ESV Expository Commentary

VOL. I

Genesis–Numbers

EDITORS

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Exodus
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Leviticus
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Numbers
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PREFACE

TO THE ESV EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY

The Bible pulsates with life, and the Spirit conveys the electrifying power of Scripture to those who lay hold of it by faith, ingest it, and live by it. God has revealed himself in the Bible, which makes the words of Scripture sweeter than honey, more precious than gold, and more valuable than all riches. These are the words of life, and the Lord has entrusted them to his church, for the sake of the world.

He has also provided the church with teachers to explain and make clear what the Word of God means and how it applies to each generation. We pray that all serious students of God's Word, both those who seek to teach others and those who pursue study for their own personal growth in godliness, will be served by the ESV Expository Commentary. Our goal has been to provide a clear, crisp, and Christ-centered explanation of the biblical text. All Scripture speaks of Christ (Luke 24:27), and we have sought to show how each biblical book helps us to see the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

To that end, each contributor has been asked to provide commentary that is:

- *exegetically sound*—self-consciously submissive to the flow of thought and lines of reasoning discernible in the biblical text;
- *biblically theological*—reading the Bible as diverse yet bearing an overarching unity, narrating a single storyline of redemption culminating in Christ;
- *globally aware*—aimed as much as possible at a global audience, in line with Crossway's mission to provide the Bible and theologically responsible resources to as many people around the world as possible;
- *broadly reformed*—standing in the historical stream of the Reformation, affirming that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, taught in Scripture alone, for God's glory alone; holding high a big God with big grace for big sinners;
- *doctrinally conversant*—fluent in theological discourse; drawing appropriate brief connections to matters of historical or current theological importance;
- *pastorally useful*—transparently and reverently "sitting under the text"; avoiding lengthy grammatical/syntactical discussions;
- *application-minded*—building brief but consistent bridges into contemporary living in both Western and non-Western contexts (being aware of the globally diverse contexts toward which these volumes are aimed);

- *efficient in expression*—economical in its use of words; not a word-by-word analysis but a crisply moving exposition.

In terms of Bible translation, the ESV is the base translation used by the authors in their notes, but the authors were expected to consult the text in the original languages when doing their exposition and were not required to agree with every decision made by the ESV translators.

As civilizations crumble, God's Word stands. And we stand on it. The great truths of Scripture speak across space and time, and we aim to herald them in a way that will be globally applicable.

May God bless the study of his Word, and may he smile on this attempt to expound it.

—The Publisher and Editors

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ABBREVIATIONS

General

AT	Author's Translation
c.	circa, about, around
cf.	confer, compare, see
ch(s).	chapter(s)
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by, edition
e.g.	for example
esp.	especially
et al.	and others
etc.	and so on
fem.	feminine
ff.	and following
g	gram
Gk.	Greek
Hb.	Hebrew
i.e.	that is
kg	kilogram
km	kilometer
lit.	literal, literally
LXX	Septuagint
masc.	masculine
mg.	marginal reading
MT	Masoretic Text
n.	noun
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
pl.	plural
r.	reigned
repr.	reprinted
rev.	revised (by)
sg.	singular
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Syr.	Syriac
trans.	translator, translated by
v., vv.	verse(s)
vb.	verb
vol(s).	volumes
vs.	versus
Vulg.	Vulgate

Bibliographic

1QM	Milḥamah *or* War Scroll
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

ANEP	*The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Edited by James B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BBRSup	*Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BR	*Biblical Research*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BSC	Bible Student's Commentary
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CD	Cairo Genizah Copy of the Damascus Document
CDCH	*The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew.* Edited by David J. A. Clines. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.
CHALOT	*A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT*. Edited by William L. Holladay. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971.
ConC	Concordia Commentary
COS	*The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Edited by David J. A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2014.

DOTP	*Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003.
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ESVEC	ESV Expository Commentary
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Library
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HC	Heidelberg Catechism
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
IBHS	*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1998.
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
Joüon	Joüon, Paul. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991.
JPSTC	The JPS Torah Commentary
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIVAC	The NIV Application Commentary
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
PTW	Preaching the Word
RB	*Revue biblique*
RCS	Reformation Commentary on Scripture
RRef	*La revue réformée*
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Ernst Jenni, with assistance from Claus Westermann. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TTC	Teach the Text Commentary
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZECOT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament

ZIBBC	Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary
ZPED	*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Edited by Merrill C. Tenney. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975.

Books of the Bible

Gen.	Genesis	Obad.	Obadiah
Ex.	Exodus	Jonah	Jonah
Lev.	Leviticus	Mic.	Micah
Num.	Numbers	Nah.	Nahum
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Hab.	Habakkuk
Josh.	Joshua	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Judg.	Judges	Hag.	Haggai
Ruth	Ruth	Zech.	Zechariah
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Mal.	Malachi
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Matt.	Matthew
1 Kings	1 Kings	Mark	Mark
2 Kings	2 Kings	Luke	Luke
1 Chron.	1 Chronicles	John	John
2 Chron.	2 Chronicles	Acts	Acts
Ezra	Ezra	Rom.	Romans
Neh.	Nehemiah	1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
Est.	Esther	2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Job	Job	Gal.	Galatians
Ps., Pss.	Psalms	Eph.	Ephesians
Prov.	Proverbs	Phil.	Philippians
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Col.	Colossians
Song	Song of Solomon	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
Isa.	Isaiah	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians
Jer.	Jeremiah	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
Lam.	Lamentations	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
Ezek.	Ezekiel	Titus	Titus
Dan.	Daniel	Philem.	Philemon
Hos.	Hosea	Heb.	Hebrews
Joel	Joel	James	James
Amos	Amos	1 Pet.	1 Peter

2 Pet.	2 Peter	3 John	3 John
1 John	1 John	Jude	Jude
2 John	2 John	Rev.	Revelation

Apocrypha and Other Noncanonical Sources Cited

2 Macc.	*2 Maccabees*
Sir.	*Sirach/Ecclesiasticus*

GENESIS

Iain M. Duguid

INTRODUCTION TO

GENESIS

Overview

The book of Genesis is foundational to the whole Bible, so much so that Bible translators around the world often translate this book first before turning to the rest of Scripture. Without the book of Genesis we cannot properly understand who this God is who has taken flesh and redeemed us in the person of Jesus Christ. The book introduces us to Israel's God, the Lord, who is the sole creator God of the whole universe (Genesis 1–3). In the beginning, before the world existed, there was God. He has made everything that exists, including time, and he reigns sovereignly over all things and all history. Genesis explains the nature of the universe, the relationship of good and evil, the place of humanity in the world, and God's good purposes for creation. The book also shows us Israel's place among the nations: Israel is the heir of God's unique calling and promises, which are designed to bring blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3). Moreover, Genesis shows how these promises are slowly worked out in the lives of the patriarchs, bringing them closer to what God had promised, despite the patriarchs' repeated sin and rebellion. These promises leave them looking forward in faith to a greater, heavenly inheritance that we share with them in Christ (Genesis 12–50).

The opening chapters of the book, Genesis 1–11, constitute the divinely authorized origin story. Everyone lives his or her life on the basis of an origin story of some kind or other. We know something of other ancient Near Eastern origin stories, such as the Enuma Elish and the Atrahasis Epic; these are so different from modern conceptions of origins that sometimes we may be tempted to think that we have no similar accounts. In reality, however, it is not possible to function without some account of the nature of reality, the nature of mankind and its place within the cosmos, and the purpose and goal of the universe (or lack thereof). A vague version of the theory of evolution serves that purpose for many people in the modern world, though in the West people are often inclined to borrow elements that lean on the Genesis account to defend particular views they wish to hold, such as opposition to racism or the supreme value of human life, for which their origin story provides no rational basis.

Of course, origin stories do not need to be true for people to build their worldviews upon them, but only true origin stories can provide solid foundations for our

beliefs. The biblical claim to present the true story of the origins of the universe is uncompromising and provides a firm basis for our understanding of creation and our place within it. To the extent to which our ideas of origins deviate from those revealed in Genesis 1–11, they will be built upon sand rather than solid rock. That is not to say that Genesis 1–3 provides a full scientific portrayal of the origin of the universe; it does not. That is not its purpose. However, its portrayal of origins is truthful and accurate and undergirds its answers to life's essential questions.

It is sometimes suggested that premodern people, including the original readers of Genesis, did not ask questions about the truthfulness of their origin stories; it was sufficient that the stories be compelling. This is, of course, nonsense. Ancient people were not stupid. The test proposed by Elijah on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18 is a basic scientific experiment under controlled conditions designed to determine which deity—the Lord or Baal—is actually able to do what the Baal myths claim concerning him: that, as the storm god, he could deliver fire from heaven (as well as rain). The people understand clearly the test Elijah proposes, and they recognize the significance of the Lord's victory over Baal on that day. Clever myths are not enough; truth matters (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16).

The opening chapters of Genesis also deal with foundational questions about the origin of evil in the world. Why do we live in a world in which things fall apart, people die (often tragically), and other people commit grotesque and reprehensible acts? These questions demand answers from all of us. Genesis roots our experience of the existence of evil in the fall of Adam and Eve, recounted in Genesis 3: the universe is not an eternal dualistic balance of good and evil, as some religions teach. Neither is it simply a place where everyone starts out good and chooses for oneself the good path or an evil one. Evil is within all of us, as a result of our descent from Adam; as a result, we all die (cf. Genesis 5). Even a worldwide flood is unable to cleanse that inner evil with which we all struggle (Genesis 6–8). All nations on earth may be part of one great, big related family (Genesis 10), but it is a family that by nature is united in its commitment to seeking to live without reference to its Creator (11:1–9). From the beginning, however, God has been committed to his promise to redeem humanity through a descendant of Eve (3:15). Decline and fall cannot be the end of the story.

At the end of Genesis 11, therefore, a pivotal change comes in the storyline of Genesis, with the call of Abram to go from Mesopotamia to the land that the Lord would show him, which is soon revealed to be Canaan. In place of the fivefold curse pronounced upon sin in Genesis 3–11 we see in Genesis 12 a fivefold promise of blessing, not merely for Abram and Sarai but for the whole world (cf. Section Overview of 12:1–9). They will have abundant offspring, who will possess the land and provide a blessing for all nations. Yet initially that promise seems impossible to fulfill: it takes twenty-five years and numerous missteps before Abraham and Sarah have a single child of their own (Genesis 21). Abraham's commitment to the promise is then tested when the Lord commands him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, though the drama is resolved by the Lord's affirming Abraham's faith and by his

providing a ram as a sacrifice so that Isaac's life can be spared and the promise reconfirmed (Genesis 22).

The book of Genesis follows the next three generations of the patriarchs: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons (Genesis 23–50). In each generation the Lord sovereignly chooses the line through which the promise descends: Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; all twelve of Jacob's sons. The narrative makes clear that this is not a matter of choosing the best and leaving the rest; in particular, Jacob is not chosen because he is a better human being than Esau, a reality underlined by the fact that the Lord's choice takes place prior to the twins' birth, while both are still in the womb (Genesis 25).

God's design for Jacob's offspring is that they should become a "company of peoples" (*qehal ʿammim*, "worshiping community of peoples"; Gen. 28:3; 48:4). The Hebrew word *qahal* is often used for sacred assemblies (Deut. 4:10; 9:10; etc.), and in most of the OT it is rendered in the LXX as *ekklesia*.[1] It is thus not too strong to say that Israel's sons are called to be a "church of peoples," yet the initial history of Joseph and his brothers suggests that this calling is unlikely to be realized. Joseph's brothers are incensed by the favoritism shown to him by his father, as well as by the divinely inspired dreams that show their bowing down before Joseph, and so they conspire to kill him (Genesis 37). In the end they decide not to follow through with this plan but, in order to make some money out of Joseph, to sell him down to Egypt as a slave instead (37:25–28). Yet their evil plan is designed by God to bring about good (50:20), as God miraculously makes Joseph ruler of all Egypt alongside Pharaoh, with the God-given insight to foresee through Pharaoh's dreams the coming of a terrible famine (Genesis 41). The result is the salvation of Jacob and his family as well as of the Egyptians, which leads to the whole family's going down to sojourn in Egypt for a while (Genesis 46), as the Lord earlier told Abraham (cf. 15:13).

This sequence of events not only provides food for Jacob's family amid the famine but also moves the sons of Israel into place for the next part of the Lord's plan, which will involve their mistreatment in Egypt and ultimate exodus from there (Exodus 1–15; cf. Gen. 15:13–14). In the meantime the book of Genesis closes with the deaths of Jacob and Joseph, who each testifies in his own way to his faith in the promise of the land of Canaan, even while living outside it. Jacob makes Joseph take his body back to Canaan upon his death and bury him in the family tomb at Machpelah alongside Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 50:1–13). Joseph, on the other hand, gives instructions for his body to be embalmed and buried in a coffin so that, when the Israelites go up from Egypt, his bones can share in their exodus (50:24–26).

At the end of Genesis the stage is thus set for the book of Exodus that follows. Indeed, the whole Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) forms a coherent narrative that unfolds the story begun in Genesis. Ultimately, of course, the story will not end until Revelation 22, when the promise of Genesis 3:15 finds its full outworking in

1 Though not in Genesis, where the Greek translator prefers *synagōgē*; cf. comment on 27:41–28:5.

the redemption of all those who have become children of God through the death and resurrection of the seed of the woman and second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Title and Author

In this instance the Hebrew and Greek names for the book are both fitting. The Hebrew title, *bereshit* ("In the beginning"), points to the function of the book as an origin story, not merely for Israel but for the entire world. Meanwhile, the Greek title, *genesis*, alludes both to the role of the book as an origin story and (in the plural form, *geneseis*) to the *toledot* ("family history") formula that structures the whole book (cf. comment on 2:4–7). This is not a collection of ancient myths and legends but an origin story that tells the family history of God's chosen people.

Traditionally, the author of Genesis has been held to be Moses, largely because the book is tightly integrated with the rest of the Pentateuch, which addresses the chosen family—now become a nation—as it is about to enter the land. That traditional ascription has been widely challenged in scholarly circles, which have often doubted that a single person could have produced such a wide-ranging and complex piece of literature as the Pentateuch, encompassing narratives, poetry, laws, and so on. It has also been questioned whether the Pentateuch could have been *written* at such an early period of history and whether many of the laws were relevant for the period in question. Scholars have sometimes endeavored to separate out different sources (often termed "J," "E," "D," and "P"), each of which purportedly contributed to the whole at different times and with different interests.

These challenges remind us of the complexity of questions of authorship in antiquity, especially of a document as complicated (and unique) as the Pentateuch. It is unlikely that no memory of Israel's family story or the origins of the universe existed in Israel prior to Moses, and, whereas the book of Exodus describes events contemporaneous to Moses, the events of Genesis all precede the time of Moses by hundreds of years. At the same time, Moses was himself brought up as the adopted child of an Egyptian princess (Ex. 2:1–10) and thus likely schooled in a wide range of ancient Near Eastern literature, including various origin stories.

We need not therefore suppose that everything in Genesis was composed by Moses *de novo*; under the inspiration of God, he would likely have been using and interacting with a wide variety of preexisting literature. The opening chapters of Genesis form a clear polemic against other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts and also provide a positive statement of the true nature of things, as we would expect. Moses likely had access to a variety of records, written and oral, concerning the early history of the Abrahamic families. The laws that Moses ordained for his people in the remainder of the Pentateuch probably drew on, as well as challenged, other ancient Near Eastern standards of justice. Yet Moses' pen was guided throughout by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There is a remarkable coherence to the entire Pentateuch—and within it to the book of Genesis—that would be hard to account for if it were the result of a series of mergers and edits by multiple rather clumsy hands with conflicting beliefs and interests over centuries of

transmission. Many of the supposed "doublets" and "contradictions" from which these theories flow can be better accounted for by a closer study of the literary artistry of the author.

There are a few places at which minor editorial changes have been made to make the work more accessible to later generations, such as the identification of 'Dan' as the city where Abram pursued Lot's kidnappers (Gen. 14:14). Dan did not acquire that name until the time of the Judges. Likewise, the final chapter of Deuteronomy, recording the death of Moses and the lack of a prophet like him since that time (Deut. 34:10–12), must also postdate the time of Moses. Such oddities are few and far between, however, and there is no reason to doubt the traditional attribution of the Pentateuch (and thus of Genesis) to Moses himself.

Date and Occasion

If the author of Genesis is in fact Moses, the time of writing would be during Israel's wilderness wanderings, after the exodus (Exodus 14) and prior to the entry into the Promised Land under Joshua (Joshua 1–11). Depending on the date of the exodus, which is variously placed in the fifteenth or thirteenth century BC, Genesis would be dated to roughly the same time period. While there is nothing corresponding to the Pentateuch in the literature of the time, there are parallels to many of the component parts—origin stories, family sagas, laws, epic poetry, and so on. Indeed, since no people has ever existed without origin stories and laws of some kind or another, if we did not have the Pentateuch we would have to postulate the existence of many separate similar materials, whether in oral or written form. Israel's unique constitution as a "people of the book" and the central place of Moses as lawgiver and author (e.g., Josh. 1:13; 1 Kings 2:3) are hard to account for if Moses in fact wrote little or nothing.

As a new nation, Israel had its relationship with God sealed at Mount Sinai in the form of a covenant (Exodus 19–24). However, that was far from the beginning of its interactions with this God, who had revealed himself much earlier as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). That backstory was of vital importance to Israel's self-identity, as well as its understanding of that covenant relationship. The Sinai covenant was not an entirely new and different covenant but a further development of the covenant God had made with Abraham in Genesis 15, sealed with the sign of circumcision in Genesis 17. In addition the people of Israel needed to understand who they were as human beings in relationship to God, in relationship to other human beings, and in relationship to the world God had created. As those created in the image of God, they had rights and responsibilities (Gen. 1:26–28). In Abraham they had been called to be blessed and to be a blessing to all peoples on earth (12:1–3). And, like Abraham and Sarah, they too were called to look forward to the promised seed of the woman, who would bruise the serpent's head and restore all creation to its destiny (3:15).

One small detail highlights the original setting of Genesis during the wilderness wanderings: the identity of Egypt as a place of tempting fruitfulness

(12:10–20; 13:10). It is not coincidental that Hagar, who is repeatedly called "the Egyptian" (16:3; 21:9; 25:12), is fertile, while the wife of promise, Sarah, is barren. Nor is it coincidental that the property Lot chooses outside the Land of Promise is "like the land of Egypt" (13:10), while the Promised Land is repeatedly wracked with famine. This theme would have resonated with Israel in the wilderness, as the people were constantly tempted to look back to Egypt with longing as the place of food and fertility (Num. 11:5; 14:3). Moses repeatedly reminds his hearers that the "Egyptian option," while outwardly looking attractive, never constitutes the pathway to blessing.[2]

Genre and Literary Features

The Pentateuch as a whole comprises a dizzying array of different genres and perhaps should be seen as a unique example of its own genre. So too Genesis includes an array of origin stories, historical narratives, and genealogies, as well as a smattering of laws and explanations of laws (e.g., Gen. 9:6; 32:32). Origin stories are distinct from historical narratives not because they are necessarily nonhistorical but because their focus is on providing an explanation of reality, both natural and supernatural. Thus the narratives in Genesis 1–11 have global implications that stretch forward through time in a way that the narratives in Genesis 12–50 do not.

One of the distinctive features of the biblical origin story is its profound historical rootedness, in contrast to similar ancient Near Eastern accounts, which are not directly connected to present-day history in the same way. The events described do not take place in a galaxy far, far away but in the same world we inhabit, to people to whom the first hearers were directly related. Indeed, a common function of linear genealogies is to establish a vital relationship between the first and last members of the listing,[3] and that purpose certainly applies to many of the Genesis linear genealogies. Certain positions in linear genealogies may be particularly significant, especially the seventh, tenth, and twelfth generations. Segmented genealogies, on the other hand, primarily define family connections—"insiders" and "outsiders" for the purposes of particular definitions of family. For example, the table of nations in Genesis 10 defines all humanity as part of the Adamic family—a very inclusive definition in a world that included those ready to deny the full humanity of outsiders, or "barbarians." On the other hand, the table also distinguishes within that larger family three smaller groupings that are singled out for a closer or more distant relationship with the line of promise.

The largest part of Genesis—and indeed its overall genre—is historical narrative. As Meir Sternberg has pointed out, biblical narratives have three driving impulses: history, ideology (or perhaps "theology"), and literary artistry.[4] That is,

2 Cf. Iain M. Duguid, "Hagar the Egyptian: A Note on the Allure of Egypt in the Abraham Cycle," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 419–421.
3 Cf. Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 9.
4 Meir K. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Reading and the Drama of Scripture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 41–48.

these stories can be appreciated for their literary skill and beauty, but they have always been intended to convey a message to their hearers, and they are also rooted and grounded in historical events. Of these three, history is foundational: it would have mattered to an ancient audience, as it should to a modern audience, whether these events actually happened as described.[5] Yet, at the same time, because these stories are important parts of God's story, these real events convey vital lessons to readers about ourselves, our world, and our God (1 Cor. 10:11). Moreover, these stories are so vital for us to understand that they not only *may* be but *must* be recounted with great literary skill and attention to detail. To be boring or trite in speaking of such events and such a God would be a sin in its own right.[6]

Theology of Genesis and the Relationship to the Rest of the Bible and to Christ

Insofar as it is an origin story, the book of Genesis has a strong polemic note to it, proclaiming a different perspective on who God is, how he created the world, who humans and animals are, and the purpose for which we exist. Since it proclaims itself to be the revelation of the only true God, who made all things in heaven and on earth and for whom and by whom all things exist, it cannot stand as merely one perspective among many; either it must be accepted as true and therefore allowed to govern our worldview in all of its different dimensions, or it must be rejected as false in favor of some other origin story, ancient or modern. The book of Genesis does not explicitly cite alternative origin stories; it simply lays out its own story, but it does so in many respects in conscious disagreement with the origin stories of Israel's neighbors, with their multiple competing gods, fundamentally chaotic worlds, and low view of humanity. In the same way, the book of Genesis does not have to mention modern humanistic worldviews in order to challenge them at the most fundamental level.

DOCTRINE OF GOD AND CREATION

In contradiction to ancient Near Eastern worldviews, the Genesis creation account involves only one God, who goes by the generic title "God" and the covenantal name "Yahweh" ("the LORD"). The two names are (unusually for Scripture) juxtaposed as "the LORD God" in Genesis 2–3 in order to make clear that the one God who created the heavens and the earth is Israel's God, the one who delivered them from the land of Egypt. What is more, in the Genesis account there is no conflict involved in the creation of the world. Unlike in other Near Eastern creation stories, there are no battles against the forces of chaos. Instead there is simply the serene ordering of space and time via God's word. This God has no rivals and faces no threats to his authority. He is good, and so is the world that he creates, which he blesses and fills with the potential for life to multiply (Gen. 1:28–31).

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5 See Peter's warning in the NT about the danger of "cleverly devised myths" (2 Pet. 1:16), as well as Paul's contrast between "the truth" and "myths" (2 Tim. 4:4).

6 As Martyn Lloyd-Jones remarked, "How can a man be dull when he is handling such themes? I would say that a 'dull preacher' is a contradiction in terms; if he is dull, he is not a preacher. He may stand in a pulpit and talk, but he is certainly not a preacher." Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 100–101.

Yet, even though the world as created in the beginning is good, it is not eternal. It has a beginning: there was a time when creation was not. What is more, it has a goal: the Sabbath pattern built into the world by God, with a day of rest at the end of the creation week, is intended to point mankind forward from the beginning to the fulfillment of creation's purpose (2:1–4). Unlike some other ancient worldviews, creation is not an ever-repeating cycle of life; it came from somewhere and is going somewhere as well.

DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

Other ancient Near Eastern origin stories assign a low place to humanity in general, and an even lower place to women. According to an Assyrian proverb, "Man is the shadow of a god, a slave is the shadow of a man; but the king is like the (very) image of a god."[7] Kings may perhaps be related to the gods, but ordinary people are not—still less slaves and women. In contrast, the biblical account relates how all human beings—Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free—are created in God's image, with an inherent dignity that comes with that status (1:26–28). Our status is not based on our functional competencies (the fact that we are reasoning, relational, and religious creatures) but is ontological: we are made in the image of God, no matter how poor, weak, or incapacitated we may be. Yet there is also an order in human relationships: even prior to the fall Eve is created to be Adam's helper, corresponding to him and completing him (2:18–24). The original couple are not identical and interchangeable but complementary in their differences.

In the Genesis account human beings are like the animals in being created on the sixth day but unlike them in being created in the image of God, inbreathed with God's very breath, in the language of Genesis 2:7. We are called to rule over the lower aspects of creation as God's representatives—not harshly or in an exploitative way but by imitating the rule of our heavenly Father, whose reign is a blessing to all creation. It is significant that it is as the image of God that mankind is assigned dominion over the world (1:26).

