relational being. Though the trinity is not fully explained here, we discover that God is somehow a multiple since He uses terms such as "us" and "our" (1:26; 3:22; 11:7-8). This also explains how God could be love (1 John 4:8) and experience love before there were any human beings to love (see John 17:24). We live in a relational universe because a relational God created it.³⁹

The second key concept seen in these verses is that men and women are created in the image of God; something that is never said of any other created being. This refers to man's spiritual resemblance to his Creator; that he is not merely a physical being but is fundamentally an eternal spirit, as is God (John 4:24). This clearly sets man apart from the animal kingdom

³⁶ The creation of land animals would have included dinosaurs. There is no logical reason why this would not be the case since dinosaurs are simply animals which, like hundreds of others, have become extinct.

³⁷ This flatly contradicts man's theories of evolution which must propose transitional forms between kinds in order to account for the great variety of animal kinds known today.

³⁸ Evolutionary theory is hard pressed to explain how random chance could possibly generate something as complex as a double gender outcome. Survival of the fittest would more reasonably be expected to favor a single gender situation for all life forms.

³⁹ Once again, evolutionary theory is insufficient. It cannot rationally explain the origin of the vast range of human emotions such as love, compassion, and empathy since none of these would have been required in a "survival of the fittest" process.

and will later provide a rational explanation why killing a human is murder while killing an animal is not (Gen. 9:3-6).⁴⁰

Finally, we learn that God intended man to rule over the earth. In other words, it is God's design that His own sovereign rule be administered through the agency of humanity. This dominion extended at least to the animal kingdom and to the earth itself. This is consistent with the fact that animals were not initially afraid of man (9:2), that God brought the animals to Adam for him to name (2:19-20), and that the ground was not initially hard to cultivate (3:17-19). Man's dominion was lost to Satan, when Adam sinned, who became the ruler of this fallen world when Adam sinned (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19).

Note that both humans and animals were originally vegetarian (1:29, 30) which is consistent with the fact that death did not exist before sin entered the world (2:16-17). The fact that God declared everything that He had made to be "very good" at the end of the sixth day indicates that there was no death, disease or extinction of species.

B. The Pinnacle of Creation (2:1-25)

Chapter two expands on the events of day six, giving additional details about the creation of Adam and Eve, the pinnacle of His creation.⁴¹

1. The creation of Adam explained (2:1-7)

God rested on the seventh day, not because He was tired but in order to set a pattern to follow. This provides us with an explanation for the origin of the weekly cycle that is still practiced today. It also undoubtedly explains

⁴⁰ Evolutionary theory provides no rational explanation for this disparity other than arbitrary social convention (custom).

⁴¹ Some claim that chapter two is an alternate or even conflicting account of creation as compared to chapter one. This is not the case.

why days were often bundled into sevens for various purposes from this point forward (cf. Gen. 7:4-10; 8:8-12; 29:27-30; 50:10; Ex. 7:25; 12:15).

Prior to Adam's creation, plants were watered from below (2:6) rather than by rain. By the time Moses wrote Genesis, this system no longer functioned, at least not to the same extent. It is possible that rain did not fall on the earth until the global flood of Noah's day, although this cannot be proven. It would indeed make sense that in a perfect world water would not fall on people's heads. Of course, rivers also provided irrigation (2:10), as they do today.

Rather than speaking Adam into existence, God fashioned his body using existing material (dust of the ground) and then breathed life into him. This would be consistent with the fact that man is unique among all created beings. Adam is the only human ever created directly by God alone without the contribution or participation of anyone else.⁴²

2. The Garden of Eden (2:8-17)

The Garden of Eden was planted by God specifically for man's enjoyment. Notice the references to pleasant sights and tastes (Gen. 2:9; 3:6).⁴³ God also intentionally planted the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He then placed man in the garden to care for them. This demonstrates that work and responsibility are part of God's original design, not a result of the fall into sin.