Since we are made in the image of God, we are also crafted to be revelation receivers; we are designed for a personal relationship with God in a way that other aspects of creation are not. The sun and moon may declare God's glory by obeying his laws (Ps. 19:1–4), but human beings are designed to glorify God and enjoy him in a unique way. For this reason God places the first humans in a sanctuary-garden, where they might enjoy his presence and glorify him through their happy obedience (cf. 3:8).

DOCTRINE OF SIN

One of the ways in which God communicates with Adam and Eve is to give to Adam his law (2:16–17). This law is not burdensome; indeed, it begins with a command to eat freely from all the trees of the garden (save one)! Yet, when the serpent questions the intent behind this law, impugning God's kindness and goodness,

7 *ANET*, 425.

Eve breaks the law by eating the forbidden fruit and then gives some to Adam, who is with her (3:1–6). The order of creation is turned upside down, with catastrophic consequences not only for Adam and Eve but for the entire created order. Humanity now groans under a curse, affecting men and women at their deepest levels, and creation groans alongside them (Rom. 8:19–23). Far from becoming like God, as the serpent claimed (Gen. 3:5), human rebellion leads to the entry of death into the world (Rom. 5:12).

THE DOCTRINE OF JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION

The first doctrine that the serpent denies is God's ability to judge rebels. God had said, "In the day that you eat of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17), whereas the serpent boldly claims, "You will not surely die" (3:4). But Satan, whom the serpent represents (Rev. 12:9), has been a "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), and God is more than capable of judging his wayward creation (Gen. 18:25). What is perhaps more surprising, however, is the Lord's desire to redeem fallen humans. As Exodus 34:6–7 makes clear, the Lord is the judge of the guilty but also full of compassion and mercy, abounding in steadfast love (Hb. *khesed*) and faithfulness. His grace is revealed immediately in the garden, as the sentence of death is delayed and a promise made of an ultimate transformation of the curse of the fall upon creation through the coming of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Sin will not have ultimate dominion over humanity (Rom. 6:14). These themes of judgment and redemption are reprised at the time of the flood, when all humanity turns aside to sin except for one man—Noah, whose righteousness redeems his family in the face of a worldwide outpouring of divine wrath (Genesis 6–8). Yet Noah and his family are themselves sinners, and there is no hope for ultimate deliverance through a mere man (cf. Genesis 9). The promises of God are reiterated on this side of the flood, but the problem of sin remains as challenging as ever.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

That promise of blessing through the seed of the woman would not be the result of human effort, no matter how lofty. The attempt by the builders of Babel to storm heaven's gates through their splendid tower accomplishes nothing but further judgment upon themselves (11:1–9). Hope for humanity will come only from God, and it does so in his calling of Abram and Sarai to go from Ur of the Chaldeans and sojourn in a backwater province called Canaan (11:27–12:3). Through them and their offspring God will restore blessing to all nations. Yet the faith of Abram and Sarai is deeply tested, first as they must wait for a son, and then as they almost see that son offered back to God as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). But on the mountain God instead provides a lamb as a figure showing ahead of time how he will win blessing for the world.

Through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob God gradually builds up the nucleus of what will become a great nation, Israel, which will be called to become a worshiping

"company of peoples" (Gen. 28:3), a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). Yet the sins of the patriarchs are visible to all: it is clear that God does not choose them because they are better than those whom God passes over. Eventually God will use the enslavement of Joseph by his own brothers and their selling him to slave traders in order to save their lives and protect them in a great famine. What they mean for evil, God means for good (Gen. 50:20). Yet at the end of Genesis the promises of offspring, land, and blessing are merely beginning to unfold. It is clear that, if the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is only for this world, they are of all men most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). But in fact their faith shines out through even their deaths and burials; by faith they look forward after death to receiving a city with foundations that God will build (Heb. 11:10).

That is where the story ends in Genesis—but only so that it can be picked up again and resolved throughout the rest of Scripture. The people who go down to Egypt as a place of protection find it transformed into a place of bondage, just as God had told Abraham (Gen. 15:13). As promised, however, God brings them out of Egypt with a mighty arm in the exodus and leads them into possession of the land of Canaan (cf. Joshua 1–12). Like post-flood humanity, post-exodus Israel continues to be as sinful as its forefathers, wracked with grumbling and unbelief (cf. the book of Numbers). The Lord provides godly leaders, yet the people rebel against them, either during the leader's reign or after his death. It gradually became clear through the OT that Israel itself is not the answer to the world's problems.

What is needed is the promised seed of the woman, a new Adam and new Israel who will triumph where the first Adam and first Israel fail. That promised seed of the woman is Jesus Christ, God himself taking on humanity in order to redeem his creation. The lamb that God provides to take Isaac's place in Genesis 22 foreshadows the Lamb of God, come to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29) through his own death and resurrection. This good news is now preached not merely to Israel but to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The God of judgment and mercy has triumphed in Christ and will one day complete the transformation of this cursed world into a "new heavens and a new earth" at Christ's return (2 Pet. 3:13). Then we will be restored to the kind of face-to-face intimacy with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed—only better, because there will be no risk of losing it due to sin. We are even now a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), God's beloved children, upon whom the fullness of his blessing rests (Eph. 1:3–14).

Preaching from the Book of Genesis and Interpretive Challenges

Preaching from Genesis, as from any book of the Bible, should focus our eyes on the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (Luke 24:26, 46–47). The Scriptures are never intended simply to provide historical information and moral guidance, though they certainly contain both of those. The origin stories at the beginning of Genesis are intended to counter alternative ancient and modern origin stories (including the evolutionary narrative prevalent in our own time)

rather than to give a full scientific account of origins. Of course, the historical veracity of the biblical origin story matters, but it is easy to get sidetracked onto such matters to the point that the focus of the narrative itself becomes obscured. It may be better to schedule another opportunity outside a worship service to explore such apologetic issues at the appropriate depth, where people can ask their questions and receive good answers.[8] Preaching a text should focus on the point of the text itself rather than addressing ancillary matters, no matter how relevant to one's culture.

The length of the book of Genesis poses a different kind of challenge. The outline below breaks the text into approximately sixty literary units, which, if preached consecutively, would normally require fifteen to eighteen months, allowing for a few Sundays devoted to other topics. Even that pace requires moving through passages fairly quickly, often dealing with a chapter of narrative at a time, and such a series may be felt to be too long for a contemporary audience. However, it could easily be broken into four sections: Genesis 1–11 (Origins), 12–25 (Abraham), 26–36 (Isaac and Jacob), and 37–50 (Joseph).[9] This would allow other series to be interspersed with Genesis for a more balanced diet over, say, a three- or four-year period. Of course, some literary units probably do not merit an entire sermon in their own right (e.g., the family history of Ishmael in 25:12–18), while other literary units stretch over as much as three chapters (e.g., Genesis 43–45) and may require more than one sermon. In general, however, sermons ought to roughly match a literary unit in order to ensure that the point of the sermon matches the point of that unit. Shorter preaching units lend themselves to taking a minor point out of context and elevating it to become the main point.

The earlier assertion that the central focus of each text in Genesis is "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that will follow" (sometimes called a "Christ-centered" or "redemptive-historical" approach to preaching) raises the question of application. To what extent may we (must we?) use the human characters of the text to derive moral lessons for our hearers? Some preachers shy away almost completely from such application, for fear of moralism.[10] Yet, while teaching "life lessons" may not be the primary purpose of Scripture, the OT and NT point out that there are at least some insights that we ought to glean from those who have preceded us in our earthly pilgrimages. Isaiah 51:2 holds up Abraham and Sarah as positive models of faith for a later generation,[11] while the writer to the Hebrews warns against sharing the unbelief of the wilderness generation

8 Helpful resources include, among many others, Iain M. Duguid, *Thinking about Science, Faith, and Origins: A (Very) Short Introduction* (Glenside, PA: St. Colme's Press, 2019); Vern Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

9 E.g., Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap between Promise and Reality: The Gospel according to Abraham*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015); *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel according to Isaac and Jacob*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015); Iain M. Duguid and Matthew P. Harmon, *Living in the Light of Inextinguishable Hope* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013).

10 Cf. Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (1970; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock). His later works, including *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007) are notably light on application and critical of the applicatory efforts of others (e.g., *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 378).

11 Compare John 8:39, where Jesus assumes that we can identify at least some of Abraham's works that we should imitate. However, Ezekiel 33:24 demonstrates how easy it is to draw the wrong lesson from such efforts!

(Heb. 3:7–19). Paul goes so far as to say, "These things took place as examples for us" (1 Cor. 10:6–11). The Scriptures are *more* than moral instruction, to be sure, but not less.

Indeed, this is typically how stories work. Leland Ryken puts it like this: "Heroic narrative springs from one of the most ancient and persistent impulses of literary art, namely, the desire to embody accepted norms of thought and action in the story of a protagonist whose destiny is regarded as being representative or exemplary. The true hero expresses an accepted social or moral norm."[12] Of course, the biblical account is not merely "heroic narrative"; it is part of the unfolding revelation of God's plan of salvation, which often progresses in spite of, rather than because of, the actions of the "hero." What is more, the correct lessons to infer from the behavior of biblical characters are not always straightforward. They text is rarely divided neatly into "heroes" and "villains," and the narrator often sets characters' behavior before us without overt moral comment. Sometimes, in narratives as in real life, we must interpret a character's complex behavior in the light of the larger trajectory of his life and the narrative as a whole. Not every action is easy to interpret, and there will be times when good expositors will disagree about the interpretation of a character.

To give a concrete example, I take quite a negative view of the character of Lot in Genesis, based on his downward trajectory throughout the narrative from the moment he leaves Abraham and sets off toward Sodom (Genesis 13–19) until he ends up living a degraded life in a cave, deceived and abused by his daughters (19:30–38). Yet 2 Peter 2:7 calls him "righteous Lot," so other commentators have taken a more positive view of his actions. To be sure, the presupposition of the text is that Lot is "righteous"; the conversation between Abraham and the Lord in Genesis 18:23–33 concerns how to deliver the righteous from the coming judgment, and Lot and his immediate family are the only ones rescued. However, "righteous" people behave in all sorts of ungodly ways in Genesis, and the message is perhaps that even very compromised and hesitant sinners may be saved by God's grace. Often the message of a biblical narrative is not "Be like this biblical hero" but rather "Don't be like him or her; instead, be thankful that God's grace in Christ extends to sinners like us, who all too often fail in the same way, and strive out of gratitude for the gospel to live in a manner that is worthy of the grace you have received."

This brings us to see how we may preach Christ from all the Scriptures, not merely from passages with an "obvious" connection, such as Genesis 3:15 or 49:8–12. In reality, every biblical passage challenges our thinking and behavior and exposes our hearts in some way or another. As sinners we do not treat those around us as made in the image of God (Genesis 1), we do not resist Satan's siren call to trust our eyes over God's Word (Genesis 3), we use our technology and sexuality to make a reputation for ourselves rather than to glorify God (Genesis 4), and so on. Every passage of Scripture is thus "law" in a sense, in that it convicts

12 Leland Ryken, *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 45.

us of our sin and is designed to drive us to see our need of Christ as believers and unbelievers.

Moralistic preaching short-circuits that process by presenting our own righteousness as the answer to our sin, as if the Scripture simply provides us with examples of people we should either imitate or shun. Our salvation and our sanctification depend on ourselves and our effort in this schema. But the gospel points us instead to Christ's righteousness as the answer to our sin, whether we are unbelievers who need to come to Christ for salvation or believers who need to go back to Christ in gratitude for his perfect obedience in our place. Christ-centered preaching does not place another brick in the believer's backpack, crushing him with yet more guilt, but instead joyfully brings him back to see the perfect righteousness of Christ in his place. Its goal is thus thoroughly doxological, leaving our hearts motivated to love and praise God.[13]

Preaching that avoids application altogether, on the other hand, tends to act as though the law of the passage no longer has any relevance for us as believers. Yet, if the law is holy and good (Rom. 7:12), then it should still be "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" (Ps. 119:105). God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13) and has begun a good work in us that he will bring to "completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). As a result, the believer should find himself asking, "How do I live a life of grateful obedience to this God who has loved me so overwhelmingly? What difference should this passage make in my life on Monday morning?" The wise preacher will help to answer those questions via skilled application.

Such application requires a proper understanding of the unfolding of redemptive history. Obedience for Abraham did not look identical to obedience for Joshua, or David, or Jesus, or Paul; the Bible does not merely give us "timeless truths." Of course, some of God's laws remain unchanged throughout history: you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not commit adultery; and so on (Ex. 20:1–17). These laws have traditionally been called "moral laws." Others relate to the ceremonies and sacrifices designed to point forward specifically to the coming of Christ and are therefore no longer in operation—what are often called "ceremonial laws." Still other OT laws are designed to provide specific application of God's wisdom to Israel's situation in the land of Canaan under the Sinai covenant, such as the law forbidding harvesting all the way to the edge of one's fields, in order to make provision for the able-bodied poor (Lev. 19:9–10). These laws do not bind us directly but have a more generalized application to the different specifics of our society; these are commonly called "civil laws."[14] Any preaching from the OT must consider into which of these three categories the "law of the passage" fits. Yet any and all of these categories will in some way point us to Christ as the remedy for our sin through his suffering and death and as the provider of our righteousness through his own perfect and holy keeping of this law.

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13 Thomas Chalmers, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection," in *Sermons and Discourses* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1877) 2.271–277.

14 On this cf. Iain M. Duguid, *Is Jesus in the Old Testament?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013).

Outline

I. Prologue: The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (1:1–2:3)
   A. Introductory Summary Statement (1:1)
   B. Pre-creation Situation (1:2)
   C. Narrative of Creation (1:3–31)
   D. Concluding Summary Statement (2:1)
   E. Epilogue/Climax: Sabbath Rest (2:2–3)
II. The Family History of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
   A. Adam and Eve in the Garden (2:4–25)
   B. The Fall (3:1–24)
   C. Cain and Abel (4:1–26)
III. The Family History of Adam (5:1–6:8)
   A. From Adam to Noah (5:1–32)
   B. The Spread of Wickedness (6:1–8)
IV. The Family History of Noah (6:9–9:29)
   A. Announcement of Judgment and Salvation (6:9–22)
   B. God's Judgment Descends (7:1–24)
   C. God Remembers Noah (8:1–14)
   D. Celebrating Salvation (8:15–22)
   E. A New Beginning (9:1–17)
   F. Blessing and Curse on the Next Generation (9:18–29)
V. The Family History of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)
   A. The Table of Nations (10:1–32)
   B. The Tower of Babylon (11:1–9)
VI. The Family History of Shem (11:10–26)
VII. The Family History of Terah (11:27–25:11)
   A. Introducing Abram and Sarai (11:27–32)
   B. The Call of Abram (12:1–3)
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   E. Abram and Lot Separate (13:5–18)
   F. A Tale of Two Kings (14:1–24)
   G. Abram Believed God (15:1–21)
   H. Abram and Hagar (16:1–16)
   I. The Lord Renews Covenant with Abra(ha)m (17:1–27)
   J. The Friend of God (18:1–33)
   K. The Destruction of Sodom and the Rescue of Lot (19:1–38)
   L. Abraham and Abimelech (20:1–18)
   M. The Birth of Isaac (21:1–7)
   N. Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away (21:8–21)
   O. Peace with Abimelech (21:22–34)
   P. The Binding of Isaac (22:1–19)
   Q. The Family of Nahor (22:20–24)

GENESIS 1:1–2:3

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth
was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

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

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse[1] in the midst of the waters, and
let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 And God made[2] the expanse
and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters
that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse
Heaven.[3] And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together
into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the
dry land Earth,[4] and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.
And God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants[5] yielding seed,
and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its
kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation,
plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit
in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was
good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to
separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for sea-
sons,[6] and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of
the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 And God made
the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light
to rule the night—and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of
the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the
night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it
was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures,
and let birds[7] fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21 So
God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves,
with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged
bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God
blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the
seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and
there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to
their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth accord-
ing to their kinds." And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth
according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and

everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man[8] in our image, after our likeness.
And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of
the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every
creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

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

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply
and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on
the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding
seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.
You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every
bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything
that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it
was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was
very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of
them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had
done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had
done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God
rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

1 Or *a canopy*; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 2 Or *fashioned*; also verse 16 3 Or *Sky*; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 4 Or *Land*; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 5 Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29 6 Or *appointed times* 7 Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20 8 The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

Section Overview

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, as the first word (Hb. *bereshit*, "In the beginning") suggests. Indeed, that first word is the Hebrew title for the book. The subject of the opening sentence is the subject of the entire passage and, we might add, the entire Bible: God. The object of the opening sentence, the heavens and the earth—creation, in other words—is the object of the entire passage. At the outset the Bible makes clear that there is one universal God, that he created all things, and that he himself is quite distinct from the world he has created. The origin of the world tells us a great deal about its nature and destiny in seed form and therefore much about who we are as human beings and that for which we have been designed. We ourselves are not gods, defining our own identity and living for our own glory; we are creatures, made in the image of our Creator in order to glorify and enjoy him forever.

Every story in the world thus begins with Genesis 1 and unfolds against the foundational backdrop that this chapter paints. One story runs from the beginning of Genesis through to the end of Genesis, which begins in a garden-sanctuary but ends in a grave in Egypt. Yet it is not without hope: Joseph's bones are buried in

a portable coffin (Gen. 50:24–26) so that, when (not if) the exodus occurs, he may posthumously join in the journey to the Promised Land alongside his people. That storyline finds its fulfillment in the book of Deuteronomy, which recounts Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and to the brink of the Promised Land.

Another storyline that begins with Genesis 1:1 runs connectedly through to the end of 2 Kings, when Israel's possession of the Promised Land is brought to an end by her sin, and the people find themselves in exile in Babylon. A third story that begins with Genesis ends with the book of Malachi (or 2 Chronicles, if one follows the Hebrew ordering of the OT), with Israel's having returned from exile to rebuild the ruins in the land of Judah. But all these stories are incomplete. The full account of the world that God creates runs all the way to the end of the book of Revelation, whereupon the lost paradise of Eden is replaced with a fully restored new Jerusalem and the original heavens and earth are transcended by a new heavens and new earth, now inhabited forever by multitudes of people, not just from Israel but from every tribe, nation, and language—all those who are Abraham's spiritual children through faith in Christ (cf. Romans 4).

The creation of the world is described in two distinct accounts, Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Genesis 2:4–25. Each of these accounts has its own focus and distinct contribution, just as each of the four Gospel accounts gives its own picture of Jesus—the differences between them are not contradictory but complementary. In the opening account (Gen. 1:1–2:3) the focus is on the creation of the whole universe by an utterly transcendent God (*'elohim*), who has neither peers nor rivals but establishes the world exactly as he pleases through his sovereign Word. That creation finds its focus and pinnacle in humanity, made in God's image as male and female, created for a special role ruling over the other animals, not just living among them (1:26–28), and in the Sabbath, the seventh day of divine and human rest (2:2–3).

In Genesis 2:4–25 the lens zooms in to examine more closely the creation of Adam and Eve, their location in the garden-sanctuary God makes for them, and their special roles and relationship. In this section God appears under his covenant name, Yahweh ("the LORD"), by which he later reveals himself to Moses and delivers his people from Egypt. In Genesis 3 the two names are brought together in the composite *yahweh 'elohim* ("the LORD God") in order to guard against any misunderstanding in a polytheistic environment that there might be two different creator gods, Yahweh and Elohim. The theme of this entire opening section is "It was good" (seven times in Genesis 1). In the beginning God orders and makes a universe of vast scope and minute detail that is good in every aspect, and he sets humanity to rule over it under his authority so that they might eventually enter into his rest.

Section Outline

I. Prologue: The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (1:1–2:3)
   A. Introductory Summary Statement (1:1)
   B. Pre-creation Situation (1:2)

C. Narrative of Creation (1:3–31)
D. Concluding Summary Statement (2:1)
E. Epilogue/Climax: Sabbath Rest (2:2–3)

Comment

1:1 The book of Genesis opens with an introductory statement that sums up God's great work in history: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."[15] This summary statement covers the whole of what follows in Genesis 1 and is balanced by the summary completion statement in Genesis 2:1: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."

The Hebrew word "create" (*bara'*) generally implies a finished product, not merely the manufacture of raw materials.[16] So when Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, it does not mean (as some have thought) that he creates the raw materials in verse 1, out of which he then proceeds to create the cosmos in the remainder of the chapter (perhaps after a lengthy gap of time). "Created" describes the end of the process, not the various stages in that process.

The word *bara'* by itself does not necessarily imply creation *ex nihilo* (cf. Ps. 51:10), and indeed it is used synonymously with *'asah* ("to make") in Genesis 1. However, it is always used, when God is its subject, to describe the origin of things that he alone can manufacture. What is more, the combination "heaven and earth" functions as a merism, so together these terms include everything that exists, implying that *ex nihilo* doctrine.

What this means is that "In the beginning" in Genesis 1:1 refers not to a time prior to creation but rather to the initial six days of creation, as a summary heading; the rest of the chapter lays out the development of God's initial purpose in the ordering of space and time.

1:2 Having begun with a universal focus ("the heavens and the earth"), the creation account immediately focuses on the center of God's purpose, which is the earth. Its initial state is *tohu vabohu* ("without form and void"), a rhyming pair in Hebrew that is hard to translate. *Tohu* often refers to the wilderness or wasteland (cf. Deut. 32:10; Isa. 34:11), and the combination with *bohu* is used in Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 in judgment passages, where formerly habitable land is rendered uninhabitable. The reference here is thus not so much to a primordial chaos, as older scholars argued, but to a wilderness that is unsuitable for life ("desolate and empty") yet transformed into a perfect environment.[17] The unusual dual combination *tohu vabohu* alludes to the two-phase creation project, God's forming the environments in days 1–3 and filling those environments with occupants in days 4–6.

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15 Some have argued the alternative translation, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was unformed and void" (NJPS) on the basis of an alleged similarity to ancient Near Eastern creation stories, such as the Enuma Elish. However, these similarities have been overstated, and all the ancient versions (along with John 1:1, and probably Mark 1:1 as well) presuppose the traditional understanding; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 137–138.

16 Cf. Psalm 51:10, where David asks the Lord to "create" a new heart in him, or Isaiah 4:5, where the Lord will "create" a pillar of cloud and fire over Mount Zion.

17 David T. Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 33–35.

The deep sea and darkness were the most inhospitable conditions to life for the Israelite, so "darkness . . . over the face of the deep" describes a wilderness that must necessarily be devoid of life. Yet even this scene is not hopeless, because over it all is the Spirit of God, hovering like an eagle over its chicks (cf. Deut. 32:10–11). Without God the scene would be one of total, hopeless desolation, but when God is present—whether in a universe or in the life of an individual—he brings life, order, and hope. Even the most inhospitable conditions cannot prevent him from establishing life in a world of beauty, splendor, and majesty—the best of all possible worlds. In Genesis 1 the darkness and the sea are the elements from which the cosmos takes shape, but in the new creation described in Revelation 21 even these are gone: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more" (Rev. 21:1); "Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there" (Rev. 21:25).

The phrase "Spirit of God" (*ruakh 'elohim*) could also be rendered "wind of God" or "mighty wind," which draws our attention to the parallel situation at the height of Noah's flood (Gen. 8:1). Then too darkness was upon the face of the deep: water was everywhere and every living soul perished, except for the few occupants of the ark. But when God remembered Noah and sent his *ruakh* over the waters, he once again brought life and hope out of a wilderness world.

1:3–5 Having described the inhospitable pre-creation state in verse 2, Genesis 1 goes on to report the process of creation by the word of God. It is described as taking place over six days, each of which has the same basic structure. The day begins with an *announcement*: "And God said." God's will is expressed through his all-powerful word. Following the announcement comes a *commandment* ("Let there be") and a *report* ("And so God made . . . and he separated"). The report is followed by *naming*, as God not only brings the universe into existence but defines its essential nature. God names only the basic ecosystems, the static life-support systems; the animals, in contrast, he brings to Adam, the first man, for him to name as an act of subordinate authority under God's rule (2:19–20). Finally, there is an *evaluation* ("And it was good") and the whole is placed within a sequential, *temporal framework* ("There was evening and there was morning"). The latter is an essential element of the creation narrative since it demonstrates that in creation God is ordering not merely cosmic space but time as well. In contrast to ancient views of history that were cyclical or essentially timeless, the biblical understanding of history is linear, proceeding from an origin point ("the beginning") and moving toward an ending point, as anticipated by the Sabbath rest that is the goal of the original creation week.

In addition to the repeated themes within the days, there are also patterns that run across the days. For instance, the six days subdivide into two sets of three days. In the first three days, with four creative words (each beginning with "And God said") God creates the spaces and life-support systems of the universe:

(1) light (one word; 1:3–5)
(2) sky and waters (one word; vv. 6–8)
(3) land and seas; vegetation (two words; vv. 9–10, 11–13).

In the first three days God replaces an inhospitable wilderness with an inhabitable universe. Then in the next three days, again with four creative words, God creates various moving creatures to fill these spaces:

(4) sun, moon, and stars (one word; vv. 14–19)
(5) fish and birds (one word; vv. 20–23)
(6) various beasts; humans (two words; vv. 24–25, 26–27).

In these last three days God replaces emptiness with fullness. The sun, moon, and stars on day four correspond to the light on day one; the fish and birds in day five correspond to the seas and skies in day two; and the beasts and man in day six correspond to the land and vegetation on day three. In each triad the creative work moves from the heavens to the water to the earth. Each triad ends with two creative words on the last day and with the earth's bringing something forth.

This structure is designed to call attention to the sixth day, which is the chronological and literary climax: the report of the sixth day takes up twice as much space as any other day. Not only that, but God breaks into poetry over the man he has created (v. 27); for the first time a day is deemed not simply good but "very good." This, the sixth day, with the creation of man, is the high point of the story so far, to be surpassed only by the seventh day and the cosmic rest it anticipates.

In keeping with the structure described earlier, the first day revolves around the creation of light and its separation from darkness (vv. 3–4). God is not said here to create darkness (though cf. Isa. 45:7), perhaps because darkness is perceived as a negative entity rather a positive one. Separation is a key concept in Genesis 1, flowing from the idea of there being a proper place for everything, with boundaries determined by God. A collapse in the boundaries between the distinct realms of light and darkness would be a sign of God's returning cosmos to chaos as an act of ultimate judgment (e.g., Zech. 14:6–7).

Light and darkness are thus imagined not in modern scientific terms as the presence or absence of electromagnetic radiation but rather as two distinct realms: a realm of light and a realm of darkness, each of which will receive its proper inhabitants on day four. These realms are given their names, "Day" and "Night," by God in an act of sovereign determination. The privilege of naming someone or something was a sign of power in the ancient world; for example, an Egyptian pharaoh renames Eliakim as "Jehoiakim" before placing him on the throne of Judah in place of his deposed brother (2 Kings 23:34). God is not sovereign merely over humans, on occasions giving them new names (cf. Genesis 17); he rules even over the foundational structures of the universe, such as day and night. His authority is finally evident in the new name that will be given to "the one who conquers" in Revelation 2:17.

By beginning his work with the creation of day and night God starts out by ordering time as well as space, a theme underlined by the refrain that divides the creative acts: "There was evening and there was morning, the [number] day" (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, etc.). Much ink has been spilled on the question of whether the days are normal, representational, or analogical. These questions are important, and each reader should be convinced in his or her own mind.[18] However, it is worth remembering that these questions would have been unlikely to occur to the original readers, or most readers throughout the history of the church, so the meaning of the passage should be able to be established without recourse to this discussion.

1:6–8 The second day begins with the creation of a *raqia'* ("expanse"; KJV: "firmament"). This word is hard to translate into English; the underlying Hebrew verb means to beat out metal (Isa. 40:19), though most uses of the noun refer back to the creational context. It seems plausible that the underlying metaphor depicts the bright sky as a metal mirror[19] that God has hammered out and set in place (Job 37:18), but the poetic image should not be pressed too strongly. Robert Alter suggests "vault," like a vaulted ceiling, which seems as good a concept as any.[20]

More importantly, the spreading out of the *raqia'* represents a mighty act of God's incomparable power, as well as establishing a fundamental division between the heavenly realm and the earthly (cf. Ezek. 1:22). The *raqia'* is part of the heavenly realm and may thus be named "the heavens," in contrast to the earth. It is also an element of the water cycle, dividing the waters above, from which the rain and dew descend, and the waters below, which include rivers as well as seas and the subterranean deeps (Gen. 1:6–8). As a result, God is sovereign over the provision of the life-giving elements of dew and rain, as well as the chaotic seas (cf. Psalm 29).

1:9–13 On the third day two creative words are spoken by God. His first word gathers the waters under the heavens, so that dry ground can appear (Gen. 1:9), which is then named "Earth" (v. 10; or "land"). After this the land is commanded to bring forth vegetation, which it does: each plant has within it the seed necessary to propagate itself according to its own kind (v. 12), stressing again the orderly universe that the Lord has created. This is the first occurrence of the word "seed," which will have a prominent role to play later in Genesis: like the plants, humans too carry seed, and each generation will reproduce the image of the father in the children. The distinction of different "kinds" of animals anticipates the later Levitical laws against mixing species (Lev. 19:19)—God's order for creation is to be respected.

Although the earth "brings forth" the plants, this is in no way conceived as a naturalistic process; these elements too are part of what God has made (cf. Gen. 1:24–25, where the animals that the earth brings forth are "made" by God). The lesson for an agricultural community is obvious: God makes the ground fruitful,

18 Those who are interested in thinking more deeply about the relationship of science and origins may find help from the author's short ebook *Thinking about Science* or the fuller treatment by Vern Poythress, *Redeeming Science*.
19 E.g., the descriptions of the (cloudless) sky as being "like iron" in Leviticus 26:19.
20 Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Norton, 2004), 17.

not the pagan deities. Vegetation belongs in the first triad of days because it does not move, unlike the various elements of the second triad.[21]

1:14–19 On day four the second triad of days begins, as the spaces created in the first triad receive their occupants. Day and night were created on day one, and, correspondingly, God creates the sun, moon, and stars on day four (v. 16). Their purpose is also assigned: to distinguish between day and night; to distinguish between seasons, months, and years; and to act as signs, as well as the more obvious function of imparting light to the earth (vv. 14–15). The announcement in verses 14–15 is fulfilled in reverse order in verses 17–18, placing the focus on the creative act itself in verse 16.

The function of these heavenly bodies is carefully limited to providing services to those on earth. Though they have the honor of "rule" over day and night (v. 18), they have no independent status as deities, as they do in other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts. Indeed, the sun and moon are not even called by name in Genesis 1 but are denoted as "the greater light" and "the lesser light" (v. 16). The stars, which were conceived by many in antiquity as controlling human destinies and whose creation comes before the moon and the sun in the Enuma Elish, are almost an afterthought at the end of verse 16. Although the heavenly lights are good and useful to humanity, there is nothing in their nature that deserves worship or praise. Indeed, part of their function is to remind humans of the appropriate time to worship their Creator: *mo'adim* in verse 14, which the ESV renders "seasons," generally has religious festivals in view (cf. Lev. 23:2). The stars also serve as a testimony to the Lord's power and authority (cf. Ps. 19:1–6).

1:20–23 On day two the skies were formed first, followed by the seas, whereas on day five the skies and seas are populated in reverse order. The seas are filled with smaller, "swarms of living creatures" (Hb. *sherets*), which conjures up an image of abundant schools of fish (Gen. 1:20). The seas are also the home of "great sea creatures" (*tanninim*); these sea monsters, like Leviathan (cf. Job 41; Ps. 74:14), feature in cosmic battles in other ancient creation narratives, but in the biblical account they are merely one more of God's obedient creatures (Ps. 148:7).[22] There is no intense battle against chaos in Genesis 1, out of which the earth finally emerges. Rather there is the simple, repeated, unruffled combination "And God said . . . and it was so."

The skies are likewise filled with birds or, more precisely, "flying things" (cf. ESV mg.)—*'op* is a broader term than *zippor* ("bird"), encompassing insects and bats as well (cf. Lev. 11:19–20). All these are "living creatures" (*nepesh hakhayyah*; Gen. 1:21); like the beasts and humans, they are to be fruitful and multiply under God's

21 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 152.

22 For *tannin* in Ugaritic literature cf. M. K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 79. It is hard to find a suitable English word to translate the concept with suitably threatening connotation; when we think of "great sea creatures," we immediately think of whales, which we do not generally find particularly threatening, or perhaps sharks, which are dangerous but only as a natural threat. The supernaturally threatening connotations of the *tanninim*, like Behemoth and Leviathan in Job, tend to get obscured.

blessing in their proper place, in the waters of the seas and upon the earth (v. 22). The Levitical laws will later divide animals, birds, and insects into the categories of "clean" and "unclean," but these divisions are not there in the beginning: at the outset of creation all creatures are "good." They are "blessed" with the ability to procreate, a key linkage between the original creation and God's new order that will be established in Noah (9:1, 7), and ultimately in Abram in Genesis 12:1–3.

1:24–31 The sixth day parallels the third in that both record two creative words of God ("And God said"). On the third day the land appeared and brought forth vegetation, while on the sixth day the land brings forth animals and vegetation is assigned to them as food. As noted earlier, the sixth day is the literary and chronological climax of creation thus far, with the longest description of any of the days. The living creatures are brought forth from the earth and reproduce after their own kind, as was the case with vegetation (cf. 1:11–12). However, they acquire a special honor in being brought into existence on the same day as humanity, and, along with humanity, they are given the plants and trees as food (vv. 29–30).

The formation of humanity in the image of God is the climax of the sixth day, and with it of the entire creation week. Humans are the only part of creation addressed directly by God, setting them apart from all other creatures. The concept of all humanity, male and female, slave and free, as being made equally in the image of God was radically countercultural in the ancient Near East. A proverb dated to the reign of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (r. 681–669 BC) claims, "Man is the shadow of a god, a slave is the shadow of a man; but the king is like the (very) image of a god."[23] Women did not merit a mention in the proverb, being ranked even lower than slaves! In the Bible, however, women are fully equal to men in status, even though the sexes are assigned different roles in Genesis 2. This passage also shows that our gender as male or female is an essential feature of God's design from the beginning, not a mere social construct that can be reconfigured in a multitude of ways according to one's desires or feelings.

The importance of the decision to make mankind is underlined by the unusual act of self-deliberation preceding it: "Let us make man in our image" (v. 26).[24] This plural is not merely an address to the heavenly council. No such body appears in this passage (unlike in Isa. 6:8, where the plural may perhaps have that force), for reasons that should be obvious: nothing can distract from the relentless monotheism of the creative process. There is no divine or angelic being but God, the Lord, involved in creating the world (cf. Isa. 40:14). Humans are made not in the image of angels but in the image of God himself. There is not yet here a full revelation of the Trinity, but later biblical revelation fills out that doctrine, showing us God's creation by the Word (Jesus; cf. John 1:1–14), through the work of the Spirit (Gen. 1:2). In that regard it is intriguing that it is as "male and female" that humanity is made in God's image, hinting at the relational dimension at the heart of the

23 *ANET*, 425.
24 Cf. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 145.

Trinity as a differentiated unity. But no earthly analog can ultimately explain the mystery of the Trinity.

Genesis 1 does not unpack all that is involved in being made in the image of God. But this text is a striking affirmation for the OT, which is so resistant to any attempt to image God in worship in any form—human or nonhuman (Ex. 20:4).[25] In context, the emphasis on man's ruling over the lower creation as a vassal king fits the ancient Near Eastern emphasis on the relationship between image and kingship. There are a nobility and a rule assigned to humanity by being made in God's image, as well as the implication of the possibility of a relationship with the God who made us sufficiently like him that we could come to know him. Theologians have organized a number of attributes under this theme—rationality, morality, goodness, and so on—and have sometimes sought to distinguish between "image" (Hb. *tselem*) and "likeness" (*demut*). However, in Genesis these seem to be broadly synonymous terms, as is common in Hebrew poetry, and both image and likeness continue in man after the fall (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9), though damaged through sin and in need of renovation. Although God has no body, even our physical bodies reflect something of the nature of God: our ears reflect his power of hearing, and our arms image his power to save (cf. Deut. 26:8; Ps. 94:9). Since we are inscribed with God's image, we belong to him and owe him our service (cf. Matt. 22:20–21).

Having made humanity in his image, God then blesses them, turning his face toward them in favor (Num. 6:24–26) and endowing them with the gifts of fruitfulness and life (Gen. 1:28). Together as male and female they are to fill the earth with their offspring and subdue it—not in an oppressive way but by organizing it productively and beautifully so that its varied aspects cohere in form and function. In the beginning the animals and birds have no fear of humanity or each other, just as it will be in the new heavens and new earth (cf. Isa. 65:25).

As a final act of blessing, God provides food for humans and animals, assigning them plants and fruit as their food (Gen. 1:29–30). This does not necessarily mean that all creatures were vegetarians before the fall, any more than it means that humans could have eaten grass. The point is that God has made a world in which everything necessary for human and animal flourishing has been provided. The original inhabitants of the world God has made lack for nothing, so much so that at the end of the creative process God can survey the universe he has made and declare it "very good" (v. 31).

2:1–3 It might seem, now that the creative work is done, that the initial episode is over—hence the ending of chapter 1. The heavens and the earth (days 1–3) and all their inhabitants (days 4–6) are now in place (Gen. 2:1). However, the author adds a crucial seventh day to the week, recording the fact that on it God rests from all his labors (v. 2). Since God never gets tired or weary, this cannot be a rest for his own sake but makes sense only as a model for humanity, made in his image, to follow. Other cultures in antiquity had significant cycles of seven days, but the concept of

25 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 32.

breaking up time into a series of seven-day weeks seems to be original to the OT.[26] A seven-day system cuts across all natural rhythms that may be derived from the sun and moon (such as years and months) and therefore becomes a means for Israel to subordinate its time to God's rule. It is a weekly reminder that God made the universe without our help and that the universe can continue on without us. Six days of labor culminating in a seventh day of rest points humanity forward, even before the fall, from the work of this world to the ultimate rest for which humanity has been created. The original world, good though it was, was never intended to be humanity's final destination. God created time as well as space, and his intention from the very beginning was to bring both to an ultimate conclusion in Christ.

Response

Origin stories, like the one in Genesis 1:1–2:3, are designed to define the nature of the world and the relationships that exist within it. Who am I as a human being? How do I relate to God/the gods? How am I like or unlike the animals? What defines my purpose in life? Every culture, ancient or modern, that has ever existed has its own answers to these questions, which define our understanding of the reality around us. As a result, the biblical worldview is necessarily polemical, insofar as its origin story provides different answers to these questions than other worldviews do. In its ancient context it described a world made by one sovereign, all-powerful God—the same God, we learn in Genesis 2, who under the name Yahweh will make a covenant with Israel's forefathers and ultimately bring them out of the land of Egypt. In the biblical worldview there is no equally powerful force of chaos constantly threatening to undo the cosmos if the proper rituals are not performed by humans. There is no heavenly conflict between different gods with different agendas, some of whom may be for humanity but most of whom do not care about us. The only God makes everything good in the beginning.

To apply the insights of this passage in a modern context, we must ask about the modern answers to these questions. Many around us believe an origin story based (loosely)[27] on evolutionary ideas, in which there is no god (and therefore no being to whom humans are ultimately accountable). Reality around us is the result of a series of random chance events with no ultimate arbiter of truth; we therefore define for ourselves who we are and how we relate to other humans and animals, including foundational concepts such as the nature of gender or marriage. There is still some carryover of ideas from a more broadly Christian conception, such as the uniqueness of human beings, but these ideals are swiftly ebbing since they lack any proper foundation in a secular origin narrative.

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26 Cf. Ilaria Bultrighini and Sacha Stern, "The Seven-Day Week in the Roman Empire: Origins, Standardization and Diffusion," in *The Origins of Calendars from the Roman Empire to the Later Middle Ages*, ed. S. Stern (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 11. The authors are, however, incorrect in claiming that no event in the OT is recorded as taking place on the Sabbath: it is true that events are normally dated with reference to day and month, but several texts record historical events as taking place on a Sabbath, such as 2 Kings 11:5–9 and Nehemiah 13:15–21, demonstrating that at least in Jerusalem the practice was familiar at an early point of Israel's history.

27 I say "loosely" because in my experience most people, whether Christians or non-Christians, cannot accurately represent the current scientific theory of evolution. Nonetheless, its broad principles and the worldview that stems from adopting it as an origin story have become deeply embedded in our culture.

The biblical account provides the foundation for our understanding of racial and sexual equality, since both men and women are made in the image of God, without reference to a particular tribe or ethnicity (cf. Genesis 10). This provides an inherent value for persons based simply on their humanity, without regard to physical or mental capacities. That much sounds appealing to the modern world, especially since there is no similar basis for these concepts in the secular origin narrative.

However, the biblical origin story also calls us to submit to the Lord's rule over our lives, not least in the shape of a weekly Sabbath rest—something that is much less attractive to our culture. Although the OT ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath have passed away (Col. 2:16), the Sabbath as a foundational principle of life was made for man (and creation) at the outset of all things and therefore it is *prima facie* likely to be a persistent obligation and blessing (Heb. 4:1–13). The biblical origin story is not just a metaphorical (or mythical) account but rather an understanding of reality rooted in actual history. The story that begins in Genesis 1:1 continues on in unbroken fashion down to the lives of the patriarchs and the history of Israel as a nation. In this it is quite unlike other ancient Near Eastern creation narratives.

There was, however, another clear lesson for the generation to which Moses was writing. They found themselves in a literal desert, surrounded by *tohu vabohu* everywhere they looked. But even such unpromising conditions could not stand between them and their possession of the Land of Promise if God was on their side and his Spirit was hovering over them (cf. Deut. 32:10–12). That is a timeless lesson for God's people. Like the people of Isaiah's day, we often find ourselves walking in deep darkness and hopelessness (Isa. 9:2). We too need the life-giving light of the Lord's favor to shine upon us, bringing us deliverance from the darkness and chaos of our sin-entangled lives. As the apostle Paul reminds us, the same God who commanded the light to shine in the darkness in the beginning now shines his light in our hearts as well, enabling us to recognize the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). Our God will one day re-create his good world in all its intricate details as an eternal home for his redeemed people, and he invites us to share that inheritance through faith in Christ.

GENESIS 2:4–25

4 These are the generations
of the heavens and the earth when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field[1] was yet in the land[2] and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, **6** and a mist[3] was

going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—
7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living
creature. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and
there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the
LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and
good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree
of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided
and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one
that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And
the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The
name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the
whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which
flows east of Assyria.[4] And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to
work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying,
"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[5]
of it you shall surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a helper fit for[6] him." 19 Now out of the ground the LORD
God had formed[7] every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and
brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever
the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave
names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast
of the field. But for Adam[8] there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So
the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he
slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib
that the LORD God had taken from the man he made[9] into a woman and
brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."[10]

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to
his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife
were both naked and were not ashamed.

1 Or *open country* 2 Or *earth*; also verse 6 3 Or *spring* 4 Or *Asshur* 5 Or *when you eat* 6 Or *corresponding to*; also verse 20 7 Or *And out of the ground the* LORD *God formed* 8 Or *the man* 9 Hebrew *built* 10 The Hebrew words for *woman* (*ishshah*) and *man* (*ish*) sound alike

Section Overview

The majority of the book of Genesis is structured by ten *toledot* formulae (cf. comment on 2:4–7) scattered throughout the book. These formulae divide up the narrative into sections of varying sizes and significance but highlight the fact that Genesis is a connected family history—indeed, the title "Genesis" comes from the Greek translation of this word in the LXX. Genesis 1:1–2:3 stands outside this

literary structure, forming a prologue to the larger account, or, in musical terms, the overture to the symphony. Genesis 2:4 marks the first of these *toledot* formulae. This chapter covers ground parallel to Genesis 1 but focuses on the "things generated" by the heavens and the earth, especially the first humans, Adam and Eve. As in Genesis 1, the main actor in Genesis 2 is God—or more precisely "the LORD God" (*yhwh 'elohim*). He is the one who forms the man (2:7), plants the garden (v. 8), sovereignly places the man in the garden (v. 15), assigns him his tasks there (vv. 15, 16), notices his potential for loneliness (v. 18), and provides him with a bride (vv. 21–22).

As is Genesis 1:1–2:3, Genesis 2:4–25 is an origin story, a defining narrative that intends to shape its readers' understanding of the nature of reality. In this case the focus is on God's creation of a garden-sanctuary for the first couple and their disparate roles in God's design for marriage. As in Genesis 1, the key thought is that God creates all things good for humans—the single "not good" element, Adam's aloneness (Gen. 2:18), being swiftly rectified. This consistent picture makes all the more jarring the claims of the serpent in Genesis 3 that the Lord God does not have mankind's best interests at heart.

Section Outline

II. The Family History of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
  A. Adam and Eve in the Garden (2:4–2:25)

Comment

2:4–7 The Hebrew word *toledot* ("generations"; or "family history"[28]) comes from a root that means "to generate" or "to father a child"; the formula "These are the generations of X" typically introduces the history of X's offspring. Some scholars have argued that this is a closing rather than an opening formula, which would then include Genesis 1:1–2:3 in the larger structure of Genesis but at the cost of excluding 37:3–50:26.[29] It is clear, however, from the use of the formula elsewhere that it introduces the section that follows (cf. Num. 3:1; Ruth 4:18), and that makes the best sense in Genesis as well.

Here the creator God is identified as *yahweh 'elohim* ("the LORD God"), an unusual title that occurs more frequently in Genesis 2–3 than it does in the entirety of the rest of the OT. The reason for this change in title is not due to different source material, one with a different name for God (as many critical scholars claim). Rather it is an emphatic way in which the author can identify the transcendent God who created the universe in chapter 1 with the covenant deity, Yahweh, who led his people out of Egypt, while making it clear that there is only one God. In a pantheistic context great care would be necessary to avoid the misconception that a High God, Elohim, had made the world but then delegated the task of creating

28 This translation is preferred by Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 55.
29 The theory was advanced originally by P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1936), 47–60. For a fuller refutation cf. Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 8–10.

insignificant humanity to a lesser deity, Yahweh. No! In Israel's world there is only one God, and Yahweh is his name (cf. Deut. 6:4).

Having offered a chronological account of creation in Genesis 1, marked by repeated temporal notices, the author makes a more thematic presentation in Genesis 2. He starts by observing a twofold lack at a specific point in the creative process. Certain kinds of plants[30] had not yet been made because there was not yet a regular water source to support them, nor yet a human to cultivate them (Gen. 2:5). That twofold lack is no sooner introduced into the storyline than the Lord answers it by creating a water source and a caregiver. First he establishes a "mist" (or perhaps better a "raincloud") to provide rain,[31] and then he makes a man from the dust of the earth to care for these plants (vv. 6–7). This establishes a connection between humans (*'adam*) and the cultivation of the ground (*'adamah*; v. 5) that will be developed later in the garden (v. 15). The main point, however, is the immediate provision by the Lord of anything that is lacking, so that creation might be good for humanity. After the intervention of sin, however, the twin blessings of tilling the ground and God's provision of rain will also have a dark side, as humans are condemned to till the cursed soil and God pours out rain in overwhelming quantities in the flood.

The creation process is described in very concrete terms, with the first man being formed out of the dust from the ground and inbreathed with the very breath of God himself (v. 7)—a uniquely personal mode of creation[32] in comparison to the rest of the animals, which were brought forth by the earth (1:24). In the creation of humanity the Lord "forms" (*yatzar*) the man, as a potter (*yotser*) might shape a piece of clay, an image highlighting the Lord's absolute sovereignty over human beings (cf. Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:20). Man's origin in the dust highlights his fragility (Ps. 103:14), yet the Bible holds out no vision of humanity's ultimately transcending the body and existing on a purely spiritual plane. Rather it envisages a bodily resurrection in which the earthly body is transformed into a heavenly one (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–49).

2:8–17 Not content with making a good world for mankind, the Lord takes the man he has made and places him in a garden (Gen. 2:8), a place of special fruitfulness in a fruitful world—a kind of Most Holy Place in a holy land.[33] In the ancient Near East, temples generally faced east, toward the rising sun. So also the access to the garden of Eden is from the east, a fact demonstrated by the location of the guardian cherubim in Genesis 3:24.[34] Technically the garden is "in Eden," suggesting that the name Eden was attached to the larger area around the garden that

30 "Bush of the field" and "plant of the field" seem to be more restrictive categories than the general "vegetation" that the earth brings forth on day three (Gen. 1:11–12). The latter seems self-propagating, while the former explicitly require human cultivation (2:5). Cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 1.102; Mark D. Futato, "Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5–7 with Implications for Gen 2:4–25 and Gen 1:1–2:3," *WTJ* 60 (1998): 3–4.

31 Cf. Futato, "Because It Had Rained," 6–8.

32 "*Breathed* is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was giving as well as making; and self-giving at that"; F. D. Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 60.

33 M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 47–49.

34 Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1.174.

was also a place a special abundance (2:11–14). Gold and onyx are associated with the high priestly breastplate in Exodus 28:20 and Ezekiel 28:13, while bdellium is associated elsewhere with the color of the manna from heaven (Num. 11:7).