God invited Adam to eat from any tree of the garden (including the tree of life) but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The exact

⁴² Some claim that the Bible is teaching here an evolutionary process from molecules (dust) to man over millions of years. If that were so, then we would have to conclude that the Bible is also teaching a similar de-evolutionary process as man returns to dust over eons of time (Gen. 3:19-20). This is clearly not its intended meaning.

⁴³ Evolutionary theory cannot provide a rational explanation why these would arise through random chance, as they are not essential to a "survival of the fittest" process.

nature of this tree is not stated. God did not forbid Adam to eat of it because its fruit was toxic – it was not (Gen. 3:6). Instead, He forbade it in order to provide Adam with a choice: either love and obey God or turn away from Him. This was necessary if Adam was to possess a genuine free will.

The consequence of disobedience was made clear: death. The Bible teaches that death is the result of sin (cf. Rom. 6:23); an enemy rather than an intended part of God's original design (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-55).⁴⁴ The fundamental meaning of death is separation, not cessation. Jesus did not cease to exist when He died on the cross, but He was separated from the Father. The day Adam would eat of the forbidden tree, he would experience separation from God and his body would begin to decay to the point where his spirit would eventually be separated from it.

3. The creation of Eve explained (2:18-25)

The account of the creation of Eve is preceded by God bringing the animals to Adam to see what he would name them. Since both he and Eve were created on the sixth day, and given the fact that Adam completed this assignment prior to Eve's creation, it follows that Adam named all the animals within one day.⁴⁵

This God-given assignment was consistent with the fact that God had placed the animals under Adam's dominion (1:26-28). It was probably also intended to cause Adam to realize that no animal was suitable to be his helper. Adam was clearly looking for a partner (2:20), and it was obvious to him that he was a different kind of being than the animals.

⁴⁴ This demonstrates that God did not use a lengthy process of disease, death, and survival of the fittest to bring human beings into existence.

⁴⁵ There were far fewer types of each animal kind than what we have today (e.g., one basic dog kind instead of the over 330 dog breeds known today). It also makes evident that animals lived peacefully together in proximity to Adam rather than being spread across multiple landmasses in isolated habitats.

God then personally fashioned Eve as He had done with Adam but, in her case, He began with existing material taken from Adam's body. The fundamental concept of marriage is then described as being the joining together of one man with one woman for the primary purpose of completion, not procreation, even though having children is part of God's design (1:28). From this point forward, all human beings would be procreated from a man and a woman with the exception of Jesus Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 1:20-23).

II. Catastrophe (3:1-8:22)

The worldview presented in the book of Genesis is at odds with man's theories of origins at nearly every point. One of the most fundamental differences is the clear teaching regarding catastrophes in early human history causing rapid change as opposed to slow, random processes operating largely uninterrupted over eons of time. The catastrophic events recorded in Genesis provide a rational explanation for much of what we see today, both in terms of the human condition (evil, disease, death) as well as the natural condition of planet earth (topography, geology, climate, fossil record).

A. The Fall (3:1-5:32)

Genesis teaches that the original condition of mankind and of the world was one of perfection. However, this was lost due to Adam and Eve's free choice to disregard their Creator's instructions and to strike out on their own. Their fall into sin not only affected their outward experience but most importantly, it fundamentally changed their inner nature.

1. The fall of Adam's race (3:1-24)

The fall of Adam into sin was far more than the beginning of wrong doing. It was the start of a new state of wrong being. His nature was fundamentally changed to that of a sinner separated from God, at enmity with Him, and governed by corrupted desires. This sinful nature would then be passed on to all of his descendants (cf. Rom. 5:12, 18-19; 1 Cor. 15:21; Eph.2:3; Ps. 51:5). His choice resulted in the greatest catastrophe to have ever occurred, for it lies at the root of all subsequent catastrophes.

Satan began by approaching Eve and talking with her through a serpent.⁴⁶ Satan's strategy was to sow doubt in Eve's mind concerning what God had said about the forbidden fruit. He then distorted God's words, denied them, and suggested that Eve should distrust God's intentions.⁴⁷

Even though Eve ate, her eyes were not opened until she had given the fruit to Adam. The moment he ate of it marks the precise point when both of them fell into sin and so did we all (3:7). Thereafter, all who would be born of Adam's lineage would be conceived in sin and be identified with his unrighteousness. Thankfully, God had devised a plan whereby it would become possible to die to Adam's race, to be born a second time of Christ's lineage, and to be identified with His righteousness (cf. Rom. 5:17-19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The inherent consequences of sin were immediately felt: separation from God (3:8), paralyzing and alienating fear (3:10), and a refusal to take personal responsibility (3:12-13). Though Eve had been the first to disobey,

⁴⁶ The fact that Eve did not find it unusual to carry on a conversation with an animal suggests that Adam and Eve may have originally been able to communicate with animals; an ability that would have been lost after the fall.

⁴⁷ The three avenues through which Eve was enticed are the same that we all encounter (1 John 2:16) and through which Satan tempted Christ (Matt. 4:1-11). They are the lust of the flesh (the tree was good for food), the lust of the eyes (it was pleasing to the eye), and pride (the fruit was desirable to become wise).

God sought out Adam as the representative head of the relationship. He then imposed a series of consequences on the serpent, on Eve, and then on Adam (3:14-19).

The serpent was cursed with changes to its physiology that would cause it to crawl on its belly from that moment on. We are told that the serpent was cursed more than all of the other animals. This shows that the entire animal kingdom experienced the curse of Adam's fall into sin. Though no physiological changes are mentioned, animals would at least suffer disease and death. In fact, all of creation was in some way negatively impacted by the fall including the productivity of the earth itself (3:17; cf. Rom. 8:20-22).

No sooner had mankind fallen into sin than God promised a deliverer (3:15); a descendant of the woman who would deal a decisive, victorious blow to Satan and his lineage while Himself being bruised. Though not a complete revelation of the gospel, it was nonetheless the first hint of God's plan of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who would be born of a woman but not of a man. Theologians call this the *protoevangelium*, which means "the first gospel."

The curse imposed upon Eve struck at the heart of her unique contribution to the human race, namely her ability to bear children; something that would now be a physically painful experience. She would also experience a distortion of her desires toward her husband which would cause her to seek to dominate rather than to help him (see comments at Gen. 4:7). Similarly, Adam would also experience a similar distortion manifested in a tendency to lord authority over his wife.

Adam's curse struck at the heart of his instinctive desire to provide for his family. The ground, which had been so productive, would now be cursed and no longer yield food without a great deal of work. This curse

was so burdensome that Noah's father would later express his hope that some relief might be found (cf. 5:29). This suggests that the productivity of fruit-bearing plants must have initially been far beyond anything known today (cf. Rev. 22:1-3).

The ultimate curse of sin would be death. Spiritual death occurred immediately as they experienced a break in their relationship with God (Gen. 3:8-9). The process of physical death also began as their bodies started to wear down which would ultimately result in their returning to the dust from which they came; something which took Adam 930 years (Gen. 5:5). Man's theories of evolution do not provide a rational explanation for the decay and death of all living things.

After imposing the consequences of sin's curse, God made clothing of animal skins for Adam and Eve. Even though they had already covered their physical nakedness with leaves, God knew that the greater and more harmful exposure was their spiritual nakedness before their holy Creator. If they were to enjoy any measure of relationship with Him, their sinful condition would have to be covered, not just their physical nakedness. Therefore, animals were put to death for the very first time in order to provide a covering for them. This must have been shocking for Adam and Eve to witness, especially given the nearness that they had enjoyed with the animal kingdom. We do not know what God said to them on this occasion but it seems likely that He explained the necessity of the shedding of blood to cover sin and the basic requirements of a sacrificial system. This would account for the fact that animal sacrifice was practiced by many such as Abel (4:4), Noah (8:20), Abraham (12:8; 22:1-14), Melchizedek (14:18), and Job (Job 1:5) before the Levitical sacrificial system was instituted by God through Moses at Mount Sinai.