The garden of Eden is set upon a mountain. This location is implicit in Genesis 2:10, where the four rivers flow out of the garden to all four points of the compass, and becomes explicit in Ezekiel 28:13–14, where Eden is called the mountain of God. Mountains in the Bible, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, symbolize God's connection with man. Mount Sinai is where Moses receives his great revelation from God (Exodus 32–34). Ezekiel's picture of a restored temple in Ezekiel 40 is located on a high mountain, and so too is the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21:10. It is no coincidence that Jesus' transfiguration and ascension take place on mountains. The Bible is full of mountaintop experiences with God—and such is the case with Eden.

Out of this "garden on the mount" flow four rivers that impart blessing to the whole world. Two of these rivers are easily identifiable, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the chief rivers of Mesopotamia. The other two, the Pishon and the Gihon, remain enigmatic. Even the identifiers "Cush" and "Havilah" do not necessarily provide greater clarity, since several places are named Cush in the Bible, and Havilah remains indeterminate. Perhaps that is the point: the geography of Eden cannot be straightforwardly mapped onto the world as we know it, but neither is it in an imaginary location.

Clearly the garden is well watered, without the need for irrigation, which was so prevalent and necessary in much of the ancient Near East. Yet there is more to the "river of life" that flows from Eden than merely the provision of water. It is the flowing source of life for the whole earth. The image of a life-giving stream flowing from the sanctuary is ubiquitous in Scripture, from here to the closing chapter of Revelation, which features a similar river that flows outward from the throne of God and the Lamb to nourish the tree of life, whose fruit appears every month and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1–2). The motif of the river of life is attested also in mythological literature of the ancient Near East, while the tree of life is itself a feature typical of sanctuaries, in the form of a literal sacred tree or a symbolic representation of such a tree.[35]

If Eden is thus a sanctuary, it sheds light on the task assigned to the man, to "work" (Hb. *'abad*) and "keep" it (*shamar*; "take care"). When these two phrases occur together in the OT, they normally refer to priestly work, especially the work of guarding from profane intrusion the sphere of that which is sacred.[36] In short, Adam should have been keeping his eye open for serpents that contradicted the word of God and crushing them on sight. After all, that is what God promises that his seed, the new Adam, will do when he comes (Gen. 3:15).

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35 Gordon Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 401. Wenham cites Carol Meyers's observation that the later temple menorah is itself a stylized tree of life.

36 Note especially Numbers 3:7, where the Levitical task is summed up by these verbs; cf. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 401; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 85.

In 2:16–17 Adam receives his instructions (*torah*, we might say, to utilize the later terminology). He is commanded first to eat freely of all the trees of the garden—the law begins by enjoining the enjoyment of the good world he has been given (v. 16). Only after this positive command to delight in *all* the attractive trees of the garden (cf. v. 9) is the restriction imposed that he may not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this way an element of conditionality is imposed upon mankind's existence in the garden. Will they submit to their Creator's definition of "good" and "evil"—ordaining which trees are "good" to eat and which would be "evil" to eat—or will they seek autonomously to determine for themselves that which constitutes good and evil? To eat defiantly from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be to make a claim of absolute moral authority, a prerogative the Bible reserves for God alone.

As God's priest, it is Adam's task to teach this *torah* to Eve. In regard to the trees of the garden he is to teach her to "distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Lev. 10:10, 11), so that both might live and not die (the Hebrew is a strong imperative of the infinitive absolute, followed by the cognate verb: "You shall *surely* die"). The one who is faithful in keeping *torah* will "live," a term describing not merely physical life but the fullness of relationship with the Great King that flows from obedience. Death, on the other hand, means estrangement from both God and the covenant community. To be cut off from God's people is to be "dead" even while physically still alive, for in such a case one would be separated from the source of life, which in the garden is symbolized concretely in the form of the tree of life.

2:18–25 Into this original world of universal sweetness and light a discordant note enters at Genesis 2:18: The Lord God remarks, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Thus far everything has been "good" (six times in Genesis 1) or "very good" (a climactic 7th pronouncement), but now there is not merely something lacking in goodness (Hb. *'en tob*) but something that is positively *not* good (*lo' tob*).[37] Man is not meant to be a solitary creature: he needs a "helper corresponding to him" (2:18; cf. ESV mg.).

As is often the case when the Bible describes a particularly challenging situation, an initial insufficient solution is presented before the final answer is provided.[38] First the Lord brings to Adam all the animals that he has (previously)[39] made so that Adam can name them—a sign of his lordship over them as God's visible representative on earth. But no suitable helper for Adam is found among them (v. 20). The animals are created for man's enjoyment and blessing, but they are no substitute for human society. The purpose of placing man in the midst of this zoo is not so that God could determine by trial and error whether Adam

37 Cf. Bruce Waltke with Cathi Fredericks, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 88.
38 Compare Ezekiel 37:1–11, where the dry bones are first brought together but are still lifeless until God breathes his spirit into them, or Mark 8:22–25, where Jesus heals the blind man in two distinct stages.
39 We noted earlier that Genesis 2 does not present a chronological account. The *vav*-consecutive imperfect here can easily be understood as a past perfect; cf. Bruce Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 33.2.3a.

could be happy living with an armadillo or a zebra; God knew already that he was not going to squander his greatest creation on an unappreciative audience.[40] However, it is necessary for the man to feel his aloneness and to understand that it is not good for him to be alone. Rabbinic commentators imagine all the animals bounding up to Adam in pairs to be named, underlining his solitary state.[41] The Trinitarian God does not intend his created image to dwell alone. Man is built for marriage—and so, of course, is woman (cf. Prov. 18:22).

To provide for this need in man God creates woman. Unlike with the creation of man, Eve is not formed from the dust of the ground but "built" from one of Adam's ribs to emphasize their close connection. As Matthew Henry puts it, "Eve was not taken out of Adam's head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him."[42] The Lord first places Adam under a very "deep sleep" (*tardemah*; Gen. 2:21), a word found often in the context of dreams and visions and almost always divinely induced (cf. Gen. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12).[43] God then brings the woman to the man, playing the role of the father of the bride (or the attendant at a Jewish wedding), whose job it is to present the bride to the groom.[44]

The woman is perfectly designed to be a "helper corresponding to" the man (ESV mg. on Gen. 2:18). Eve is man's equal in being—created in the image of God, just as man is (1:27). God creates for the man not a "helper like him" (*'ezer kamohu*) but a "helper corresponding to" him (*'ezer kenegdo*). There is no suggestion of inferiority in this title, for God himself can be called our helper (e.g., Ps. 33:20). Rather the focus is on complementarity: like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, men and women are designed to fit together perfectly, completing each other precisely because they are not the same but have different roles.

When Adam is presented with God's answer to his need, he breaks into the first recorded human poetry:[45] "Yes! This is it! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23 AT).[46] Adam also names her "Woman," just as he named the animals, as an act of authority (v. 23; cf. v. 19). Yet that authority is softened by the passive voice of the verb, "She shall be called," and the acknowledgement in the form of her name that she is from him, made of the same stuff (*'ishah* from *'ish*).

Just as Genesis 1 climaxes in the Sabbath, a day of rest with lasting significance for all humanity, so chapter 2 climaxes in the union of Eve and Adam, a model for

40 Cf. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In Primum Librum Mosis* (1569), 12r: "The animals weren't brought before Adam as if God wanted to find out whether some suitable helper for the man might be found among them. The Lord perfectly well knew that one would not be discovered, but he brought the animals so that his gift would be welcomed by *Adam* all the more, lest he happen to think that there was no need for the creation of woman, because something could have been discovered among the animals as suitable for him as the woman was. God wanted Adam to learn for himself that no such helper was to be found." Cited in John L. Thompson, ed., *Genesis 1–11*, RCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 97.
41 Genesis Rabbah 17:5, cited in Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.
42 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 1:16. Henry here is developing an idea found already in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 92, 3c.
43 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 22.
44 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 84.
45 Robert Alter (*Five Books of Moses*, 22) points out that the first recorded human speech does not come until after God has created a fellow human with whom to converse.
46 Hebrew identifies "flesh and bone" as the key kinship ingredients rather than "flesh and blood" (cf. 29:14).

marriage for all human societies. Even the most holy people in the OT, the high priest and the Nazirite, are allowed to marry. Marriage is holy; it is life as God intended. Indeed, the marriage relationship is assigned priority even over relationships within the husband's family of origin: the husband is commanded to leave his father and mother—the very ones whom he is told to honor in the fifth commandment (cf. Ex. 20:12)—and cleave to his wife in a unique one-flesh relationship (Gen. 2:24). Since in most cases in antiquity sons did not leave the physical household of their parents, this "leaving" must be metaphorical, giving preference and honor to his wife over long-lasting and deeply rooted family ties. There was no need for a similar instruction to brides, since the wife usually moved in with her new in-laws.

However, this absolute statement of the goodness and priority of marriage is qualified in the NT. There is a spiritual gift of celibacy; some are gifted not to marry so that they can be free to serve God (Matt. 19:11), while there may be times when even wives must be counted as secondary in pursuit of God's kingdom (Luke 14:26). Paul makes a remarkable statement in 1 Corinthians 7:1: "It is good for a man not to marry" (ICB), which he then goes on to explain as being due to the particular challenges of the present situation in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 7:29–35). In a fallen world there may be some circumstances in which singleness is better, as Paul's own example illustrates (cf. 1 Cor. 7:8). But singleness is not in itself a higher, more spiritual state than marriage, as the monks and nuns thought in the Middle Ages. Although Jesus himself was not married while he lived here on earth, he has a bride prepared for him, his church. The usual state for human beings to desire and pursue is marriage.

Profound though the parent-child bond is, only the bond of marriage involves becoming "one flesh." This has in view far more than sexual intercourse, though certainly not less than that. Intercourse is indeed designed by God to create and sustain deep bonds of relationship, which is why sexual relations outside of marriage are so deeply damaging (1 Cor. 6:16). Just as the prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is preceded by the command to eat freely of all the other trees of the garden (Gen. 2:16–17), so also the command "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14) is preceded by the celebration of unashamed sexuality within marriage (Gen. 2:24–25). Similarly, the prohibition on homosexual activity and relationships (e.g., Lev. 20:13) is preceded by the foundational and defining marriage between a man and a woman, two distinct and different genders joined in one flesh (Matt. 19:5–6). They were naked before one another, with nothing to hide because neither was seeking an advantage over the other. As long as they were both agreed that the Lord was their king and that they would mutually submit to the roles he had defined for them, there was nothing over which to fight. It is only after they decide to strive after divine status and throw off the Lord's yoke that conflict—and therefore concealment and shame—becomes inevitable (Gen. 3:7).

Response

Genesis 1–2 lays the foundation and sets the trajectory for understanding the cosmos properly, whenever and wherever we live. The world and everything in

it was created by God and belongs to him. Humans are not merely animals but transcend them in their composition and calling. We were made to worship God together, coming into his presence with praise, glorifying and enjoying our Creator. And marriage is a sacred joining of one man and one woman in an unbreakable relationship intended to result in offspring ("filling the earth"; 1:28) and mutual encouragement ("a helper corresponding to him"; ESV mg. on 2:18). If Genesis 1 is lofty and poetic prose, stressing the transcendence of almighty God, then Genesis 2 paints a more personal and intimate picture of the Lord's interactions with the world, especially with humanity. Israel's God (and ours) is both the high and holy God who inhabits eternity and also the God who stoops down to dwell with the humble and contrite in spirit (Isa. 57:15).

This passage has wide-ranging implications for understanding our place in the world. Created in the world to have dominion over it, the first man was immediately taken out of the wider world and placed directly in the divine presence and in divine service. This is how the creation mandate was intended to be exercised: man was to control the world not primarily by immersing himself in the tasks of ordering it but by "seek[ing] first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). If Adam was relating rightly to his Creator, then he would necessarily respond rightly to creation. This includes the male-female relationship. As with his dominion within wider creation, the man is given the obligation of seeking to understand the nature of the marriage relationship as well as the duty to maintain it first of all by exercising a God-centered life (1 Pet. 3:7).

Eve's task of helping Adam certainly includes the chief end for which he is made: glorifying and enjoying God in the garden-sanctuary within which they are placed. It is not possible to worship and glorify God to the fullest extent on one's own or in company with a Labrador retriever! Human fellowship is required. The first couple's freedom and privilege are enormous: they are given a home in the most beautiful part of the most perfect world, living in the presence of God himself, constantly enjoying the smile of his blessing. The only limitation on their freedom is the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), hardly an onerous restriction in a garden filled with other good trees to enjoy (vv. 8–9).

Of course, we no longer live in Eden. Nakedness is no longer unaccompanied by shame, and marriage sometimes ends in divorce. With the fall in Genesis 3 everything has changed. Our world is cursed because of human sin, which mars the natural order as well as complicating our relationships with God, with other humans (especially our spouses), and with the created order. The "good" trajectory launched in Genesis 1–2 has turned tragically "evil" through the entry of sin. But God's plan from the beginning included a new creation, in which he would redeem a people for himself in Christ—a people who would become the spotless bride of Christ, clothed in his righteousness, and would inhabit a new creation, of which they themselves would be part. God's goal for humanity is not merely union with one another in marriage but the deeper reality that marriage

exists to image: the union between Christ and his church (Eph. 5:32). This goal can be accomplished only through Christ's self-sacrifice for his bride, which now becomes the inspiration and model for Christian husbands (Eph. 5:25–27), while Christian wives are called to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:24).

GENESIS 3

3 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[1] shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 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,[2] she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool[3] of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"[4] 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 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.
15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring[5] and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for[6] your husband,
and he shall rule over you."

17 And to Adam he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
19 By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."

20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.[7] 21 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

1 In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1–5 2 Or *to give insight* 3 Hebrew *wind* 4 In Hebrew *you* is singular in verses 9 and 11 5 Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis 6 Or *to*, or *toward*, or *against* (see 4:7) 7 *Eve* sounds like the Hebrew for *life-giver* and resembles the word for *living*

Section Overview

In Genesis 1–2 we saw God create a good and perfect world. The one thing that was not good, man's being alone, was swiftly and perfectly put right. The first man and woman lived in a world in which there was no excuse for sin. Genesis 3 is therefore shocking in its introduction of sin and evil into this world: we move from a perfect world into a broken and dysfunctional one in the space of a few verses. Some theologians are reluctant to speak of a "fall" since the Bible does not use that terminology explicitly. But it is hard to think of a better term for the injury inflicted on all subsequent humanity by Adam and Eve's original sin—a sin that affects not only themselves but all subsequent offspring (1 Cor. 15:22).

As it records the fact and the consequences of that first sin, it is striking that Genesis 3 does not tell us *why* man sins. Ultimately, there is no reason for sin.[47] If there were a "why" behind sin, then in some measure we might claim that sin is not completely our fault; it is (at least in part) the product of our genetics or our environment. Yet Adam and Eve can blame neither of these things. In showing the fundamental irrationality of the very first sin (and all subsequent sins) the Bible reveals us as we really are: without excuse.

Section Outline

II. The Family History of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26) . . .
  B. The Fall (3:1–24)

Comment

3:1–5 Genesis 3 begins with a disjunctive construction (*vav* + nonverb), separating what follows from what precedes grammatically, just as the chapter will separate "life before" from "life after" in a comprehensive way. We are introduced to a new character, "the serpent." This character is not a god; he is merely one of the creatures that the Lord God has made, albeit potentially dangerous in being "more crafty" ("shrewder")[48] than all other creatures (Gen. 3:1). We are not told the serpent's backstory here. Indeed, the entire Bible says very little about Satan's origins, except to affirm that he has been created by God and is subject to his control—he is "God's devil,"[49] as it were, and, wicked though he is, Satan cannot do anything beyond God's permission (cf. Job 1–2). The form chosen by the serpent is not arbitrary; Leviticus classifies animals in terms of clean and unclean—for a variety of reasons, some connected with eating habits, some with means of locomotion—and snakes are in the unclean category (Lev. 11:42). The serpent's writhing motion on the ground, which is connected to this episode (cf. Gen. 3:14), makes it an appropriate anti-God image.[50]

The serpent speaks to the woman—a surprising turn of events, given our experience of the world. Yet the woman's experience of life is much more limited at this point, perhaps especially with the "beasts of the field," who live outside the garden. The serpent clearly targets the woman since she did not hear the prohibition in Genesis 2:16–17 directly from the mouth of God. Yet the man evidently is also present with her throughout the entire encounter (3:6). There is a reversal of

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47 Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, trans. D. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 22.
48 It is hard to translate *'arum* into English, since most potential equivalents either have a positive connotation ("wise") or a negative one ("crafty"), while *'arum* can be either. It is a positive attribute in Proverbs 12:23 but negative in Job 15:5. "Shrewd" (NET) is perhaps the best morally neutral equivalent, allowing the reader to experience the same moral ambiguity in encountering the serpent that Eve experiences—though that ambiguity is swiftly dispelled once the serpent opens his mouth.
49 The appellation is often attributed to Martin Luther, though it is not clear that he ever said those exact words. He did, however, say similar things, such as "The devil must serve us with the very thing with which he plans to injure us; for God is such a great Master that He is able to turn even the wickedness of the devil into good." Cf. Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 401–402.
50 Serpents were also prominent in the worship and mythological symbolism of many ancient Near Eastern cultures, not least Egypt, from which Moses' audience had recently emerged. Cf. K. R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974).

the proper ordering of creation from man-woman-beast to beast-woman-man in this chapter. This theme is highlighted by the chiastic structure of the passage in terms of the characters interacting in each scene, which begins with disordered relationships in scenes A and B and ends with those relationships' being properly reordered after the divine intervention.

(A) The serpent and the woman (vv. 1–5); the man is silently present (v. 6)
  (B) The woman and "her man" (vv. 6–7)
    (C) God and the man (vv. 8–12); the woman is silently present
      (D) God and the woman (v. 13)
        (E) God and the serpent (vv. 14–15)
      (D') God and the woman (v. 16)
    (C') God and the man (vv. 17–19)
  (B') The man and "his woman" (v. 20)
(A') God and the man (vv. 21–24)

As is typical of Satan, the serpent uses the things God has created good for his own wicked purposes. He begins with a question that misrepresents God's words: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (v. 1). Far from saying "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden," what God actually said was, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden" (2:16), with a single exception. Eve's response is initially accurate—though omitting the intensification of God's command ("You may *surely* eat")—but she adds a clause to God's words that make the prohibition regarding the tree of life sound petty and legalistic. According to her, God told them not merely to avoid eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but not even to touch it,[51] lest they die (3:3). Again Eve omits the intensification of the original command ("You shall surely die").

The serpent not only misquotes God; he goes on to contradict him. God had said, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (2:17). Satan says to Eve, however, "You will not surely die" (3:4). His inclusion of the intensification that Eve omitted evinces firsthand knowledge of the truth, even as he twists it to serve his own purposes. The shrewdness of the serpent is evident further in the fact that he never directly tells Eve to eat from the tree; he simply proposes a different exegesis of the key biblical text and then allows her to draw her own desired conclusion. Eve also follows the serpent in referring to the deity generically as "God" rather than by his more relational covenant name, "the LORD." The greater the distance that exists between humans and the deity, the easier it is for them to believe that God does not have their best interests at heart.

After the serpent denies the doctrine of judgment ("You will not surely die"; v. 4), the doctrine of divine providence is the next target of the serpent's attack. Far from acknowledging God's working all things together for Eve's good (Rom.

51 The (imagined) prohibition on touching the tree aligns it with the (real) prohibition on touching the mountain of Sinai under pain of death in Exodus 19:12.

8:28), the serpent claims that God is seeking to protect the uniqueness of his divine status, which would be imperiled if the humans ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and became like him (Gen. 3:5). The irony of the man and woman's believing this claim is deeply tragic, for God had created them in his very image for rulership over an entire creation designed for their good. Nevertheless, this is the same heresy that we routinely believe any time we choose to sin rather than to obey the Lord's fatherly commands to us.

The serpent claims not only that Adam and Eve (the verb is plural) will not die but that they will have their eyes opened, acquiring godlike knowledge and status (vv. 4–5). But the serpent is trading in characteristic half-truths. Adam and Eve do not die immediately, though their fullness of life in God's presence is immediately lost. Moreover, while their eyes are opened with a new kind of knowledge, this knowledge brings shame and conflict rather than status and power (vv. 7–13).

3:6–7 In light of the serpent's words the woman looks at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in a new way, considering it to be "good for food," "a delight to the eyes," and desirable "to make one wise" (v. 6). Even before she takes the fruit she is already beginning to form her own evaluations independently of God's word.[52] In reality, every tree that God had made was "good for food" and "pleasant to the sight" (cf. 2:9), but now she sets her heart on the forbidden tree. The wisdom offered by eating from that tree is certainly not God's wisdom, for the beginning of that wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Prov. 9:10). The fear of the Lord would have kept her from eating from the tree. Eve's "logic" thus deconstructs itself, as our reasoning in favor of sin always does. But it is enough to tempt her to take and eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, hoping for a new kind of knowledge that would give her autonomy from her creator. Christian art since at least the Middle Ages has pictured the fruit as an apple, likely based on the fact that in Latin the word for "apple" and for "evil" is the same (*malum*). The type of fruit is unspecified in the Genesis account, however, and it was unlikely to have been an apple, since those were not introduced to Israel until significantly later.[53]

It is at this point that we learn that Adam has evidently been with Eve throughout the entire encounter (Gen. 3:6), apparently without contributing a single word to a conversation in which God's words to him have been misquoted, maligned, and denied by both the serpent and his own wife. Instead of being Adam's helper, Eve is leading him astray, and he has done nothing to challenge her. Before the fruit is even touched Adam fails in his God-appointed priestly task as guardian of the sanctuary and teacher of *torah*. Adam's sinful abdication of his responsibility throughout the encounter is highlighted at this point by his being named "her husband" (v. 6; "her man"). Sin always subverts God's ordering of the world. However, the chapter is not devoid of hope. In the corresponding chiastic section B' (cf. structure above), when order is restored after God's intervention, their relationship

52 John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 104.
53 Cf. Othmar Keel, *Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary*, trans. F. J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 82.

is once more "the man and his woman" (v. 20; ESV: "his wife") as Adam resumes a leadership role by naming his wife "Eve" in response to God's word of promise.

Immediately after Adam and Eve sin the consequences of that sin begin to become apparent: "The eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (v. 7). Their nakedness had not bothered them previously because they had had nothing to hide. Because they had been content to accept their assigned place in the divine order, there had been nothing over which to fight. But now that they have declared themselves to be as gods, everything is in flux. Once they have rejected the created order, they seek to establish their own order, which inevitably means conflict with one another, a striving for the dominant position. In that struggle, knowledge is power. No longer could they be completely open with one another, because the other person might use that openness against the spouse. As a result, they begin to cover up and hide from one another with ineffectual and uncomfortable loincloths made from fig leaves in a desperate attempt to regain the safety they had experienced prior to the fall (v. 7). In a tragicomic scene, after Adam and Eve's declaration of cosmic war on the creator of the universe, the highest priority on their to-do list is to sew fig leaves together to hide from one another.

Adam and Eve do not die immediately, in the sense that their life is not at once extinguished. Otherwise the Lord's purposes of redemption could not be completed. However, in the Bible death is the reverse of life, not of existence. Adam and Eve's experience of life in its fullness is immediately greatly diminished as their sin exposes them to shame and fear. The serpent had claimed that, if they disobeyed God, they would experience freedom and power; in actuality their sin brings bondage and helplessness. They discover the hard way that Satan is the real hard taskmaster, not God.

3:8–13 The futility of Adam and Eve's attempt to "be like God" is rapidly exposed when the Lord makes known his presence in the garden. It was apparently customary for the Lord to "walk to and fro"[54] in the garden on a daily basis. The difficult phrase "With respect to the wind/Spirit of the day" (Hb. *leruakh hayyom*; v. 8) is understood by most as a temporal description, following the LXX, which translates it "in the afternoon" (*to deilinon*). This would thus be a reference to the time of day when the afternoon breeze picks up, making it a pleasant time for a walk: "At the breezy time of day" (NET).[55] When Adam and Eve heard the sound of God's arrival, they immediately recognized the inadequacy of their flimsy coverings and ran to hide in the trees, as if the created world could conceal them from the one who had made all things.

Like a parent confronting a naughty child, the Lord calls out a question that gently invites the man to reveal himself: "Where are you?" (v. 9). Unlike the serpent,

54 The form of *halak* here likely has an iterative force, "walking to and fro" (cf. *IBHS*, 26.1.2).

55 Jeffrey Niehaus, "In the Wind of the Storm: Another Look at Genesis III 8," *VT* 44 (1994): 263–267, has interpreted the phrase in a more threatening fashion as describing the manner of the Lord's approach ("with respect to the wind of the storm"), but that seems contextually and grammatically unlikely. Niehaus builds on an earlier suggestion by Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 102–115, but Kline was comprehensively refuted by Christopher Grundke, "A Tempest in a Teapot: Genesis III 8 Again," *VT* 51 (2001): 548–551.

who inverted the proper order by approaching the woman, God begins his questioning with the man (the pronoun is singular). Adam immediately emerges from hiding and answers not only God's question but the unspoken question behind it as well (i.e., "Why are you hiding?"): "I heard the sound of you[56] in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (v. 10).