Now that Adam and Eve had fallen and their natures had become corrupted, God barred them from eating of the tree of life and thus living forever in their fallen condition. Cherubim were positioned as guardians to prevent them from accessing it (3:24). Presumably, they remained there until the tree of life was swept away in the flood of Noah's day over 1,650 years later.⁴⁸

2. The evil of Adam's race (4:1-26)

Genesis records that Eve was the mother of all the living (3:20) and that her very first child was conceived in sin. There is only one human race, all members being descendants of Adam and Eve and inheritors of their sinful nature. The name "Cain" means possession, which suggests that Eve may have expected her firstborn son to be the fulfillment of God's promise of a deliverer (Gen. 3:15). She would be sorely disappointed as Cain would become the first murderer and the head of a long, ungodly line marked by polygamy, violence, and murder (Gen. 4:19-24).

Cain and Abel proved to be very different, both in profession as well as in character. After many years had likely passed (Gen. 4:3,4), an occasion arose when each brought a sacrifice to the Lord. Cain, being a farmer, brought agricultural products while Abel, a shepherd, brought the firstborn of his flock. God's reaction to both sacrifices implies that they had already been instructed on the necessity of blood sacrifice to cover sin.

Verse 7 provides us with the very first glimpse of the power of the inherited sin nature. Cain yielded to sin's control and killed his brother. When God inquired about Abel's whereabouts, Cain's heartless response was typical of the extreme self-centeredness of the sin nature. Abel's blood

⁴⁸ The Bible records that the tree of life still exists in heaven (Rev. 2:7) and that it will once more be accessible to God's redeemed people (Rev. 22:2, 14).

cried out to God calling for vengeance. Many years later, Christ's shed blood would cry out to God for forgiveness because it had provided the just payment for all sin (cf. Heb. 12:24).

The soil that Cain loved was cursed with even poorer productivity than the original curse imposed when Adam disobeyed (cf. 3:17-19; 4:12). He was then driven out from God's presence to wander the earth and finally settled somewhere east of Eden (4:16). Having murdered his brother, Cain now feared being murdered himself by close family members (there was no one else around), so God placed on him a mark of some kind so that others would not touch him. The nature of the mark is not described.⁴⁹ Cain's act of murder launched a cycle of escalating wickedness and violence on the earth portrayed in verses 18-24.

Fortunately, something happened at this point that provided hope. The text reverts one final time to Adam and Eve in order to record the birth of Seth (4:25-26). Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born (Gen. 5:3), so it may well be that they had conceived other children before him. So, why highlight Seth? The next chapter reveals that Seth is the head of a line from which would come Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and ultimately, Jesus Christ. From this point forward, the Bible focuses on Seth's line (cf. Luke 3:38). Contrary to Cain's ungodly line, some of Seth's descendants would begin to call upon the Lord (Gen. 4:26).

⁴⁹ We discover that Cain was married (3:17), which has raised questions about where Cain got his wife. The simple answer is that she must have been a sister or possibly a niece (cf. 5:4). Marriage with close relations was necessary in early human history and was permitted by God until around 2,500 years later (Lev. 18:6-18). This would allow for the fact that Abraham married his half-sister (20:12). Practically speaking, genetic mutations would not have yet accumulated to the point where producing offspring from the union of close relatives would risk serious birth defects, as is the case today.

3. The children of Adam's race (5:1-32)

Chapter five has been called a “diary of death” as the curse of sin began to extract its ultimate penalty on succeeding generations. It traces the genealogy of the godly line of Seth from Adam to Noah. Many dispute the accuracy of Genesis because they claim that it must have been handed down through oral tradition (word of mouth); a notoriously inaccurate method of transmitting information. Furthermore, many claim that Genesis cannot provide us with an accurate timeline of history since the genealogies that it records must skip generations.

The chapter opens with a reference to a book of early human generations (5:1). The Hebrew word here indicates a written document. This is either referring to the contents of chapter five itself or possibly to another document containing these records which Moses used when compiling chapter five. In either case, the implication is that it was a distinct document from the rest of the Genesis account. Once again, this contradicts man’s theories, which claim that early man was so primitive that he could hardly talk, let alone write. God’s account indicates that man was created highly intelligent. It is entirely plausible that Adam himself could have begun such a written record since he would have lived right up to the lifetime of Lamech, Noah’s father (Gen. 5:26). Noah could then have brought that record with him on the ark and passed it along to future generations.⁵⁰ Noah himself lived about 58 years into Abraham’s lifetime (Gen. 9:29).

Another feature of this chapter is the way it presents the descendants of Seth using chronogenealogies whereby each generation is chronologically linked to the next by listing the age of the father when the son was born (cf. 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25, 28). This is far more accurate than a simple

⁵⁰ It is an established fact that genealogical records exist in many nations of the world that trace all the way back to Noah and his three sons.

genealogy since it provides a seamless timeline and makes it possible to pinpoint the precise years of certain events with reference to the creation of Adam. From this chapter, we know that Noah was born 1,056 years after creation and that the flood occurred 1,656 years after creation. The Bible assumes the accuracy of the genealogies it records. For example, Jude 1:14 places Enoch in the seventh generation, which correlates perfectly with Genesis 5:3-18.

A final interesting feature of this chapter is the great life spans of early humans. At 969 years, Methuselah is the oldest human being recorded in the Bible. Many scoff at the possibility of such long life spans, but it is entirely rational to conclude that the bodies of Adam and Eve, having been created in perfection, would last much longer than ours. The same would hold true of their early descendants, but as genetic defects gradually accumulated over time, these affected longevity. Lifespans clearly dropped significantly after the flood (Gen. 11:10-26) leading many to conclude that this global catastrophe had some part to play in the process.⁵¹ One happy result of such long lifespans would be the ability to accurately transmit information by word of mouth across great spans of time. For example, based simply on what is known from this chapter, we can say that Adam could have had a conversation with Noah's father Lamech, who could have spoken with his grandson Shem, who then could pass information directly to Abraham. This is a span of approximately 1,900 years. Using today's average lifespan, this would require 35-40 generations.

The chapter ends with Noah and the birth of his three sons, which sets the stage for the second great global catastrophe in early human history.

⁵¹ Suggestions include radical climate change, changes to atmospheric pressure and oxygen content, and genetic defects unique to Noah's line, which would affect all succeeding generations.

B. The Flood (6:1-8:22)

The flood described in Genesis was no small event. It was a global disaster that destroyed the world that was (2 Peter 3:6) and left its unmistakable mark on the planet to this day.

1. Preparation for the flood (6:1-22)

After introducing Seth, and tracing his godly line to Noah, one would expect the next event in the biblical account to be the flood. Instead, the text interrupts this natural flow to recount a strange occurrence (6:1-4). Why the interruption? The logical explanation is that the events recorded in these verses are what finally triggered God's decision to destroy the world with a flood (2 Peter 3:6).

The debate surrounding these verses centers on the identity of the "sons of God" who cohabited with "the daughters of men" and produced offspring. Some propose that the "sons of God" were descendants of the godly line of Seth who intermarried with descendants of Cain's ungodly line. Others suggest they were wicked kings of that time. A third idea is that fallen angels possessed the bodies of human men to commit debauched sexual acts with women. A final proposal is that fallen angels took on flesh in some way and had sexual relations with human women producing a hybrid human-demon offspring called the Nephilim, which means "fallen ones." Those who hold to this view point to Jude 6-7; 2 Peter 2:4-6; and 1 Peter 3:18-20 for additional support.