Adam's response reveals not only his location to God; it also reveals the nature of his problem. Adam does not come to God humbly confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness. Rather, he laments the consequences of that sin as if it were an unfortunate natural disaster for which he was not responsible. He is afraid of the Lord, but only when it is too late. Earlier, the fear of the Lord might have kept him from sin, but not fearing the Lord at the right time led to an overpowering fear of God later. Adam's refusal to receive God's wisdom leaves him with nothing to receive from God but his judgment.

Adam also laments his nakedness before God (v. 10). That had never been an embarrassment to Adam and Eve before. God had made them, after all, and he was not unfamiliar with the shape of their bodies! But now, with the coming of sin into the world, Adam and Eve have a powerful urge to hide from God. That relationship, once so unhindered, is now shattered in pieces. Adam immediately realizes that his fig leaves are an inadequate covering. They might have been sufficient to keep out his wife's threatening gaze, but not that of the all-seeing God.

The Lord continues his interrogation: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (v. 11). Again, these are questions not seeking to elicit information but rather aimed at giving Adam the opportunity to make a confession. No one needed to tell Adam that he was naked; his own guilty conscience is sufficient to cause his shame. However, Adam's answer to God's questions is less about taking responsibility for his action than it is about placing the responsibility elsewhere: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (v. 12). In Hebrew the sentence starts with the subject rather than the verb, highlighting the woman's role in the transgression. Next, Adam blames God for giving the woman to him—the Lord gave him the woman, and she gave him the fruit, as if he were entirely passive throughout the process.[57] Then he returns to blaming the woman (the feminine pronoun is emphatic: "*She* gave me"), and it is only with the very last word of the sentence that Adam utters anything close to a confession ("and I ate"; one word in Hebrew).

Then God turns to the woman, asking her: "What is this that you have done?" (v. 13), opening the door for her to admit her responsibility. However, she too seeks to blame someone else: "The serpent deceived me." Once again it is only with the final word of her sentence that she made the same one-word confession ("and I ate"). The catastrophic effects of that first sin are already evident in the blame-shifting and evasion that have become humanity's modus operandi. Instead of

56 Sadly, "I heard the sound of you" could also mean "I obeyed you" (= "I listened to your voice"), the exact opposite of what had happened here; cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 26.
57 Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 25.

being "naked and . . . not ashamed" (2:25), they are now inadequately clothed and deeply ashamed.

3:14–19 Having heard Adam and Eve's worthless defense, God pronounces his gracious sentence. He does not ask the serpent to explain his behavior: he is not permitted to speak. The Lord could justly destroy humanity outright on the spot. However, God's sentence is remedial, not retributive. God will be the judge, notwithstanding the serpent's denial, but he is not the harsh master Satan had portrayed him to be. The order of judgment parallels the proper order of creation, first addressing the lower order, then the woman, and then the man.

God begins by judging the serpent.[58] In a larger narrative marked out by a focus on God's blessing, this is the first occurrence of the word "cursed" (Hb. *'arur*; v. 14). As in English, the relative clause normally comes after the main clause; putting it first here highlights its importance in giving the reason for the curse, which has just cause and is not a capricious act on God's part. The serpent that has been distinguished from the rest of creation by its shrewdness will now be distinguished by the judgment it experiences, which will bring it low. Just as the serpent's offense involved eating, so too does God's judgment curse. To "lick the dust" expresses abject humiliation and defeat, as when someone is prostrated before his conqueror (cf. Ps. 72:9; Mic. 7:17); the equivalent English idiom is to "bite the dust."[59] This is the opposite of triumphing with head held high. Satan's moment of triumph will be short lived.

Not only will Satan be brought low, but his apparent victory in ensnaring the pinnacle of creation will be short lived: the Lord will place enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between their offspring[60] as well (Gen. 3:15). This accounts for the continuing need for subterfuge on the part of Satan; very few of his followers are out-and-out Satanists, for he has nothing within himself to attract people. To overcome man's God-given enmity Satan must pretend to be something he is not, to deceive and seduce people into a continued rebellion against God. Yet there is no question about the outcome of this multigenerational conflict. Ultimately, though he may wound the seed of the woman, the serpent will be kicked in the teeth and defeated by the seed of the very race he has just brought down.

This is not merely an etiological story about people's fear and loathing of snakes; it has a singular conflict in view, the struggle between the second Adam, who is the ultimate promised seed of the woman, and the ancient Serpent (cf. Rom. 5:19; Rev. 12:9). Not coincidentally, the issue of "seed" is prominent in the rest of Genesis (cf. Gen. 4:25; 12:7), as humans look forward to the coming promised seed and the salvation he will bring. However, Genesis also reveals a fundamental

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58 Although judgment is pronounced upon the serpent, and snakes depict the outworking of that judgment curse, it is clear that the real target of God's curse is the spiritual enemy behind the serpent, whose ultimate downfall is prophesied in these verses.

59 Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 81.

60 Lit., "seed" (Hb. *zera'*), a word that can be a collective or a singular. Here both are in view: the enmity between the woman and the serpent will be a continuing reality until the coming of the final seed of the woman who will triumph definitively over the serpent.

division within humanity from this point onward, which finds expression in the conflict between the line of promise and a line of children of the devil (John 8:44), a conflict that leads to the murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis 4).

In spite of this continual opposition the curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:15 is at the same time the first proclamation of the gospel, the promise that through this seed of the woman God will restore humanity to his side and thus reverse the effects of the curse upon creation. In light of the forthcoming judgment upon the woman it is striking that the victory is assigned to the seed of the woman. The victor will not merely be a second Adam; he will also vindicate Eve.

God next judges the woman (Gen. 3:16). His judgments on the first couple strike at the heart of what it means to be a man and woman, respectively. Thus, because men and women are not the same, neither are their judgments.[61] The woman's judgment strikes primarily at her relationships, especially motherhood and marriage. Eve was designed for one-fleshness with her husband, but now that one-fleshness will be dogged by problems—on both sides. To begin with, the woman will desire to dominate her husband; when God says, "Your desire shall be toward[62] your husband," the Hebrew word for "desire" (*teshuqah*) is the same rare word used in Genesis 4 to describe the relationship between sin and Cain. Some have interpreted *teshuqah* as sexual desire, on the basis of the other use of this word in Song of Solomon 7:10; however, the usage in Genesis 4:7 is more relevant, not merely because it is adjacent and by the same author but because the same combination of *teshuqah* and *mashal* recurs. There sin is depicted as a wild animal, crouching outside the door of Cain's heart, waiting to overpower Cain unless he masters (*mashal*) it. So too here the woman will constantly be in danger of repeating her disruption of the created order in relationships, while for his part the man will seek to dominate her. Now "he shall rule over" her harshly (Gen. 3:16), rather than with the sensitive, servant leadership pose he was intended to have in the beginning (cf. discussion of Genesis 2 above, though the creational order between men and women lies on the surface of Genesis 3 as well, as we have seen).[63]

The fall also affects a woman's natural desire to be a mother. Now, even though the bearing of children is the means through which salvation comes, the process itself is inseparably linked with pain and anguish. As Kenneth Mathews puts it, "By this unexpected twist the vehicle of her vindication (i.e., labor) trumpets her need for the deliverance she bears (cf. 1 Cor. 11:12). Painful childbirth signals hope but also serves as a perpetual reminder of sin and the woman's part in it."[64] Moreover,

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61 So Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 44: "The woman is condemned to suffer in what constitutes her nature as woman."

62 The ESV has "for" in the main text and "to, or toward, or against" in the marginal note. It is not so much that the woman and the husband will desire different things ("against") or that she will desire her husband sexually (though it has that sense in the more distant parallel text, Song 7:10) but that she will desire to dominate him and make him conform to her own wishes. This is the meaning in the more immediate parallel passage of Genesis 4:7, in which sin is pictured as a wild animal about to pounce on Cain: sin desires to possess Cain and govern his behavior.

63 Waltke, *Genesis*, 94; contra Ada Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 39–42; Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 56–58, who argue that submission is a result of the fall, not part of the creation order.

64 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 250.

the initial suffering associated with childbirth is simply a miniature depiction of the suffering that goes with being a mother in a fallen world. One of Eve's sons, Abel, will be brutally and senselessly murdered; the murderer will be her own firstborn, Cain (Genesis 4; cf. Mary's experience in Luke 2:34–35). It is not easy being a mother in a fallen world.

Nor is it always easy to *become* a mother in a fallen world. With God's blessing and command that mankind should be fruitful and multiply, conception ought to have been easy (Gen. 1:27). But the fall changes that. God's challenge to a woman he is about to use in a special way is often seen in precisely the area of her fertility. Sarah (Gen. 11:30), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (Luke 1:7), are among many who face this challenge as a preparation for roles of remarkable importance in God's plan.

God's judgment upon the man likewise strikes at the heart of what it means to be a man, namely, in the realm of his work. Man was designed to work the garden in Eden and take care of it (Gen. 2:15). Now, however, his labor will lead to sweat and anxiety, not joy. Work will no longer be fulfilling and satisfying, as it was intended to be in the beginning; instead, it will be laborious and frustrating toil (cf. Eccles. 1:3; Ps. 90:9–12). Our labor-filled days are turned to sorrow, frustration, and pain. Both men and women are condemned to pain in the deepest area of their identity.

The man is also rebuked because he abdicates his leadership role in the marriage and "listened to the voice of your wife" (Gen. 3:17). The same problem recurs in Genesis 16:2: there Abram "listened to the voice of Sarai" and took Hagar as a concubine.[65] This does not mean it is always wrong for a man to listen to his wife—Abraham is specifically instructed by God to listen to Sarah in Genesis 21:12. But a proper creational order is to be observed in that relationship.

The ultimate judgment on both men and women is death (3:19). This is the complete refutation of the serpent's lie. He had claimed, "You will be like God"—the one who never dies (cf. v. 5). Instead death lies at the heart of the curses on both the woman and the man. Death leads to great pain in relationships. One day, if the Lord tarries, we shall all have to say goodbye to those we love. And death relativizes the joys and sorrows of our work, for one day we shall leave that behind as well if the Lord does not first return. Final judgment on humanity may have been postponed, but it has not been abolished. From dust we are, and to dust we shall return (cf. Ps. 90:3–6).

3:20–24 The proper reordering of male-female relationships is reiterated in Adam's immediate response to God's word of judgment and hope: "The man called his wife's name Eve" (Gen. 3:20). From "the woman and her man" (cf. v. 6) we have returned to "the man and his woman," so to speak. The name Adam gives his wife (Hb. *khavvah*, "Eve") is a play on the verb "to live" (*khayyah*) and reflects not only his recognition that there will be a continued existence for himself and Eve but also his

65 The similarity between the two episodes is highlighted because in both instances the woman "takes" and "gives" something to her husband (Gen. 3:6; 16:3).

faith that through Eve God's promise of restored blessing will ultimately be established (cf. v. 15). Through Eve's seed God will ensure that his final word on humanity is "life" and not the "death" that Adam and Eve have merited because of their sins.

God also provides more effective coverings for Adam and Eve's nakedness[66] in the form of tunics of animal skin (v. 21). Older scholars often derived an atoning significance from this provision of God, in which animals lose their lives in order to cover the effects of human sin;[67] however, that seems to be deriving the right doctrine from the wrong text. In the passage there is no mention of God's killing the animals, let alone of their foreshadowing a sacrificial ritual. Rather the focus is on the fact that God provides an effective covering for Adam and Eve's shame, replacing the inadequate works of their own hands (the fig leaves) with something much better. To be sure, the theme of clothing as a metaphor for redemption does appear later in the Bible (e.g., Zechariah 3), and that theme may certainly be seen foreshadowed here, but this verse does not directly connect Adam and Eve's clothing with the need for blood sacrifices. The focus is far more on God's continued providential care for his children in covering their shame, even after the fall (cf. Matt. 6:28–30).

At the same time, Adam and Eve's sin has immediate and tragic consequences, as they are driven out of the garden (Gen. 3:22–24). Because[68] the man has aspired to become like God in knowledge, he must not now be allowed to "take" and "eat" from the tree of life in a repetition of his rebellion involving the tree of knowledge. Once again the headship of Adam is acknowledged, and he is held responsible for the sin that has caused humanity's expulsion. It is not entirely clear from the text whether Adam and Eve have previously been permitted to eat the fruit of the tree of life; it is not included in the prohibition of 2:17. However, a key consequence of their sin is a loss of access to the Lord's presence, which the tree of life concretely represents. The wages of their sin is indeed death (Rom. 6:23).

From now on they will have to work the ground outside the garden, which, while still good, is now under God's curse and will yield its fruit only in response to strenuous labor (cf. Gen. 3:17–19; the phrase "sweat of your face" is literally the more vivid "sweat of your nose"). Toiling in the dust from which he had been taken will be a constant reminder to Adam of his mortality, since that same dust will be his

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66 The genitive in "garments of skin" (Hb. *kotnot 'or*) is generally understood as a genitive of material, that is, the tunics were made from animal skin. However, it is also possible to interpret this phrase as reflecting purpose ("tunics for the skin"), which would leave the material from which they were manufactured unspecified. Compare Nehemiah 7:70, where the *kotnot kohanim* are tunics for the use of the priests, not tunics made from priests. Cf. Genesis Rabbah 20:12 and Sotah 14a for early examples of this understanding (cited by Sarna, *Genesis*, 29). However in Leviticus 16:4 a *ketonet-bad* is a linen tunic, so either understanding is possible.

67 So Matthew Henry: "It is supposed that they were slain, not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the great sacrifice, which, in the latter end of the world, should be offered once for all. Thus the first thing that died was a sacrifice, or Christ in a figure" (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1.34). In contrast, John Calvin thought the clothing made of skins simply represented a suitably humble form of attire for humans after the fall, and he uses it to make application that Christians should adopt a "frugal and unexpensive mode of dress"; *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, trans. J. King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 1.182. Geerhardus Vos (*Biblical Theology*, 156–157) observes: "It must be admitted . . . that the Pentateuch contains no record of the institution of sacrifice either as to its expiatory or as to its consecratory aspect. Some profess to find it in Gen. 3:21. The covering provided by God from the simple skins of animals would have carried the implication that animal life is necessary for covering sin. Against this speaks the fact that the word used for this act of God is not the technical term used in the law for the covering of sin by sacrifice. It is a word signifying 'to clothe,' a term never employed in the law for the expiation of sin."

68 Understanding *hen* as supplying the reason for the decision that follows; cf. *IBHS*, 40.2.1c.

final resting place (v. 23). Meanwhile, the entrance to the garden of Eden—and with it to the presence of God—is closed, guarded by cherubim, along with a flaming sword (v. 24). The cherubim are stationed on the east side of the garden because that is where the entrance is, as with the tabernacle. As composite creatures the cherubim sum up and unite the highest forms of all creation (cf. Ezek. 1:5; 10:15) and are the fearsome guardians assigned to guard (*shamar*) God's holiness. They will not fail to protect the sanctity of the garden, as Adam has failed (Gen. 2:15). No longer will access into the presence of the Lord be easy and untroubled for humanity, as it once was. For now the doorway into the Most Holy Place has been firmly closed in their faces, and mankind is left to make its own way "east of the garden of Eden."

Response

The fall is one of the key events in redemptive history, a tragedy that explains the brokenness of the world in which we find ourselves living. Every religion—and every person—has to wrestle with the big question of why bad things happen, not just to the wicked but to the innocent as well. Some religions, such as those of Israel's ancient neighbors, solve the problem by imagining multiple deities locked in a perpetual conflict, with humanity as an unfortunate bystander. Others imagine a God who tries his best but is not powerful enough to avert all evil, especially given human free will.

The Bible gives us a different answer. Evil and suffering in this world are a result of the failure of our first parents to resist temptation. Because of their sin, all people now are born with a bent toward sin that they cannot fully resist, even if they wished to do so. Creation itself is under God's curse because of human sin, which results in innumerable natural disasters and sicknesses (Rom. 8:20–23). Yet none of this is outside God's control, any more than individual human decisions are. Without being the author of sin, God ultimately controls it and directs it for his glory and the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). Thus the fall, tragic as it is, becomes the context in which we hear the first promise of the gospel, in Genesis 3:15. The rest of Scripture is in many ways the sovereign working out of God's fulfillment of that promise in Christ. The obedience of the second Adam transcends the disobedience of the first Adam. The death that enters the world through Adam and Eve's sin is overcome by life and hope in the second Adam, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:22).

Indeed, we can sketch the main flow of the history of the world in four movements: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Each of these represents a different experience for mankind: as created before the fall, it was possible for humans to sin, but also possible for them to resist it (man was *posse peccare*—able to sin). After the fall our natural state is one in which it is not possible for us not to sin (*non posse non peccare*)—we may choose to sin in differing ways, but we are all living for our own glory, not our Creator's. Redemption makes it possible for us not to sin (*posse non peccare*), although we are still deeply stained with sin's legacy (Romans 7; 2 Cor. 5:17). At the consummation God will finish the sanctifying work

he has begun in us, and we will no longer be able to sin (*non posse peccare*), which will be true freedom (Phil. 1:6).[69]

To be sure, we must be careful not to confuse the categories of the *historia salutis* (the history of salvation) with those of the *ordo salutis* (the order of salvation): many saints were regenerated by the Spirit and saved in the OT, long before the coming of the Christ in whom they placed their trust by faith (John 8:56). However, as a way of categorizing the broad sweep of redemptive history, these categories seem helpful. The next several chapters of Genesis will work out the implications of life outside the garden, under God's curse. It is a very different world from the one in which Adam and Eve first lived, and without a proper understanding of the fall many aspects of this broken world are impossible to explain.

In addition to this primary focus of the chapter on the fall, we find a number of secondary themes as well, as might be expected in an origin story. The foundational differences and nonreversible relationship between men and women lie at the heart of the narrative. The fall occurs through a reversal of the male-female relationship, an order that God restores when he intervenes by addressing the man first. This pre-fall order underlies the rest of Scripture's teaching about the proper roles of men and women, including in the church. Many scholars have gone astray by attempting to interpret Paul's teaching about women's roles in the church in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy in a vacuum, or against the background of Second Temple Judaism, rather than seeing it as rooted and grounded in creation, a plain connection that Paul makes explicit in 1 Timothy 2:12–15.

GENESIS 4

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten[1] a man with the help of the LORD." **2** And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. **3** In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, **4** and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, **5** but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. **6** The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted?[2] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for[3] you, and you must rule over it."

8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother.[4] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. **9** Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my

69 These four categories were originally advanced by Augustine. Perhaps the fullest development of this idea is in Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in the Fourfold State* (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964).

brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice
of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you
are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your
brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall
no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer
on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than
I can bear.[5] 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground,
and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer
on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 Then the LORD said to
him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-
fold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should
attack him. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and
settled in the land of Nod,[6] east of Eden.

17 Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built
a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. 18 To
Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered
Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. 19 And Lamech took two
wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.
20 Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have
livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those
who play the lyre and pipe. 22 Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the
forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was
Naamah.

23 Lamech said to his wives:

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
24 If Cain's revenge is sevenfold,
then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name
Seth, for she said, "God has appointed[7] for me another offspring instead of
Abel, for Cain killed him." 26 To Seth also a son was born, and he called his
name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.

1 *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *gotten* 2 Hebrew *will there not be a lifting up* [of your face]? 3 Or *to*, or *toward*, or *against* (see 3:16) 4 Hebrew; Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate add *Let us go out to the field* 5 Or *My guilt is too great to bear* 6 *Nod* means *wandering* 7 *Seth* sounds like the Hebrew for *he appointed*

Section Overview

In the beginning everything in creation is good. The fall, however, changes everything, bringing sin and death into a previously untarnished world. The dramatic nature of that change is nowhere clearer than in Genesis 4, in which we hear of the first human death, which is the result not of old age or a natural disaster but of murder. Having heard the curse pronounced and sin judged in theory, we now see the effects of sin starting to work themselves out in reality. The formula "God said . . . and it was so" is not limited to Genesis 1 but stretches throughout Scripture, now with devastating results.

In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve had to be talked into sin by the subtlety of the serpent (cf. Gen. 3:1–6), whereas in Genesis 4 Cain will not be talked out of sin by the direct intervention of God himself (4:6–7). Yet God's longsuffering grace is shown even to Cain, allowing human history and culture to develop and flourish (vv. 19–22), albeit in rebellion against God, which reaches a climax in the celebration of gratuitous violence by the seventh of Cain's line, Lamech (vv. 23–24). Nevertheless, the Lord provides a replacement seed for Adam and Eve in the person of Seth to carry on the line of promise (v. 25). This line has neither the technology nor artistic prowess or cities that come from the line of Cain, but it has something far better: hearts that call upon the name of the Lord (v. 26).

Section Outline

II. The Family History of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26) . . .
  C. Cain and Abel (4:1–26)

Comment

4:1–5 The chapter starts on a positive note. Adam has sexual relations[70] with Eve, and she gives birth to two sons, fulfilling her role as "the mother of all living" (3:20). Women were often involved in the naming process in the OT (cf. Gen. 29:32–30:24; 38:4–5; Judg. 13:24; 1 Sam. 1:20), though men also named their children (cf. Gen. 21:3; 38:3; Ex. 2:22). The firstborn child she names "Cain" (Gen. 4:1; Hb. *qayin*) because, she says, "I have gotten [*qanah*, "acquired, created"] a man with the help of the LORD." The woman who was herself taken from the man (cf. 2:23) has now produced a man herself.

The reason given for Cain's name suggests great rejoicing at his arrival, which is natural given that he was the first human to arrive in this way. Does Eve think that this son is perhaps the promised seed of Genesis 3:15? He is, after all, the oldest son, who follows in his father's footsteps as a cultivator of the ground (4:2), and Eve attributes his arrival to "the help of the LORD" (v. 1).[71] Eve calls this little baby a "man" (*'ish*), like the man, Adam, from whom she herself was taken (2:22), suggesting his potential to be a second Adam, reversing the effects of the fall.[72] Certainly her words are an expression of faith in the promise of God, even if she does not yet understand how long the redemptive process will take.

Abel's name, on the other hand, sounds like "worthless, vanity" (*hebel*; the same word used frequently in Ecclesiastes, rendered "vanity"; e.g., Eccles. 1:2). There is no special rejoicing recorded over his birth, nor mention of the Lord's help. The text simply says, "And again, she bore his brother[73] Abel" (Gen. 4:2). To the casual

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70 Literally, "Adam knew his wife"; *yada'* is far from being merely an intellectual exercise but can have overtones of a special relationship (e.g., Amos 3:2); cf. Waltke, *Genesis*, 96.

71 Literally she simply says, "I have acquired a man with the Lord." Martin Luther rendered this "a man of the Lord," seeing this as Eve's belief that Cain would be the promised seed. Cf. "Lectures on Genesis 1–5," *The Works of Martin Luther*, trans. J. Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 1.242.

72 Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 92.

73 The word "brother" occurs seven times in the Cain and Abel narrative, always with a possessive suffix, "your" or "his," of which Cain is always the subject. This feature underlines the fact that Cain later denies, which is that he has a duty of care for his brother.

observer Abel seems the disadvantaged one as the younger brother. After all, if the promised seed of the woman has already arrived in Cain, what need is there for Abel?

Each brother pursues a different calling. Cain, like Adam, works the ground (v. 2; cf. 3:23), while Abel keeps flocks of sheep (or perhaps goats; Hb. *tson* can refer to either animal). Their respective callings form the backdrop for the conflict that ensues. At some unspecified point of time[74] the brothers bring offerings to present to the Lord from their respective produce, with Cain bringing a grain offering and Abel offering a lamb (4:3–4). We are not told where they bring these sacrifices; since there is no sanctuary in Genesis 4–11, they may simply present them on a suitable rock. But God reverses the natural order and accepts the offering of the younger brother, Abel, while refusing the offering of the older brother, Cain. Perhaps fire descended from heaven on Abel's offering indicating God's favor, while Cain's was untouched (as in 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Chron. 7:1).[75]

The reason God accepts Abel's sacrifice while refusing Cain's has been much debated. Some interpreters suggest that it is because Abel offers a blood sacrifice while Cain's sacrifice is of grain.[76] They point out that the Bible insists that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22). But that understanding fails to recognize that both offerings are specifically described as being *minkhot*, "tribute offerings" (Gen. 4:4–5).[77] According to the law of Moses, a *minkhah* would very often be a grain offering—and this is how the ESV often translates the word (cf. Lev. 2:11). That is because the aim of the *minkhah* is *not* to seek forgiveness of sins but rather to acknowledge someone as overlord by bringing him a gift or, more precisely, tribute. In 1 Samuel 10:27, when Saul has been crowned king over Israel, it is reported that certain people "brought him no present [*minkhah*]." These troublemakers are reluctant to recognize Saul as their king, and they show it in their lack of tribute offerings.