The spiritual condition of humanity at this time was appalling (6:5) resulting in a world that was filled with violence (6:11-13). Murder was likely rampant, since God instituted capital punishment immediately after the flood to curb it (9:5-7). One can only imagine how horrible a place the world had become after more than 1,500 years of unchecked violence.

In contrast to this, it is refreshing to read of the blameless life of Noah (6:8-9) who walked with God as his great grandfather Enoch had done (cf. 5:22-24). His life was characterized by a righteousness that evidences a close walk with God.

God's instructions to Noah regarding the flood and the need to build an ark must have been nearly inconceivable to his mind. If the pre-flood world consisted of only one land mass (cf. 1:9), it is hard to imagine that anyone had ever needed to build a boat, let alone one the size that God instructed Noah to prepare. If rain was unknown prior to the flood, one can imagine how strange the prospect of water falling from above might sound to Noah and how ridiculous it would appear to the masses.

The basic instructions for the building of the ark (6:14-16) describes a vessel much larger than the image most people picture today. Built with three decks, one large window near the top, and one access door, it was at least 450 feet (137m) long, 75 feet (23m) wide, and 45 feet (14m) high resulting in a total volume of approximately 1.5 million cubic feet (42,500 m³).⁵²

God's promise and instructions to Noah (6:17-21) provide us with some important details. They only needed to bring representatives of all air-breathing, land-dependent animal kinds (6:7, 17, 20; 7:14-15, 21-23). It was not necessary to bring any aquatic animals. It is helpful to remember that there were likely many less types of each animal kind (e.g., one original horse kind instead of the over 350 breeds known today).⁵³

⁵² This is a conservative estimate based on an 18 inch cubit. However, larger cubit sizes were also used and, in fact, were more likely to have been the ones used in Noah's day. These would have resulted in an ark with up to 47% greater volume (2.2 million ft³, 62,300 m³).

⁵³ Answers in Genesis, a Christian apologetics ministry that has built a full-sized ark replica in Kentucky, estimates the total number of individual animals on the ark at about 6,700. See *A Flood of Evidence* by Ken Ham and Bodie Hodge (Green Forest, AR: Master

2. Destruction of the flood (7:1-24)

The first nine verses of chapter seven describe an amazing scene as thousands of animals made their orderly entrance into the ark (Gen. 6:20). God had done a similar thing in bringing the animals to Adam for him to name them (Gen. 2:19). The entire process took seven days (7:4).

Unclean animals went in by twos and clean animals by sevens (7:2). Since Noah would offer a sacrifice upon his exit from the ark (Gen. 8:20), it was necessary to bring extra clean animals. This shows that Noah was familiar with the distinction between clean and unclean animals, well before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood in the days of Moses (cf. Lev. 11).

The remainder of the chapter describes the devastating waters of the flood. On the day the flood began, two sources of water were opened; one from above and the other from below (cf. 8:2). This may correspond to the fact that God had separated the waters that had initially covered the earth (1:2, 7, 9).

The deluge continued for 40 days (7:12) and the rising waters were unstoppable (7:17-20, 24), covering the highest mountain to a depth of 15 cubits (approximately 20 feet), ensuring that the ark would not run into a submerged mountain peak. All air-breathing land dwellers perished leaving only Noah and those with him in the ark. The expected results of such a global flood are found all over the earth today.⁵⁴ The Genesis account describes a global flood, not a localized flood.⁵⁵

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⁵⁴ These include millions of fossilized animals rapidly buried alive in massive mud flows, stratified and twisted rock layers produced by moving water, and massive water-carved canyons. There is no need to search for evidence of the flood since it is everywhere. According to the Bible, the problem is not the possession of evidence but rather the suppression of evidence (2 Peter 3:3-6; Rom. 1:18).

⁵⁵ Many claim that the flood described in Genesis was simply a large local flood rather

3. *Recovery from the flood (8:1-22)*

This chapter opens with a wonderful statement regarding God's faithful care of Noah's family and all of the animals while they floated above the raging waters (8:1). A general chronology of the flood is provided (8:2-19). What a moment it must have been when Noah and his family finally stepped onto dry ground. Noah's first act was to build an altar and to offer a sacrifice to the Lord that was well pleasing to Him.⁵⁶ This chapter ends with God's statement that the annual seasons of the earth would continue without interruption for the rest of history (8:22).

III. Cultures (9:1–11:32)

If a worldview regarding origins is to be worthy of any consideration, it must address many issues and propose reasonable explanations for the condition in which we find the world today. Genesis 1-11 does so extremely well. In this final section, we discover the origin of languages and cultures.

A. Source of Nations (9:1-29)

Where did all of the nations of the world come from and what caused human beings to separate into nations in the first place? The answers to these questions find their earliest roots in the events of this chapter.

than a global event. If so, then why not simply move out of the way instead of investing decades to build an ark? If Noah and his family could have done this, so could have anyone else for that matter. Furthermore, a local flood would not kill all humans and non-aquatic life (Gen. 6:13; 7:21-23) nor would it be able to cover the highest mountain (Gen. 7:19-20) without covering every lower peak as well. Finally, if this was a local flood, then God has broken His promise thousands of times to never again flood the earth in this way (Gen. 9:11, 15).

⁵⁶ Having brought seven of all clean animals into the ark (Gen. 7:2), there was an unpaired clean animal available for sacrifice without compromising the survival of its kind.

1. God's instructions (9:1-7)

God's first instruction to Noah and his sons was to multiply and fill the earth just as He had commanded Adam and Eve (1:28). Noah's early descendants would deliberately disobey this instruction (cf. 11:4). God further provided Noah with additional explanations and instructions, and explained that from now on animals would fear them.

God then broadened their diet by giving them permission to eat meat (9:3-4). The loss of vegetation caused by the flood may have been one of the reasons for this allowance. However, they were not to eat meat with the blood since life was identified with blood (cf. 4:10). God later provided a more complete explanation of this concept in the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev. 17:10-14).

Having given them the right to eat animals, it was obvious that taking an animal's life was acceptable to God. However, He next made it clear that taking human life was not to be tolerated because man was created in the image of God. As a deterrent, God instituted capital punishment (9:5-6); a measure intended to curb the human violence which characterized the pre-flood world (Gen. 4:23-24; 6:11, 13). By doing so, God established the concept of a punitive justice system administered by man (cf. Rom. 13:1-5).

2. God's covenant promise (9:8-17)

In these verses, we read of an everlasting covenant that God made, not only with humanity but with the animal kingdom as well. He did not say that He would never again destroy the earth, but He did promise that He would never do so by means of water.⁵⁷ If the flood of Noah's day was

⁵⁷ God will indeed destroy the earth in the future by means of fire, not water (2 Peter 3:5-10).

simply a large local flood, then God has broken this promise thousands of times. God placed the rainbow in the clouds as a perpetual sign of this covenant.

3. Noah's blessings and curses (9:18-29)

This section begins by telling us that all of earth's inhabitants were descended from the three sons of Noah. The next chapter will describe this in detail. For now, the account shifts to a rather odd event that, like the strange incident found in Genesis 6:1-4, was obviously included in the biblical record for some strategic purpose.

Having become drunk, Noah uncovered himself inside his tent. Two of Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth, respected their father by walking in backwards and covering him so they would not see his nakedness. Ham, on the other hand, not only saw his father's nakedness but also appears to have done something to his father that greatly dishonored him (cf. Noah's comment in 9:24). As a result, Noah blessed Shem and Japheth and pronounced a curse in connection with Ham. It is important to note that Ham became the father of the Canaanites (9:22) and that this curse was directed specifically at them (9:25) as opposed to all of Ham's descendants. In the course of time, the Canaanites experienced the full effects of this curse at the hands of the nation of Israel that descended from Ham's brother Shem (Gen. 10:21; 11:10-32). The effects of these blessings and curses would have significant long-term consequences, as they would shape the destiny of the cultures that arose from these three men.