So then, the offerings Cain and Abel bring to God are tribute offerings, acknowledging him as their king. But Abel, we are told, brings the very best that he has (some "of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions"; Gen. 4:4), whereas Cain brings "an offering of the fruit of the ground" (v. 3).[78] There is a difference in heart attitude between Cain and Abel, expressed in the quality of the sacrifices they offer: it is not simply Abel's sacrifice that God favors but *Abel* (v. 4).[79] To put

74 The Hebrew word *yammim* often seems to indicate a period of about a year (cf. Lev. 25:29; 2 Sam. 14:26; Jer. 13:6); so Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 103.
75 Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 33.
76 E.g., James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 1:201.
77 Kidner, *Genesis*, 80.
78 So B. K. Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 363–372; Sarna, *Genesis*, 32. Cf. Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889), 1:69. Greidanus points out the absence of any mention of "firstfruits" in describing Cain's offering (*Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 93).
79 G. Herion thinks that Cain's problem is that he offered the fruit of the soil (Hb. *'adamah*), which has been cursed; "Why God Rejected Cain's Offering: The Obvious Answer," in *Fortunate the Eyes That See*, ed. A. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 52–65. However, God told Adam to continue working the soil (Gen. 3:19), and Cain was simply following in his father's footsteps, which must have mitigated the curse at least to some extent. It is not clear why the fruit of the soil would be inappropriate to offer to God in the days of Cain yet be required as an offering to God as part of the Mosaic order, or for that matter how animal offerings would escape the general curse on the ground that resulted from the fall.

it another way, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that Abel's sacrifice is offered in faith (Heb. 11:4). He offers a better sacrifice because he believes in God's promise that one day there will be a Redeemer, and so gives of his very best, while, in contrast, Cain has no love for God; he is simply going through the motions of religion.

Cain's reaction to God's refusing his offering is significant: he becomes very angry (Gen. 4:5). "His face fell" indicates a feeling of rejection; acceptance is sometimes described as a person's having his face lifted (cf. ESV mg. on v. 7; Job 11:15). Cain does not ask himself the question "Why did God not accept my offering?" He simply explodes with rage, as if God has no right to determine which offerings are acceptable and which are not—or which offerers are acceptable and which are not. Like his parents, he wants to decide for himself what constitutes good and evil when it comes to making offerings to God. He believes that God should gratefully receive whatever is given to him.

4:6–8 In the midst of Cain's rebellion God gives him a second chance: he comes to Cain directly and asks, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is toward[80] you, but you must rule over it" (Gen. 4:6–7). Once again, as in the garden, God approaches humans with questions designed to spark self-reflection. Rather than being angry with Abel (and with God), Cain should examine his own heart. If he had offered his sacrifice with the right spirit, his sacrifice—and he—would also have been accepted. The doorway to life through a relationship with God is still open to him.

However, the Lord also warns Cain of the danger facing him. Sin is depicted as a wild animal poised and ready to spring on the unwary Cain (v. 7; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). This is the first time in Genesis that "sin" has been named, and it appears not merely as a wrong action on Cain's part but as a powerful force that desires to take over his life. The parallelism of Genesis 4:7 and 3:16 is instructive: sin now fills the woman's position in the equation. Through the fall mankind has now become "one flesh" with sin; like a nagging wife, it will not go away. Yet there is still time for Cain to recognize the danger, repent with godly sorrow, and resist sin's power. The original mandate for man to have dominion over creation (1:26) has now become the struggle for man to have dominion over himself. To quote Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions."

As noted earlier, the progress of sin's power is evident in Cain's refusal to listen even to a direct appeal from God. He submits to sin's power, and the results are fatal for his brother. He invites Abel out into the field,[81] and there he kills him (Gen. 4:8). In the OT violent crimes committed in the field are regarded as premeditated, since they take place where there would be no witnesses to respond to

80 Again, following the footnote rather than the main text, as in 3:16; cf. comment on 3:14–19.
81 The MT, which simply has "Cain said to Abel his brother," is awkward (Gen. 4:8; ESV smooths it in English by rendering "Cain said" as "Cain spoke"). Normally, "said to" is followed by the content of that conversation (e.g., Gen. 1:28; 3:1; etc.). Here the LXX fills in the lacuna with "Let us go out into the open country," which may represent the original text, omitted in error by the MT, or may simply be an attempt on the part of the Greek translator to smooth an obviously difficult text.

cries for help.[82] The deadly seriousness of sin is on full display. Anyone tempted to dismiss the original sin as a victimless crime, an offense against God rather than man, must recognize that breaking the earlier commandments inevitably ends with breaking the latter ones as well.

4:9–16 God then comes to Cain, as he had earlier come to Adam, and confronts him with a question inviting confession of his sin: "Where is Abel your brother?" (v. 9). Even though Adam made excuses for his actions, at least he finally told the truth and confessed his sin, as did Eve (cf. 3:12–13). Cain does neither. He first lies to God, saying, "I do not know," and then attempts to evade his own responsibility for Abel, asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9). Having failed in its appointed task as the guardian (Hb. *shomer*; 2:15) of God's sanctuary, now mankind shrugs off its responsibility as the guardian (*shomer*; 4:9) of one's brother. But Cain's pretense of innocence could hardly deceive the all-knowing God, who responds, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood[83] is crying to me from the ground" (v. 10). Alienated from the ground, which previously he had worked, Cain will from now on be a wanderer upon the face of the earth (v. 12). He will become a man without a place, an outcast from God's presence, alienated from the ground from which his food comes and from his fellow man. Whereas Adam was indirectly cursed through the ground that he worked (3:17), the curse on Cain is direct and personal: "You are cursed" (4:11). The doctrine of judgment, denied by the serpent (3:4), is nonetheless real. Only the blood of Jesus, which cries out for grace rather than justice, can redeem those under the wrath of God (cf. Heb. 12:29).

There is no sign of penitence in Cain's response to God—only anger and fear at the fate awaiting him (Gen. 4:13–14). He laments the forthcoming absence of God's face (v. 14), yet he had done nothing to cultivate that relationship earlier by offering proper sacrifices from a broken and contrite heart or by resisting the pull of sin. Yet in his grace God does not allow judgment to take its immediate course. He puts a mark of his protection on Cain (v. 15)[84] to keep him safe in a dangerous world, showing far more compassion on Cain than Cain had shown to his brother. Even the unbelieving murderer is to be afforded protection from revenge and anarchy and allowed to live out the full number of his days on earth. Cast out from the vicinity of Eden, Cain goes farther and further from God, away to the east, to the land whose very name means "wandering" (*nod*; v. 16)—an expression of Cain's deep lostness.

4:17–24 In a sad parody of the optimistic beginning of Genesis 4 we are told that Cain "knew" his wife, who bears him a son. The son's name is "Enoch" (Hb. *khanok*; v. 17), which comes from a verb meaning "to dedicate," usually at the outset of a

82 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 106.
83 The word "blood" here is plural (Hb. *damim*), as is often the case when describing bloodshed, as if to reflect the blood spatter caused by violent acts.
84 More precisely *'ot* means "a sign." Elsewhere in Genesis it is always a sign of a covenant relationship. Here it is less than that but nonetheless marks out Cain as remaining under God's direct protection despite his sin.

project (cf. Deut. 20:5; 1 Kings 8:63).[85] There is nothing in the text to suggest that this Enoch is dedicated to the Lord in any way, however, and he serves primarily as a foil for the later Enoch, from the line of Seth, who will truly embody the meaning of his name (Gen. 5:18–22).

Since Cain has no center for his society in God, he founds a city to provide that center, forming an imitation of the sacred community that has been lost through his sin against his brother. There is already here an anticipatory contrast with Abraham: Cain seeks an earthly city, desiring to make a name for himself by founding a civilization and pursuing immortality through naming a city after his son (4:17). Abraham, however, is promised both offspring and a great name by God (12:2) yet spends his earthly lifetime as a wanderer here on earth, looking for a city yet to come, "whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). From the outset there is a profound contrast between earth-centered religion and heaven-centered religion, between the true covenant community and the noncovenant imitation community.

The city is in a profound sense Cain's natural territory; it is archetypally the place where no one is his brother's keeper. Yet God's grace can redeem even the city; the place that in Genesis 1–11 is the home of Cain's descendants and the builders of the Tower of Babel becomes in Revelation 21 the new Jerusalem, where God dwells with his people, where we know God and are fully known by him, and where we live in intimate and untroubled fellowship with our brothers and sisters.

Intriguingly, advances in farming, in the arts, and in engineering are ascribed to Cain's line (Gen. 4:20–22).[86] The city concentrates human talent and insight, encouraging progress and development, even in a fallen world. Jabal is called the father of the nomadic shepherding lifestyle (v. 20), while his brother, Jubal, is the originator of musical instruments (v. 21). Their half-brother, Tubal-cain, originates metalwork of various kinds,[87] while his sister, Naamah ("Pleasant"), earns a rare genealogical mention for a woman in Genesis, though we are not informed of any particular innovations on her part. The point is clear: Cain's line is advanced in power, wealth, luxury, and artistic accomplishment—and likely beauty as well.

At the same time that the line of Cain contributes all these advances to mankind, it also declines rapidly in morals, as exemplified in Lamech, the seventh in Cain's line. In addition to being the place of technological, artistic, and educational opportunities, the city is a place of moral decay from the beginning. It is Lamech who transgresses God's design for marriage between one man and one woman through the introduction of polygamy (v. 23). It is Lamech who has access to the technology necessary to make deadly weapons and the vicious ruthlessness to

85 The same verb is used in Proverbs 22:6, where our English translations usually render it "train up a child," though the idea of setting a child apart for the way he should follow is likely also present there.
86 This contrasts sharply with other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, which generally attribute such advances to specific gods.
87 The forging of bronze and iron came later; the Hebrew word *latish* means "to hammer, sharpen," which would have been some of the earliest methods of forming meteoric iron and naturally outcropping bronze into something useful. It has been suggested that his unusual double name thus represents "Sharpener-smith." Cf. Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 127.

use them. What is more, Lamech composes the first poetry since the fall, in order to glorify to his wives an act of gratuitous violence he commits—killing a *child* (*yeled*) for merely hurting Lamech (v. 23). In the process he turns God's gracious withholding of punishment on Cain into the justification for his own outrageous personal vindictiveness, promising seventy-seven-fold judgment upon those who cross him (v. 24), thereby becoming the father of all genres of music that glorify sex and violence. The seventh of Cain's line has developed the full measure of sin's destructiveness. In diametric contrast Jesus teaches a model of seventy-seven-fold forgiveness of those who wrong us (Matt. 18:21–22).

Cain's house comprehensively turns its back on God. His descendants are still living busy, productive lives, taking the gifts God has given them and using those gifts to build their own kingdoms and to establish their own forms of security and significance. They completely invest themselves in the progress and the pursuits of this world, and their course is determinedly set to the east of Eden. Despite this, however, they cannot escape the fulfilling of God's purposes of the creation mandate, and their inventions and discoveries, intended to serve their own glory, will nonetheless help the progress of civilization under God's sovereign plan.

4:25–26 God is not finished with humanity. In place of Abel God raises up another son to Adam and Eve, through whom his promise will ultimately bear fruit. The end of the chapter brings us full circle to the beginning, as "Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth" ("appointed"; Gen. 4:25). In this line lies the hope of the world. Seth is not simply appointed to be a replacement child for Abel. In naming him Seth Eve sees far more in him than that. She says, "God has appointed for me another seed [ESV: "offspring"], instead of Abel, for Cain killed him" (v. 25). Eve recognizes that the true hope of the world lies not in the rich, the powerful, the educated, or the artistic influencers—not in the descendants of Cain, in other words, for all their vaunted achievements—but in the seed of the woman, which was promised in Genesis 3:15. As long as that line survives, there is hope of salvation.

In contrast to the line of Cain, which is steadily increasing in decadence and immorality, the line of Seth preserves true religion, calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26).[88] There is no pomp or circumstance in its worship; it seems to be simple and unadorned prayer and praise, presumably along with heartfelt sacrifices similar to the ones offered by Abel, acknowledging the Lord as God. It may look like

88 In the book of Genesis it appears that the patriarchs worship Yahweh by name, even though in Exodus the divine name appears to be a new revelation (Ex. 6:3). One possibility is that they knew the name Yahweh but not yet its significance and meaning as the God who brought his people out of the land of Egypt. Another possibility, however, is that Moses has deliberately included the name Yahweh anachronistically into the patriarchal narratives, much like we might talk about Jesus' appearing to Abraham in the OT, to make it abundantly clear that "the God of the Fathers" worshiped by the patriarchs is the same God as the one who brought Israel out of Egypt. A couple of lines of evidence support this theory. One involves passages in which it appears that an original reference to *'el* or *'elohim* in a narrative has been replaced by a reference to Yahweh. So in Genesis 16 the narrator regularly references "the LORD," but Hagar refers only to *'el* ("God"), and she names her son "Ishmael" ("God heard"), not Shemaiah ("the Lord heard"). Similarly in the Pentateuchal narratives there are many Israelite names that include "El" or "Shaddai" as a theophoric element but none with "Yah." For a fuller discussion of the issues cf. R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 5–104.

nothing compared to the great City of Man, founded and developed by Cain's line. The true remnant seems pitiably small and backward in comparison. It is probably significant that Seth names his son "Enosh," which means something like "mere man" (e.g., 2 Chron. 14:11; Job 7:17). Seth is under no illusions about the weakness of his family line. But God's strength is made perfect in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). In God's own time he will bring the treasures and insights of all civilizations into the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26). Technology and the arts can ultimately be redeemed because God is the ultimate source of all knowledge, insight, and beauty. On the last day even the spiritual descendants of Cain must bow their knees and confess that the seed of the line of Seth, Jesus Christ himself, is the Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10).

Response

The story of Cain and Abel challenges all of us in terms of our worship. It is not enough to make offerings to God, not even to the true God, if they come from a heart that lacks faith and love for God. In this regard it is striking that most people ask "Why was Cain's sacrifice rejected?" instead of "Why was Abel's accepted?" Those two questions reveal two contrasting approaches to God: the approach of self-justification versus the approach of humble dependence upon divine grace. Self-justification expects God to be obligated to receive whatever we choose to offer, no matter how sketchily we go through the motions of presenting it. Grace realizes that even our best offerings are not adequate to present to a holy God, and it marvels that he would be pleased to receive such poor gifts as we have to offer, even though they be our very best.

Of course, the reality is that all of us offer deeply tainted worship to God, even as Christians. Our minds wander, our bodies fidget, and our hearts are given over to other idols, even as we are physically there, offering a half-hearted song and perhaps some money that we can easily spare. We should be profoundly thankful for Jesus, who came as a wholehearted worshiper, the fulfillment of David's cry in Psalm 69, "Zeal for your house has consumed me" (Ps. 69:9; cited in John 2:17). Unlike our half-hearted worship, which so easily spills over into indifference or anger toward our brothers and sisters, his worship led him to the cross, where the temple of his body was destroyed for us (John 2:19). His blood, shed for us on the cross, cries out for mercy and acceptance by the Father toward all those who are in him, cleansing us from all our sins, including our dysfunctional worship (Heb. 12:24).

Who, though, is my brother? We are often overly enamored of the powerful and influential, those who control the world of technology and the arts, even though they bear the marks of Cain's spiritual parentage rather than that of the line of promise. In our modern culture we are sometimes also overly enamored of cities, thinking that through them we can gain power to reach the wider culture with the gospel. The desire for influence and power often penetrates the church in our age, especially in more affluent countries. Yet the call to follow Jesus is often

a call to leave the city, the place of worldly influence, and go outside its gates to the place of suffering and of the cross, the place of simple, heartfelt, dependent worship by men and women calling on the name of the Lord. As the writer to the Hebrews reminds us,

> Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (Heb. 13:12–15)

Of course, the poor, the weak, and the needy can be found in many places, and cities need the gospel too. Yet those who live in cities are not more precious to God than those who live in suburbs or rural towns and villages.

GENESIS 5

5 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created
man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man[1] when they were created. 3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. 4 The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. 5 Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

6 When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. 7 Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. 8 Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

9 When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. 10 Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. 11 Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.

12 When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. 13 Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. 14 Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died.

15 When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. 16 Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. 17 Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died.

18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch. 19 Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 20 Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died.

21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. 22 Enoch walked with God[2] after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not,[3] for God took him.

25 When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech.
26 Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons
and daughters. 27 Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he
died.
28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son 29 and called his
name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one
shall bring us relief[4] from our work and from the painful toil of our hands."
30 Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and
daughters. 31 Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died.
32 After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and
Japheth.

1 Hebrew *adam* 2 Septuagint *pleased God*; also verse 24 3 Septuagint *was not found* 4 *Noah* sounds like the Hebrew for *rest*

Section Overview

Genesis 5 provides an interlude after the breathtaking march of sin in Genesis 3–4. It comprises a linear genealogy for the line of Seth, from the beginning (Adam) to the time of the flood (Noah). The genealogy shows the line of Seth as it obediently fulfills the creation mandate and continues the line from which the promise of Genesis 3:15 will ultimately find its fulfillment. A remarkable feature of this genealogy is the prominence of dates and of death. A normal genealogical structure consists of identifying father-son relationships over multiple generations, often with relevant mininarratives inserted where appropriate (e.g., Genesis 36). Here, however, the (remarkable) ages achieved by the patriarchs at their deaths are an additional feature, along with the repeated refrain "and he died" (nine times in Genesis 5, with the age and notice of the death of the 10th generation, Noah, deferred to 9:29).

This repeated formula highlights the unique position of Enoch, in the seventh generation, whose culminating age is given without a death notice: "He was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). The contrast to the line of Cain is striking: the seventh[89] in the line of Adam through Cain was Lamech, the depths of depravity (4:19–24), while the seventh in the line of Adam through Seth, Enoch, walks with God—a phrase indicating a special intimacy with God and a life of piety—and then he is not, for the Lord takes him (5:24). The only other OT character to avoid death in this way is Elijah, whom God takes to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11–12).

The genealogy climaxes in the tenth generation with the birth of Noah, whose name means "relief" (Gen. 5:29). His father has high hopes that in him the promised rest from laboring over the cursed ground might finally be achieved. But the peace of Genesis 5 is merely the calm before the storm. Noah is not the promised seed of the woman, though he will have an important role to play in maintaining humanity's hope. Many generations must yet pass before the coming of the promised and eagerly anticipated Christ, but that hope is faithfully preserved by the line of Seth.

89 All these sequences adopt the biblical practice of counting the generations inclusively.

Section Outline

III. The Family History of Adam (5:1–6:8)
  A. From Adam to Noah (5:1–32)

Comment

5:1–5 The chapter begins with the main structuring device in Genesis, the *toledot* formula (cf. comment on 2:4–7). Here it introduces the "family history," or the "account of the offspring," of Adam and specifically the line of Seth. The focus of chapter 4 was the line of Cain and its advancements of technology, civilization, and the arts, in contrast to which the line of Seth received only a very brief mention in connection with true worship (4:26). Now the focus shifts to the elect line, though there is no mention of any similar cultural achievements on its part. It is often assumed that this chapter was borrowed from an earlier source;[90] this is plausible, since genealogies by their very nature tend to have an independent existence, preserving remembrance of the family line. However, a more interesting question asks why Moses chose to incorporate this genealogy here and what function it serves within the wider narrative. (Note esp. the tight connections to 1:26–28 and 4:25–26, connecting this section with the prologue, 1:1–2:3, and the first *toledot*, 2:4–4:26.) The genealogy is not a random insertion at this point in the story; rather it serves to underline the historical nature of the narratives surrounding it. These events did not take place "in a galaxy far, far away" or in some timeless heavenly realm of the gods but in real time and space that are connected directly through these genealogies down to the world of Moses' first readers.

The passage begins with a reprise of 1:26–28, focusing specifically on humanity's relationship to God and omitting all the aspects of the original that had to do with its lordship over creation. Humans were made in the likeness of God—both male and female—and named by him. What is more, they existed under his blessing in the beginning (5:1–2). This reprise both introduces and forms a contrast with what follows. Just as humans were made in the image of God and named by him, so too Adam had a son in his own likeness, whom he named Seth (v. 3). In a fallen world conception and safe delivery cannot be taken for granted; both are a blessing from God (cf. Ps. 127:3–5) in light of the judgment on the woman in Genesis 3:16. If Seth is in Adam's likeness, and Adam is in God's likeness, then this implies that all subsequent humans are also in the likeness of God, even after the fall.[91] God's creation of and naming of mankind form a pattern that the line of Seth will imitate. The story of Cain and Abel does not need to be repeated here; Cain is not included in the line of promise because of his sin, and Abel has been replaced by Seth (4:25).

An unusual feature of the genealogy in Genesis 5 is the cataloging of the ages of the primeval figures, both when each fathers his first child and when each dies.

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90 In this case it is uniquely called "the book [*sefer*] of the family history," indicating that it reflects a written record, not just an oral tradition; cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 125–126.
91 It is in this sense that Luke 3:38 can call Adam the "son of God."

The figures for both these events are high throughout the genealogy—Adam, for example, fathers his first child at 130 years old and then lives to be 930 (Gen. 5:3–5). Ancient people were as familiar with normal lifespans as modern people are (cf. Ps. 90:10), yet their memory was that people lived to far greater ages in the period prior to the flood. In the providence of God this would, of course, have permitted far more rapid population growth (note the repeated refrain "And he had other sons and daughters"; Gen. 5:4, 7, 10, etc.), enabling much of the earth to be occupied within only a few generations. It also suggests that the full effects of the curse had not yet taken hold; it is not until the time of the flood that normal human life expectancy is reduced to less than 120 years (cf. 6:3). Yet the curse is still in effect upon humanity, as may be seen by the repeated refrain "And he died" (5:5, 8, 11).

In most cases nothing is recorded in the genealogy about the lives of these early humans beyond their birth, having and naming children, living out their days, and death. The message of Psalm 90—the one biblical psalm by Moses—is that humans are like the grass that springs up in the morning and is swept away by the evening, because we pass our days under the wrath of God; our time is soon gone and we return to the dust from which we were taken (Ps. 90:3–10). Genesis 5 communicates the same message in the form of a genealogy; even the longest human life is largely empty and devoid of substance. Although we may fill the earth with children made in our own image, sooner or later we will die and return to the ground from which we were taken. This is true not merely of the line of Cain, the non-elect line; it is the fate also of the elect line of promise. Calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26) does not exempt the family from the trials and challenges of living in a world in which (almost) every life ends in death. Yet we should not miss the significance of the fact that each of these otherwise unknown people has his own part to play in passing on the line of promise.

5:6–24 This repeated cycle of birth, fathering a son, living a long (but essentially empty) life, and then dying makes the story of Enoch distinct. Just as Lamech is the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain (Gen. 4:19–24), so Enoch is the seventh from Adam in the line of Seth. But whereas Lamech is noted for the height of his iniquity, introducing polygamy and celebrating gratuitous violence with his poetry, Enoch is marked out because he "walked with God" (5:24). Although he fathers his first child at age 65 (a relatively normal age in the genealogy; cf. v. 15), Enoch lives to be a mere 365 years old, by far the youngest of the preflood patriarchs, less than half the lifetime of his grandson (also named Lamech), who at 777 years is the shortest-lived of the antediluvian patriarchs. This clearly challenges the idea that a long life is an unmitigated blessing from God: in this case the patriarch who walks most closely with God lives the shortest life before God takes him (5:24).[92]

92 The Hebrew clause for "He was not" is used elsewhere to describe unexpected deaths (Gen. 37:30; Ps. 37:10), so by itself it does not imply that Enoch did not die. However, as Hebrews 11:5 deduces, the similarity

It is sometimes suggested that the idea of individual resurrection is a late concept in the Hebrew Bible, appearing first in books such as Daniel (e.g., 12:2–3). This may be true if one is looking for explicit references to bodily resurrection; however, the whole fabric of the Hebrew Bible rests on the reality of life after death (or more precisely in Enoch's case, "life after life"). Jesus, of course, points this out to the Sadducees when he reminds them of the simple formula "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," which, he argues, presupposes the reality of the resurrection, since the Lord is the God not of the dead but the living (Matt. 22:32). He could just as easily have pointed to the experience of Enoch. If life in this world is all there is, then the one who walks with God should live here longer than others. What is more, if there is nothing beyond this life, what could it mean for God to "take Enoch" (Gen. 5:24) or for the later patriarchs to be "gathered to [their] people" (e.g., Gen. 49:29)? If Abraham had no expectation of a resurrection, why did it matter for him to be buried in a plot of the Promised Land that he owned (cf. Genesis 23)? As the writer to the Hebrews correctly discerns, everything in Genesis rests on the substratum of a hope of life beyond this life, a hope that finds its firstfruits, as it were, in the experience of Enoch.

When we are told that Enoch walked (Hb. *hithallek*) with God, we are immediately reminded of God's walking around in the garden, which he apparently did regularly with Adam and Eve, which uses exactly the same form of the verb (cf. comment on 3:8–13). Similar terminology is later used to describe the Lord's presence in the midst of his people in the wilderness by means of the tabernacle (Deut. 23:14). This is the language of keeping company with and sharing intimate fellowship with someone, not merely marching together along the same road (cf. 1 Sam. 25:15). The same virtue will be ascribed to Noah in Genesis 6:9: in contrast to the wicked and perverse generation surrounding him, Noah walks with God. However, whereas for Enoch the outcome of his walking with God is to be caught up to live with God "early," as it were, thus avoiding many of the trials and pains that accompany life in a fallen and cursed world, for Noah the fruit of his walking with God is that the Lord preserves him through those trials and pains as he endures and survives the flood. God has more than one way of dealing with his faithful servants.

5:25–32 The last three generations in the ten-generation sequence from Adam to Noah include the longest-lived patriarch of all, Methuselah, whose son, Lamech—not to be confused with the Lamech in the line of Cain[93]—is the shortest lived of the patriarchs to live out a full life and die. Methuselah lives 969 years, while his son lives a mere 777 years. Yet, like most of the other antediluvian patriarchs, neither of them does anything more significant than having children to carry on the line of promise.

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of the language about Enoch to the experience of Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11–12 suggests something more than that Enoch simply suffered a tragic accident.

93 The fact that both lines have an Enoch and a Lamech invites the reader to compare and contrast the characters with identical names; the Enoch and Lamech in Seth's line are quite different from those in Cain's.

This reality is emphasized by the explanation of the name given to Lamech's son, Noah. Thus far there has been no explanation given for any name since the time of Cain and Seth (cf. Gen. 4:1, 25). This should caution us against the attempts of some popular commentators to draw imaginative significance out of the sequence of names in Seth's line; to do so is at best to interpret the passage in a direction entirely unintended by the original author, while at worst some of the proposed etymologies are extremely tortured in such an interpretation. The passage itself largely uses these names as markers of the passage of the generations, while the line of promise keeps alive hope that God would in due time send the appointed seed.

This hope is expressed concretely by Noah's father, Lamech, who names him "relief" (Hb. *noakh*; 5:29),[94] saying, "This one will bring us relief [*yenakhamenu*] from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed" (v. 29 CSB).[95] The reference to the "agonizing labor of our hands" and the curse on the ground clearly alludes to God's judgment upon Adam in 3:17, so the hope of Noah providing relief must be a reference to the promise of Genesis 3:15. Surely, now that Adam had died,[96] it is time for God to provide relief to his people through the promised seed of the woman? But, though Noah will carry humanity safely through the judgment of the flood, it is not yet time for the people to enter their rest. That seed will take many more generations to arrive.

Noah is marked out in one other way from the other generations in the genealogy. Each of the other patriarchs has a single named son who carries on the line of promise and multiple other sons and daughters who disappear from the picture. Are we to assume that they virtually all assimilate to the line of Cain, so that the elect line remains just that—a line, with almost no branches? That may be the case, if Noah's generation is in any way representative: Noah walks alone with God, surrounded by a wicked and rebellious generation (cf. 6:9–12). Yet unlike his ancestors Noah has three named sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—through whom there will be a new beginning for humanity. He has to wait a long time for those sons, even by antediluvian standards: Noah's first son is born when he is six hundred, which explains why there are no grandchildren on the ark and hints at a lengthy period of barrenness for Noah and his wife, a theme that will become prominent later in Genesis.

It will not take long before the line of promise returns to being a single thread, however, passed down through the line of Seth to Terah, then to Abraham and to

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94 Strictly speaking, Noah's name comes from *nuakh* ("rest") rather than *nakham* ("to give relief"), so this is a play on words rather than a precise etymology of Noah's name.

95 Following the RSV, the ESV here takes the final clause "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed" and makes it an initial clause, so that now it is Noah who is taken from the cursed ground, like Adam, rather than understanding the phrase as referring to the relief Noah would provide from the difficult labor caused by the curse on the ground.

96 According to the chronology of the MT Noah would have been the first generation born after the death of Adam. Some have suggested that the genealogy may be telescoped, with some generations omitted to achieve the ten-generation schema, as Matthew's Gospel does with its three-part fourteen-generation genealogy of Jesus (cf. Matt. 1:17). However, the fathers' ages at the birth of each firstborn suggest that it is perhaps intended to be taken more literally.

Isaac. It will not branch into a segmented genealogy again until the time of Jacob, whose twelve sons will together form the nation of Israel. But the remaining offspring of Shem, Ham, and Japheth will have important roles to play in establishing the various nations of Israel's world (cf. Genesis 10).

Response

According to Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death," an assertion that Genesis 5 thoroughly confirms. Tracing the line of promise from Adam to Noah, we see that each of the patriarchs dies in turn. Being in the image of their father Adam means that they all die, just as he did. Yet the chapter's emphasis on universal death is the background, not the focus. Two characters introduced here demonstrate the possibility of a different future. The first is Enoch, who walks with God and then is not, for God takes him. The writer to the Hebrews asserts that by his faith Enoch is miraculously exempted from the normal human ending of life (Heb. 11:5). In that regard he is somewhat like those who will still be alive at the return of Christ: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51).

Enoch models for us what the godly life looks like: walking with God. For Enoch that presumably means obeying what he knows about God's law, which is in some measure written on his heart, but it also means more than that: living a relationship of faith in the God who has made him and called him to himself. The reward for Enoch's life of obedience is not length of days but a shorter time here on this broken planet, the sooner to enter heavenly fellowship with God. As the missionary martyr Jim Elliot put it, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."[97] In that regard Enoch points forward to his Savior, Jesus, who lived a far shorter life than his and walked with God even more consistently, to the point of drinking the cup of God's wrath in order to redeem the line of Seth from its sins.

The other pointer of hope is Noah, another man who, we will later be told, "walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). Unlike Enoch, Noah is not delivered from the trials and sufferings of this world but enabled to endure them by God's grace. In that regard Noah also points us to Jesus, the one who brought true relief and rest from our burden of sin through his death and resurrection. Noah and Enoch finish their days in faith and hope, looking forward to the promised seed of the woman (3:15). We may now look back on that promised seed and find strengthening for our own faith and hope in a dark and perverse world. In him we are offered rest in all its fullness (Matt. 11:28–30).

97 *The Journals of Jim Elliot* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1978), 174.

GENESIS 6:1–8

6 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters
were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man
were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. 3 Then the
LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in[1] man forever, for he is flesh: his
days shall be 120 years." 4 The Nephilim[2] were on the earth in those days,
and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man
and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of
old, the men of renown.

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and
that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continu-
ally. 6 And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it
grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom
I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping
things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."
8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

1 Or *My Spirit shall not contend with* 2 Or *giants*

Section Overview

Chapter 5 presented a peaceful interlude between the increasing wickedness of the line of Cain, in the person of Lamech (Gen. 4:19–24), and the even more widespread wickedness of Genesis 6. Now, as we return to the world outside the confines of the elect line, we discover that the peace of Genesis 5 was merely the calm before the storm. The spread of wickedness picks up with the mysterious transgression of 6:1–4, as the "sons of God" go in to the "daughters of men." Until this point sin has been committed only by specific individuals; now for the first time it involves whole classes of people.

Nor does sin stop there; it eventually engulfs an entire generation, so that *every* thought of the *whole* world is *only* evil *all* the time (Gen. 6:5). God's response is to decree the destruction of the created order (v. 7). But one man stands out from the crowd: Noah alone is righteous (v. 9), and so through him God determines to preserve alive a people for himself, along with the various kinds of animals that would otherwise be destroyed in the flood. Through Noah and his sons mankind will have a future, so that the Lord's promise to bruise the head of the serpent through a seed of the woman could ultimately find its fulfillment (cf. 3:15).

Section Outline

III. The Family History of Adam (5:1–6:8) . . .
  B. The Spread of Wickedness (6:1–8)

Comment

6:1–4 The timing of this episode is introduced in rather vague terms: "When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them" (6:1). However, from what follows it appears that these events occur during the lifetime of Noah. At this time "the sons of God *saw* that the daughters of man were attractive [Hb. "good"]. And they *took* as their wives any they chose" (v. 2). The language of seeing and taking something perceived to be good echoes the first temptation in Genesis 3:6, so it is clear that this action represents a significant sin on the part of the "sons of God." But who are the "sons of God" and the "daughters of man," and why is their intermarriage sinful?

Three views of the identity of these groups have been argued, with the first two explanations both finding support since the earliest interpreters.[98] The first view suggests that the "sons of God" are the descendants of the line of Seth, with the "daughters of man" being the descendants of Cain.[99] The second view interprets the "sons of God" as (demonic) spirit beings, who engage in sexual intercourse with human women ("daughters of man"). Justin Martyr (AD 100–160) wrote, "God, when He had made the whole world, and subjected things earthly to man, . . . committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them. But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons."[100] Meanwhile, a third view identifies the "sons of God" as kings, who in many ancient Near Eastern societies claimed divine status for themselves as "sons of the gods." These kings had the power of life and death over their subjects, and on this interpretation the stress in 6:2 lies on the rulers' taking on "any [of the daughters of men] they chose." These kings seize whatever women they wish for their harems—marrying not just one woman, as God intended (2:24), but as many as they choose. Whereas Lamech first broke God's pattern for marriage by having two wives (4:19), these kings multiply that sin many times over by multiplying for themselves wives.[101]

Each of these views has able exponents and is defensible, though each has its own problems. The greatest challenge for the first view is that nowhere else in the OT are human beings described as the "sons of God"; on the contrary, the term consistently designates angelic beings (cf. Job 1:6; 38:7; and probably Deut. 32:8).[102] In addition, "daughters of man" in verse 2 seems obviously related to the daughters born to men in verse 1, which does not seem to limit them to a particular subgroup (i.e., the daughters of the line of Cain).[103] Moreover, some NT passages seem to reference

98 On the early interpretation of this passage cf. Robert C. Newman, "The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4," *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984): 13–36.

99 This view is held by, among others, Augustine, *City of God*, 15.22–23; John Calvin, *Genesis* (1554; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 1.238; Robert S. Candlish, *Studies in Genesis* (repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1979), 123–124; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 324–331.

100 Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.5 (cited in Newman, "Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4," 21–22).

101 For this view cf. Meredith G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4," *WTJ* 24 (1962): 187–204; so also Waltke, *Genesis*, 116–117.

102 Deuteronomy 32:8 has text-critical difficulties, but the reading "sons of God" rather than "sons of Israel" seems probable. Cf. Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *BSac* 158 (2001): 52–74.

103 It is possible to adapt the first view to take "daughters of men" globally as covering *all* women, not just the daughters of the line of Cain. On this understanding the sons of Seth were not deliberately marrying

the involvement of spiritual beings in these events. For example, Jude 6–7 speaks of angels' leaving their proper home and sinning in a way similar to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah in pursuing "strange flesh."[104] Similarly, 1 Peter 3:19–20 references the proclamation of the gospel to spirits who were disobedient in the time of Noah.

The main challenge for the second view is the question of whether angels are capable of producing offspring through intercourse with humans (cf. Matt. 22:30). John Calvin says the angelic view "is abundantly refuted by its own absurdity; and it is surprising that learned men should formerly have been fascinated by ravings so gross and prodigious,"[105] though it must be said that ancient audiences did not find the idea as obviously absurd as Calvin did. Moreover, Genesis says remarkably little about the world of angelic beings, good or bad; on the contrary, it is focused much more closely on human sin and its consequences.[106] Indeed, the transgression in Genesis 6 (whatever it may be) seems to result in a specific judgment that comes upon humanity, not on angelic beings.

The third view offers a potential explanation for the use of the language of "sons of God" to describe humans but does not necessarily provide a much better alternative overall. In general, ancient Near Eastern kings as individuals may have styled themselves as "son of the gods," but there is little evidence for the use of "sons of the gods" as a collective term for kings or rulers. There seems little interest in the political organization of the ancient city-states in Genesis 4, which references farming, music, and technology as advances belonging to the line of Cain but says nothing at all explicitly about kingship.

It is hard to establish with any certainty which of these interpretations is to be preferred. However, a significant contextual consideration is the fact that the contrast between the lines of Cain and of Seth forms the larger backdrop against which this episode occurs. Indeed, Genesis 6:1–8 is itself incorporated into the larger genealogy of Seth that starts in chapter 5 and concludes in 9:29.[107] On this view the passage provides an explanation of why the two families do not result in large numbers of people in the category of "righteous" and "wicked." Because so many of the sons of the line of Seth intermarry indiscriminately, the result is an almost complete loss of the righteous line.

What is more, it is also true that, even though the OT does not elsewhere use "sons of God" to describe God's people, the idea is not entirely foreign to the passage. In Genesis 5:1–3 image and sonship are intimately connected: Adam is made in God's image, and he passes that image on to his children through Seth. If Adam is thus, by virtue of bearing his image, God's son (Luke 3:38), and Seth is explicitly made in the image of Adam (Gen. 5:3), could not Seth and his line rightly be called "sons of God"?[108]

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outside the line of promise but were carelessly marrying whichever women they chose, without reference to their origins. Cf. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 330.

104 It is worth noting that Jude also cites elsewhere from *1 Enoch*, which clearly adopts the supernatural being view; cf. Newman, "Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4," 16, 28–29.

105 Calvin, *Genesis*, 1.238.

106 Cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 48.

107 Cf. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 329.

108 It is striking that in Genesis 5 it is explicitly *Seth* who bears Adam's image, not Cain. Moreover, all the other uses of *bene-'elohim* occur outside the Pentateuch (with the possible exception of Deuteronomy 32:8).

Finally, elsewhere in the Bible Satan's three primary modes of attack on God's people take the form of deception, persecution, and seduction,[109] and it could be argued that the same modus operandi is evident already in the opening chapters of Genesis: deceiving Eve (Genesis 3), martyring Abel (ch. 4), and now seducing the line of promise (6:1–4). These considerations, taken together, persuade me that the interpretation that understands the sin as being the wrongful mixing of the lines of Seth and the line of Cain is correct, though the alternative views each has its strengths.

Whichever interpretation is adopted, what is abundantly clear is that as man multiplies and fills the earth—evidence itself of God's blessing (Gen. 1:28)—sin multiplies also. The sin of these verses forms an evil parody of the creation mandate: these beings, who aspire to be in the image of God, seek to fill the earth with their offspring as God has commanded, but they go about it in the wrong way, abusing the marriage relationship to serve their corrupt desires and seeking to make a name for themselves, following the pattern of Cain (6:4; cf. 4:17).

In this pursuit they are unsuccessful, as is the case for every act of human rebellion in Genesis. God judges the "sons of God," and their sin results in curse and destruction rather than the blessing and prosperity that was sought. Just as indiscriminate eating in Genesis 3 resulted in death, so too indiscriminate marriage that transgresses the boundaries set by God results in death. In contrast to the lengthy lives of the antediluvian patriarchs in Genesis 5, human life will be limited to a mere 120 years.[110] The reason given ("For he is flesh"; 6:3) could describe human mortality or corruption. In fact, both are likely in view: human mortality is the result of human corruption, and the expansion in corruption in these verses will be matched by a decrease in human lifespan. The divine breath/spirit gives life to humanity, and, when it is withdrawn, the result is death (cf. Gen. 2:7; Pss. 104:29; 146:4; Ezek. 37:10).

The judgment of Genesis 6:3 logically separates verses 1–2 from verses 4–5, though they are linked by the renewed mention of the sons of God and the daughters of man in verse 4. The result is a chiastic structure that focuses our attention on the judgment curse that falls on humanity:

(A) Humanity multiplies on the face of the earth (v. 1)
  (B) Sin increases: the sons of God and daughters of men transgress (v. 2)
    (C) Judgment declared upon humanity (v. 3)
  (B') Sin increases: the Nephilim and mighty men transgress (v. 4)
(A') Human wickedness grows great in the earth (v. 5)

The significance of this observation is to note that the sin in verse 4, while contemporaneous with that of verse 2 ("When the sons of God came in to the daughters

109 Deception (2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9); persecution (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:10); seduction (2 Cor. 11:2–3; Rev. 19:2).
110 On the translation issues of Genesis 6:3 cf. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 332–335. This is obviously not an absolute limitation of age, since Abraham lives to be 175 (Gen. 25:7), but after this point very few people exceed that number.

of man and they bore children to them"),[111] is not necessarily identical to it. In other words, the Nephilim and the mighty men are not necessarily the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men, as is often assumed by the interpretation that sees the sons of God as angelic beings.[112] Genesis 6:4 simply asserts that the Nephilim ("fallen ones," cf. CSB mg.) were also present during these corrupt days, as well as later on. It does not tell us anything about the Nephilim, assuming that readers are already familiar with these people.

The only other explicit reference in the Bible to the Nephilim is at Numbers 13:33, where the scouts claim that the fearsomely large Anakim that they encountered were "of" (*min*) the Nephilim. This Hebrew construction could mean that the Anakim were "descended from" the Nephilim, though that raises questions about how the Nephilim could have survived the flood.[113] More likely the point of the comparison is that the Anakites shared the characteristics of the Nephilim of old, not that they were actually related to them. In that case, Numbers 13 gives us a window into what the original audience of Genesis thought the Nephilim were like: tall and strong, fearsome and invincible in battle.

Given this, it makes sense to identify the Nephilim as the antecedent of the pronoun in the last part of Genesis 6:4: "they" would then refer to the Nephilim rather than to the children of the illicit unions described immediately before, so that the Nephilim would be the "mighty men" ("warriors"; *gibborim*) and the "men of renown" (or "men of name"). In that capacity the Nephilim represent a different manifestation of the growth of sin, namely, self-promoting violence rather than sexuality. Their sin lies in seeking to make a name for themselves through their military conquests rather than humbly calling on the name of the Lord, as the line of Seth had done (cf. 4:26). Not coincidentally, Lamech celebrated his deviancy in both his sexuality and his fame-seeking violence in 4:19–24; likewise the universal spread of sin in Genesis 6 demonstrated in both these areas. Yet, as the concentric structure emphasizes, what counts ultimately is not human striving but God's action, here in judgment (and later in making a name for his chosen one, Abraham; cf. 12:2).

6:5–8 Verse 5 summarizes the culmination of man's downward spiral into sin that has been unfolding since Genesis 3. Seven times in Genesis 1 we read, "God saw . . . and it was good"; now, however, what the Lord sees is the great wickedness of mankind (6:5). It has become so comprehensive that for almost everyone "*every* intention of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *continually*" (v. 5). Theologians often stress the fact that the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that people are as wicked as they could possibly be; it is simply that every aspect of their thinking and doing is tainted with sin. However, the world of Noah's day was

111 We may note the similarity to the temporal clause in Genesis 6:1 ("When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them") as supporting the interpretation of this phrase in verse 4 as temporal rather than causal.
112 A connection that is likely behind the LXX translation, *gigantes* ("giants"), which was then followed by the KJV.
113 The Talmud suggests the unlikely possibility that one of them clung to the outside of the ark!

closer to the former, with unbridled sexual expression and gratuitous violence on all sides.

God is not an "unmoved mover" who coldly surveys the destruction of his good world without caring. The Scriptures can speak of God's "regretting" that he had made humanity, of how the situation "grieved him to his heart" (v. 6). Of course, we must remember that our speech about God is always analogical; he no more literally "regrets" and "grieves" than he has a literal heart or mouth. A God who transcends time cannot "regret" an action in exactly the same way humans do, for he knows the end from the beginning and plans every event perfectly. Yet, because we are made in the image of God, this language can communicate something important to us. Even though God does not have emotions, our emotions nonetheless help us to understand something important about God, just as, even though God does not have a mouth, when the Scriptures speak of the "mouth of the Lord" we understand something of his nature as a speaking God. So we may meaningfully speak of God's care and compassion for the world he has made and of his grief over the damage sin causes to it and the people it contains.

And God is not merely a helpless bystander, watching the chaos and evil of the world unfolding while wringing his hands and wishing he could do something. He is the God who created this world out of nothing, and he can return it to nothing at any time he chooses. He will judge wickedness, as he warned Adam in 2:17, and, though he is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," he is also the God who "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:6–7). As a result, judgment will come upon all flesh, both human and animal, blotting them out from the face of the land and the heavens. The comprehensiveness of the destruction is highlighted by the repetition of language from Genesis 1 ("man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens"; Gen. 6:7; cf. 1:20, 24). The sweeping spread of sin in Genesis 3–6 is matched by sweeping judgment on the whole world, proving that the wages of sin is indeed death (Rom. 6:23).

Yet in the midst of the blackest description of human sin a shaft of light still shines: "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8). A single individual who walks with the Lord (v. 9) can have an impact far beyond what might be expected. Noah's faith and faithfulness will be the means by which the Lord preserves the human race and moves forward his purposes for creation. In the midst of the coming destruction of the flood a holy remnant will be preserved and kept safe by God.

Response

Many people naively believe that humans are, in their heart of hearts, fundamentally good. They may be misguided or misled into sin, but, if they really followed their best instincts, they would end up in a good place. Rabbinic Judaism, for example, teaches that within each of us there is not one *yetser* ("inclination"; cf. Gen.

6:5) but two, struggling for control; one is good and one is evil. What we need to do is to fight hard to control the evil *yetser* and to support the good *yetser*.[114] If that is the case, then what humanity needs is not a savior but merely a helper, or a life coach—someone who will show us the right way and give an inspiring example for us to follow. Christianity, however, insists that there is only one *yetser* naturally present in our hearts, the evil one. This is the doctrine that theologians call total depravity. Or, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians,

> You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph. 2:1–3)

Genesis 6:1–8 shows us the same doctrine in OT garb. The natural tendency of humanity without God is to fill the world with sin. Sin always blurs the lines between things that God created to be separate, and believers are regularly tempted to compromise their distinctive identity and join themselves to unbelievers. The temptation to intermarriage with people who do not share our values is perennial (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14), but it inevitably ends badly. If the center and focus of our individual worlds is so far apart, how can those worlds be joined together as one? Either our love for the other person will draw us away from a life centered on God, or a life centered on God will draw us away from the other person.

In addition to unbridled sexuality, pervasive and gratuitous violence remains a problem. If we are not finding our identity in Christ, we will tend to find our "name" in other things, and we will bite, destroy, and kill in order to achieve and protect the status we desire (cf. James 4:2). It is doubtful that the modern world is really any better than the world of Noah's day. The flood did not accomplish a fundamental change in the hearts of men and women (cf. Gen. 8:21)—nor was it intended to do so.

Yet, instead of sending another flood to destroy the present world order, God sent his own Son to redeem it. He is the one who most of all found favor in the Lord's sight (Matt. 3:17) and in whose life was no hint of sin. Through Jesus' death and resurrection God put to death our evil and sin and now makes us a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The evil of the world that surrounds us will not endure forever but will finally be judged and destroyed—yet we who ourselves are so deeply stained with our sin are even now called "sons of God" (Rom. 8:14) and look forward with the remainder of creation to its full and final renovation (Rom. 8:19–21).

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114 Cf. P. W. van der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context*, WUNT 196 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 61.

GENESIS 6:9–22

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh,[1] for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.[2] Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits,[3] its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 16 Make a roof[4] for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

[1] Hebrew *The end of all flesh has come before me* [2] Transliterated from Hebrew; the identity of this tree is uncertain [3] A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters [4] Or *skylight*

Section Overview

One of the distinctive features of Israel's God is his propensity to announce ahead of time his great works, both of salvation and of judgment. As Amos 3:7 says,

> The Lord GOD does nothing
> without revealing his secret
> to his servants the prophets. (cf. Gen. 18:17)

Unlike the gods of the ancient Near East, who were capricious and acted on a whim, the Lord has a purpose and plan from the beginning that he will carry out, for his own glory and for the good of his people. These two things are connected: as God announces his works ahead of time, humans may acknowledge that these are the Lord's work, not merely random chance events. When the work is one of

judgment, people may have the opportunity to repent and be saved out of the coming judgment; when it is one of salvation, people may have their faith in God's power and goodness increased.

Israel will have its own formative moment of judgment and salvation involving water at the exodus, when God drowns the Egyptians at the Red Sea and brings his people safely through (cf. Exodus 12–14). But even that mighty work is only a faint echo of the flood, when God brings watery judgment on almost the whole world, delivering only one family through that trial.