B. Table of Nations (10:1-32)

This chapter provides a detailed historical record of how the various cultures spread from Noah's three sons to populate the earth. Seventy

nations are mentioned including 14 that descended from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 26 from Shem.

The descendants of Japheth head the list (10:2-5). Noah had blessed Japheth (Gen. 9:27) saying that he would be enlarged. An analysis of the nations that descended from Japheth shows that they did occupy the greatest territory, spreading generally north, northeast, and northwest of the tower of Babel that was located in the plain of Shinar somewhere near modern day Iraq (Gen. 11:2). This would correspond generally to modern day Europe, Russia, and the northern Asian nations.

The descendants of Ham are then summarized (10:6-20). They migrated generally southwest into modern day Africa, into parts of the Middle East, and probably Southeast Asia. The Egyptians descended from Ham (Ps. 78:51) as well as the Canaanites who occupied the Promised Land prior to Joshua's conquest. They did indeed serve the descendants of Shem (cf. 9:25-27).

Finally, the descendants of Shem are reviewed (10:21-31). They settled in most of the Middle East and in some parts of Africa. Shem's descendants include Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans (10:21-31; 11:11-31) and ultimately Jesus Christ, the deliverer, first promised to Adam and Eve (3:15).

C. Scattering of Nations (11:1-32)

How did the world come to speak so many languages when the trend of history has been the extinction of languages rather than their proliferation? Once again, Genesis provides us with a sensible explanation. We learn that the entire world originally spoke one language (11:1) but an event caused this to change very suddenly.

God had clearly instructed Noah and his family to multiply and to fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). Rather than doing so, his early descendants acted in defiance of this, settled in the plain of Shinar (generally believed to be located in modern day Iraq), and built a large tower. This construction project was an expression of human pride and self-sufficiency intended to make them famous (11:4). Because they were the only people group on earth, this can only mean that they intended to make themselves great in God's eyes and choose their own course independent of Him.

God was not impressed. In fact, He clearly viewed the global unity of a fallen race to be a dangerous thing (11:6). Their creativity and intelligence, though wonderful gifts from the Creator, could nonetheless be turned to evil ends.⁵⁸ Something had to be done to slow the spread of evil and fallen genius. Therefore, God supernaturally confused their language, which forced them to scatter over the earth. Differing languages is what ultimately resulted in the rise of distinct nations (Gen. 10:5). As the common gene pool fractured into isolated pieces, genetic strengths emerged within individual people groups leading to distinctive racial characteristics even though we are all of one human race (Acts 17:26).

This division of earth's population occurred during the lifetime of Peleg (Gen. 10:25; 11:16) which places it somewhere between 101 and 310 years after the flood. This Babylonian spirit of pride and self-sufficiency is very much alive even to this day.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Indeed, history has proven that wherever fallen humans mass and unite, wickedness proliferates alongside of innovation and technology. Witness the rise of internet pornography, violent and sensual media, weapons of mass destruction, and much more.

⁵⁹ The Bible records that it will eventually culminate with the nations of the world standing united once again under one leader in defiant opposition to God. However, as recorded by Daniel who lived in Babylon, the very city where the tower of Babel was likely located, God reigns supreme over the nations of the world and will have the final word in human history on planet earth (Dan. 2:44; 4:34-35).

Chapter 11 concludes by tracing the genealogy of Shem down to Abram (11:10-32). Having described: 1) the creation of man, 2) his fall into sin and subsequent perversion, 3) the destruction of the human race (except for Noah's family), and 4) the division and scattering of the earth's population into distinct nations, the stage was set for God's choice of Abram to be the father of the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). It was, and still is, God's intention to provide salvation for lost men and women through a descendant of Abraham and ultimately to bless all the families of the earth through Him.