Other ancient Near Eastern societies had their own flood narratives, with similarities and differences to the biblical account.[115] This is as one would expect, as memories of such a catastrophic ancient historical event would have tended to be preserved, in forms that cohered with and revealed a culture's worldview. The differences between the stories are often more significant than the similarities, since they highlight the uniqueness of Israel's (inspired) version. For example, the boat that Utnapishtim—the Noah figure in the Gilgamesh epic—is instructed to build is a perfect cube; this is the ideal form for a sacred place in the ancient Near East (compare the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and the temple) but hardly ideal for an actual boat. In comparison Noah's ark, although massive, is more nautically appropriate.

In the Akkadian Atrahasis epic[116] the cause of the flood is human overpopulation, which leads to the gods' being troubled by noise pollution, while in the biblical account it is caused by human sin. Moreover, in the Akkadian account it is an accident that any humans survive, due to differences of opinion among the gods, while the gods themselves are terrified by the forces they have unleashed, cowering before them like dogs. However, it is just as well for the gods that Utnapishtim survives, since they are dependent upon the sacrifices offered by humans for their food, and so they gather like hungry flies around Utnapishtim's altar. These accounts have a very different worldview than that of the biblical picture, which shows a single God who sovereignly executes his plan of judgment and salvation by unleashing the mighty forces of nature according to his will and to accomplish his own purposes.

Section Outline

IV. The Family History of Noah (6:9–9:29)
  A. Announcement of Judgment and Salvation (6:9–22)

Comment

6:9–12 The *toledot* formula ("These are the generations of"; cf. comment on 2:4–7) introduces the third major section in the book of Genesis, which will concern Noah and his offspring, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.[117] Their story begins with a reprise

115 The best known is part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, an Akkadian saga from the eighteenth century BC. Cf. *ANET*, 93–95.
116 Atrahasis was written down during the mid-seventeenth century BC but clearly represents a much older oral tradition; cf. *ANET*, 512–517.
117 The standard formula is "Shem, Ham, and Japheth," even though Ham is the youngest son (cf. 9:24). This may be due to grouping the monosyllabic names before the disyllabic.

of the immediately preceding verses. "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (6:8) is unpacked in terms of Noah's behavior that has led to such acceptance before God. In contrast to the universal wickedness surrounding him (vv. 1–5) Noah is a righteous man (Hb. *tsaddiq*; v. 9), a term with roots in legal texts that recognize someone as being "in the right."[118] He is also "blameless" (*tamim*), a word that has to do with wholeness and integrity. Sacrificial animals that are *tamim* are "without blemish" (Lev. 1:3); so too people with this quality are morally pure and upright.

These two attributes of righteousness and integrity summarize Noah's ethical behavior, but he also "walked with God," a phrase describing relational intimacy (cf. comment on 5:6–24 [at v. 24]). Noah is thus a man of outstanding character, all the more so in contrast to "his generation" (*dorotav*),[119] which is evil to the core. Second Peter 2:5 infers from the distinction between Noah and his contemporaries that Noah must have preached to those around him, without seeing any turn and repent. Noah's exemplary reputation leads to his being cited as an example of righteousness elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Ezek. 14:14; Heb. 11:7). Noah is not perfect, of course, but like Abraham after him he walks consistently before God by faith (Gen. 15:6).

As the first man born after the death of Adam (according to the chronology of ch. 5), Noah becomes a kind of second Adam figure, a new father for the entire human race.[120] Like the first Adam, Noah has three named sons, one of whom proves to be reprobate. Shem, Ham, and Japheth are introduced here, repeated from 5:32, since they will have a major part to play in the later story, but no evaluation is yet given of their character, unlike with Noah (6:9) and the remainder of their contemporaries (v. 5). Their salvation from the destruction of the flood rests not upon their own righteousness but on Noah's, their faithful covenant head.

The indictment against humanity is repeated in order to make it clear that the Lord's judgment is just and righteous: the earth (*ha'arets*) had been corrupted (*shakhat*, used three times in vv. 11–12) and filled with violence by humanity. The Hebrew *ha'arets* can, of course, be translated as "the land" rather than "the earth," and some have therefore argued for a limited flood, covering only a small portion of the earth; however, the global nature of the spread of sin described in these verses suggests the flood is at least as widespread as the spread of humanity at this point. "All flesh" has corrupted the earth (v. 12), and the only solution is for God to make an end to all flesh because of the violence it has spread throughout the earth (v. 13), as demonstrated by the behavior of Lamech (4:19–24) and the Nephilim (6:4). "Violence" (*khamas*) is the opposite of "justice" (*mishpat*), the situation that provides the ideal circumstances for human flourishing (cf. Job 19:7).

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118 Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 54. Genesis 6 is the first time that the concepts of "righteous" (Hb. *tsaddiq*) and "wicked" (*ra'ah*) occur in the Bible, though the text assumes that its readers already understand the concepts.

119 The plural "generations" is unexpected and is not reflected in the ESV. It may reflect the fact that, at six hundred years in length, Noah's life spans several generations of contemporaries. It is not the same word translated "generations" by the ESV earlier in the verse; that was *toledot*.

120 This emphasis on the unity of the entire human race rooted in common ancestry, prominent in the biblical account, is absent from the ancient Near Eastern flood stories, in which a significant number of unrelated people survive the flood in the boat with Utnapishtim.

These sins are committed "in God's sight" (Gen. 6:11) rather than being concealed in secret. It is natural to hide our sins (Isa. 29:15; Heb. 4:13), but to sin openly and brazenly in this way is almost challenging the Lord to act—a challenge he is ready and willing to meet. "God saw" does not mean merely a casual observation; as judge, he examines the facts and then issues a just sentence. Mankind has corrupted the perfect world it has been given, so the judgment of the destruction of its world is merely turning man over to the fate he richly deserves.

6:13–22 Although God threatened to make a complete end of the earth and all its human occupants because of its corruption, it was not yet time for that final destruction (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5–13). Noah and his family will be preserved, and, because they are not sinless—not even Noah—with them will be carried the seeds of sin that will reflower on the far side of destruction. Only a complete new creation will finally achieve God's ultimate goal of creating a holy people prepared to walk with him in a sin-free environment.

In the meantime Noah is instructed to make himself an "ark" (Hb. *tebah*);[121] Noah is also informed of the reasons for the Lord's decision, which shows that God's action is neither hasty nor capricious. He has waited ten generations of increasing corruption before acting to bring judgment upon the world. The word "ark" is probably a loanword from Egyptian, where it means a chest or even a coffin,[122] with the latter sense being particularly fitting for a vehicle designed to take its occupants through a symbolic death and resurrection. The Hebrew word is used only of Noah's ark and of the container in which Moses is placed as a baby for his equally risky water adventure (Ex. 2:3).[123] Noah is given very precise instructions by the Lord for the materials and manufacture of the ark, a procedure seen more commonly in the ancient world when a deity instructs a king about the plans for building a sanctuary.[124] That precision is fitting, for constructing this boat is an equally sacred endeavor.

The ark is to be 450 feet [135 m] long by 75 feet [23 m] wide and 45 feet [14 m] high, made of "gopher wood," which is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew word *gofer*. The term occurs only here, and so it is uncertain what kind of wood is intended, though an etymological connection is possible to "cypress," a coniferous wood used widely in ancient shipbuilding. The three floors of the ark are each to have an unspecified number of "rooms" (*qannim*, "nests"), presumably to provide separate quarters for the various animals. The ark is to have a roof, necessary to keep the rainfall off, though it seems to have an opening of 18 inches [46 cm] all around under the roofline.[125]

In spite of God's decree to destroy every living thing under heaven[126] through the flood[127] (Gen. 6:17), he will establish his covenant with Noah (v. 18). When a

121 This should not be confused with "ark of the covenant," which uses a quite different Hebrew word (*'aron*).
122 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 364.
123 This unique parallel is particularly striking if Moses is indeed the author of Genesis; cf. Ronald Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 89.
124 Compare the instructions given to King Gudea of Lagash for the temple of Ningirsu in *ANET*, 268.
125 Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 173–174.
126 This could be taken as a merely phenomenological description, but it is most naturally understood as speaking of a global judgment; cf. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 365.
127 The Hebrew word translated "flood" (*mabbul*) is used only here in the flood narrative and in Psalm 29:10, underlining the uniqueness of this event.

new covenant was made in the ancient Near East, the terminology was usually to "cut" (*karat*) a covenant, reflecting the self-imprecatory oath taken by the parties passing between two dismembered animals, asking the gods to make them like those animals if they broke their word (cf. 15:9–18). In this case, however, the Lord speaks of "confirming" (*heqim*; cf. Gen. 17:7, 9, 21) his covenant with Noah, which may reflect a reference to the covenant originally made with creation.[128] In this case God is covenanting to keep Noah and his family safe within the ark, along with two of every kind of animal, bird, and creeping creature according to their kinds (6:20; cf. 1:24–26), along with their necessary food (6:21; cf. 1:29). The extensive reuse of terminology from Genesis 1 stresses the fact that this mission is nothing less than a new start for creation.

The chapter closes with an affirmation of Noah's obedience (6:22). This might seem superfluous, given the earlier description of Noah's righteousness and integrity, but such notices of precise conformity ("As God/the LORD commanded him") are common throughout the Pentateuch (Ex. 7:6, 10, 20, etc.). Exact obedience to the Lord's commands is of vital importance, especially when constructing a sacred object such as the ark, notwithstanding God's covenanted promise of blessing. It is the appropriate response of gratitude to the Lord's grace extended to Noah and his family.

Response

There were (broadly speaking) two kinds of covenants in the ancient world: (1) suzerainty treaties, in which a great king (a suzerain) entered into a relationship with a lesser king (a vassal), promising protection and reward in return for future obedience to the specified terms of the covenant, and (2) covenants of grant, which were unconditional promises of favor, often based on past acts of faithfulness.[129] The Sinai covenant is often classified as belonging to the former category, while the Noahic covenant, like the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, is generally regarded as being more like a covenant of grant. That is, it reflects a reward for Noah's past history of serving and walking with God and is not dependent upon his future obedience.

These distinctions are helpful in focusing our attention on some crucial differences between different biblical covenants. Yet covenants—even of the suzerainty variety—always have an inherently gracious quality in that there is nothing forcing the great king into making this commitment to the vassal. Moreover, covenants of grant may sound entirely unconditional, but that does not mean that future obedience is unimportant if the grant is to be maintained.[130] God owes

128 The Hebrew word "covenant" (*berit*) is not used in the creation account; however, many of the features of a covenant are present there, and the strong recollections of creation in these verses suggest that a connection is being made. Cf. W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 15–26.

129 Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 184–203.

130 Bruce K. Waltke, "The Phenomenon of Conditionality within Unconditional Covenants," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. A. Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 123–139.

Noah nothing in return for his years of walking with him, which is simply what humanity owes God, and God could equally easily have preserved Noah by taking him out of the world, as with Enoch. Yet through this covenant God promises that he will preserve not only Noah's life but the lives of his family as well. His righteousness brings blessings not only to himself but to his entire household, as is typical of biblical covenants.

It is in this way that the passage points us forward to Christ. The Father has made a covenant with the Son that, through the righteousness of Christ, salvation will come to all those who are in him. Jesus has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant through his perfect righteousness of life and his self-offering as the blameless Lamb of God, whose death atones for our sins. In him God accomplishes the complete new creation that the flood was never able to establish, pouring out his Spirit on believers and their children (Acts 2:39). To paraphrase the writer to the Hebrews, the blood and water that flows from Jesus' side on the cross speaks a better word than that of the water that fell from heaven in Noah's days (Heb. 12:24). We who have benefitted from this new covenant should respond as Noah did, with gratitude-infused obedience to all that God has commanded us through his Word.

GENESIS 7

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. 2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals,[1] the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, 3 and seven pairs[2] of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. 4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing[3] that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." 5 And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. 7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. 8 Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, 9 two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. 10 And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, 14 they and every

beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. 15 They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

17 The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18 The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. 19 And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. 20 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits[4] deep. 21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. 22 Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. 23 He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. 24 And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

1 Or *seven of each kind of clean animal* 2 Or *seven of each kind* 3 Hebrew *all existence*; also verse 23 4 A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Section Overview

Genesis 6 gives us very few details about the process of building the ark. There is no mention of what Noah's neighbors think or of the construction challenges and cost overruns that typically accompany such a massive project. God tells Noah to build an ark, and he does—just as, at creation in Genesis 1, God spoke the word and it was so.[131] Now, in Genesis 7, it is time to gather the animals and enter the completed ark, for the judgment rains are about to fall. The lives of Noah and his family depend upon their trusting God's word and entering their coffin-shaped boat, dying to the world, as it were, while believing that God's promise to protect them will keep them safe. So it transpires: judgment falls upon the world around them, but they are kept safe in the midst of the storm, just as God has promised. God judges the wicked while preserving the lives of those who trust in him.

Section Outline

IV. The Family History of Noah (6:9–9:29) . . .
  B. God's Judgment Descends (7:1–24)

Comment

7:1–5 Noah is not left to calculate the time of God's coming judgment by watching for signs; instead, God tells him when it is time to enter[132] the ark and exactly how the judgment will transpire. Noah is also instructed to take his household

131 The same pattern will be repeated in the calling and response of Abraham in Genesis 12: God calls and a person responds by faith.
132 The key Hebrew verb *bo'* ("enter") occurs seven times in this chapter.

with him. His family members are included in this act of salvation explicitly on the basis of Noah's by-faith righteousness, not their own. The Hebrew is emphatic: "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you [singular] are righteous" (7:1). God's "seeing" of Noah's righteousness is the equivalent of his "reckoning" Abraham to be righteous in 15:6. It also contrasts with God's "seeing" the extensive wickedness of the world in which Noah lives (cf. 6:5, 12). Noah's righteousness not only serves as the foundation for his family's salvation but also underlines the condemnation of the rest of his generation for its wickedness. When Lot is told to flee from the judgment coming upon Sodom, he finds it hard to persuade his household to join him (19:12–14), but Noah has no similar difficulties in recruiting his family for this much more challenging mission.

Noah had earlier been told to gather one pair of every kind of animal and bird (Gen. 6:19); God now adds the stipulation that seven pairs of clean animals must be brought along, along with seven pairs of birds (7:2–3). The reason for this is not explicitly stated, but presumably it is to allow for the possibility of offering sacrifices after the flood without wiping out an entire species in the process. This does not necessarily require Noah to be aware of the full Levitical laws of clean and unclean animals (cf. Leviticus 11); he simply needs to be aware of which animals might legitimately be offered as sacrifices and which are not "kosher" for that purpose.[133]

The number seven is prominent in the flood account, echoing the seven days of the original creation (Gen. 1:1–2:3). In addition to the seven pairs of clean animals and birds, there is a seven-day delay before the rain comes (7:4, 10) in order for the collection process to be completed. Another sacred number, forty, is also prominent in the forty days and nights during which the rain falls, wiping out every living creature from the face of the earth (v. 4). The period of forty days is often associated with periods of testing and trial in the Bible—for example, Moses' forty days and nights at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:18), the spies' forty days in the Promised Land (Num. 13:25), Goliath's taunting Israel for forty days (1 Sam. 17:16), and Jesus' testing in the wilderness for forty days (Luke 4:2).[134] Once again we are informed explicitly of Noah's obedience to the Lord's commands, underlining his righteousness (Gen. 7:5).

7:6–10 And it is so: having heard God's word announcing to Noah what will happen, we see these same events unfolding exactly as God has said. The repetition may seem cumbersome to modern readers, but it drives home the point effectively. This is no random or out of control process that God has unleashed (unlike the flood brought about by the gods in the Gilgamesh epic) but rather a measured and controlled process of judgment. What God has created, he has the power and the authority to destroy (v. 4; cf. Jer. 18:4). Noah follows the Lord's instructions with precision, and, when the appointed day of judgment arrives, so too does the flood.

133 Sarna, *Genesis*, 54.
134 John Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis, Volume 1: Genesis 1:1–25:18* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 192.

7:11–16 For a third time we hear more or less the same facts related, each time with a little more detail, stressing just how precisely the events follow the divinely ordained pattern. The date of the flood, the seventeenth day of the second month (Gen. 7:11),[135] is significant precisely for its insignificance: it is not the day of any major festival or celebration. There is no ultimatum given to humanity that slowly ticks down to zero; rather, at a moment no one anticipates time finally runs out for this evil generation and the day of God's terrible judgment begins. The implications for the Lord's future judgments are unmistakable: no one knows the hour or the day (or the month or the year) of the end of all things.

The source of the water is described phenomenologically in terms of an opening of the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven (v. 11).[136] In other words, the waters that had been separated and ordered by God on days two and three of creation in order to form the dry land are now reunited, so that the dry land once again disappears into the great deep (Hb. *tehom*; cf. 1:2, 6–9). The hospitable world the Lord built for man returns to a wilderness state, "without form and void" (*tohu vabohu*; cf. 1:2). For three chapters humanity has been sinfully striving to erase the lines of separation God had drawn; it is therefore a fitting judgment when the Lord removes the lines of separation upon which life itself rests.

From an Israelite perspective there would be a certain irony in the Lord's bringing destruction by opening wide the windows of heaven and pouring out rain, since in Israel the problem was usually the reverse—a drought caused by the Lord's closing the windows of heaven in judgment upon Israel (cf. Deut. 11:17; Mal. 3:10). The Lord is sovereign over the rain as a means both of blessing and of curse, a theme underlined by the use of the verb *hamtir* ("to rain down"; Gen. 7:4), which can be used equally of curse or of blessing (curse: Gen. 19:24; Ex. 9:23; blessing: Ex. 16:4; Amos 4:7).

Those who enter the ark are described as having the "breath of life" (Gen. 7:15). Soon they will be the only ones left on the earth who still have this breath, since all others will be blotted out. The difference between the two groups is simple: those inside the ark will live because of their relationship to Noah, with whom God has covenanted, while all those outside the ark will die because they lack such a saving relationship. It is not explicit in Genesis, but 1 Peter implies that, in spite of a climate of unrestrained sexuality all around them, Noah and his family remain committed to monogamy, so that the human contingent on the ark comprises only eight people (1 Pet. 3:20).[137] The description of the embarkation onto the ark is very detailed in some ways but equally sparing in others. Unlike Utnapishtim, who takes all his gold and silver onto his boat with him,[138] Noah and his family's possessions go unmentioned. There is no mention of other people's seeking

135 There is debate among the rabbis as to whether this reflects a fall or a spring new year and thus whether the flood occurred in April or in October according to our reckoning. Multiple calendars were in use in the ancient world, and in Israel at different times. In either case the specificity of the date underlines the historical reality of the event being described—this is no timeless myth.
136 Any attempt to reconstruct a "Hebrew cosmology" from texts like these, whose purpose is very different, is likely to end up with a misleading picture with very little connection to the thought processes of ancient readers.
137 Kidner, *Genesis*, 97. This fits with the emphasis on the animals' going onto the ark in pairs; even in the animal kingdom (Gen. 7:9) monogamy is presented as the norm!
138 *ANET*, 94.

admission to the ark and being turned away; only those who have been called by God and have faith in God's word would want to enter this coffin-shaped refuge. But there is no other sanctuary in which to seek shelter from the judgment to come.

One added detail is the fact that "the LORD shut [Noah] in" (Gen. 7:16). Noah built the ark and collected the animals, as he had been commanded to do, but the final act in the process, safely sealing him into the ark, is God's.[139] This ensures that the safety of those on board rests not in the effectiveness of Noah's marine engineering or navigational skills but in the hands of God. They can relax, confident that the God who has sealed them safely on board will watch over them every moment of their voyage until their ship comes safely to dry land.

7:17–24 Forty days of torrential rain, along with the outpouring of subterranean springs, is more than sufficient to complete the task of blotting out every living creature from the face of the earth (vv. 17–21). The rising floodwaters are marked literarily by a repetitive style, piling sentence upon sentence as the waters gradually prevail over the earth, then cover the mountains, then finally cover the mountains by a significant amount, 15 cubits (roughly 27 feet [8 m]; v. 20), which would provide plenty of clearance for the ark, with its total height of 30 cubits. The floodwaters then remain high for a total of 150 days (v. 24).[140] Eight times in verses 19–23 the word "all" appears, stressing the comprehensiveness of the global destruction. Only Noah is left alive, along with those with him in the ark (v. 23). Nothing outside the ark could survive such a deluge; it all dies (v. 22), fulfilling God's judgment upon Adam and all those made in his image (cf. Genesis 5).

Response

Since the beginning the serpent has sought to deny the doctrine of divine judgment (Gen. 3:4) and has had considerable success in sowing doubt into human minds (cf. Mal. 2:17). Even believers sometimes struggle to believe that evil will have its proper day in court and that the righteous will be vindicated (cf. Ps. 73:2–14). Throughout history, however, the Lord has given us clear lessons of his judgment, of which the flood is perhaps the most prominent. Does God see the wicked? Is he able to judge them? Can he preserve the righteous in the midst of that sweeping judgment upon sin? The flood narrative answers all those questions with a resounding "Yes!" God sees; God judges; God preserves a righteous remnant[141] alive.

The implications of these realities are clear. Those who do not know God live their lives in the face of clear and present danger. Just as no one knew ahead of time exactly when the flood would come, so no one knows when Christ will return to bring the final day of judgment (cf. Matt. 24:36–39, which explicitly draws a comparison to the days of Noah). As a result, we should strive constantly to be

139 This forms a stark contrast to the Gilgamesh epic, in which Utnapishtim seals the entrance to his own boat and also employs the services of experienced sailors; cf. *ANET*, 94.
140 It appears that the 150 days includes the forty days of actual rain. On the chronology of the flood cf. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 298.
141 "Noah was left" (Hb. *vayisha'ar noakh*; 7:23) uses the key verb (*sha'ar*) that is used later to describe the preservation of a righteous remnant through the exile.

ready for the Lord's return (Matt. 24:44). Now is the time to make one's peace with God, before the judgment draws nigh.

In addition to a warning to unbelievers, however, this passage provides a comfort for believers that "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9; again explicitly referencing the flood—cf. 2:5). Believers too wonder about God's deferred justice in a wicked world, but the flood shows us that justice is not always delayed and will not be deferred forever. At the same time, the Lord is able to keep safe in that coming judgment those with whom he has covenanted (Gen. 6:18). As we follow his commandments faithfully—however strange that obedience may look to a watching world—the Lord will seal us safely into the ark that preserves our lives from the deluge of his wrath.

For us as Christians the fulfillment of that theme is found in Christ himself. Christ is the righteous covenant-keeper in whom we, like Noah's family, find undeserved safety. Faith in Christ calls us to die to the world around us, just as the inhabitants of the ark voluntarily entered their coffin-shaped vehicle of salvation. We are called to trust not in our ability to pilot the vessel of our lives—for the ark had neither sails nor rudder—but in the God who has sealed us into the vessel that he will guide safely into the harbor of heaven. Through a final act of cataclysmic judgment God will bring about his new heavens and new earth, where righteousness reigns (2 Pet. 3:13), and we will be free from the sin and wickedness that currently still afflicts us all.

GENESIS 8

8 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that
were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth,
and the waters subsided. 2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of
the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, 3 and
the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the
waters had abated, 4 and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day
of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. 5 And the
waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on
the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he
had made 7 and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were
dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if
the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. 9 But the dove found
no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters
were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took
her and brought her into the ark with him. 10 He waited another seven

days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. 11 And the dove
came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly
plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the
earth. 12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and
she did not return to him anymore.

13 In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of
the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed
the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground
was dry. 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,
the earth had dried out. 15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Go out from the ark,
you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17 Bring
out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and
animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may
swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." 18 So Noah
went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. 19 Every
beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the
earth, went out by families from the ark.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean
animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the
altar. 21 And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said
in his heart, "I will never again curse[1] the ground because of man, for
the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever
again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth
remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day
and night, shall not cease."

1 Or *dishonor*

Section Overview

Many scholars have suggested that the flood narrative is structured as a large-scale chiasm.[142] The proposals vary in their details, but everyone agrees that Genesis 8:1 represents the central turning point: "But God remembered Noah." God is just as much in control of the aftermath of the flood as he was over its causes. The same God who brought the rain now closes up the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of heaven and sends a wind to dry up the earth (vv. 1–2). The resemblance to creation, at which God's Spirit/wind (Hb. *ruakh*) was hovering over the waters, deliberately paints this action as an act of recreation, once again separating the waters and returning them to their allotted boundaries so that the dry ground may appear and the world may again be populated by people and animals. God is sovereign over salvation as well as over judgment.

Section Outline

IV. The Family History of Noah (6:9–9:29) . . .
  C. God Remembers Noah (8:1–14)
  D. Celebrating Salvation (8:15–22)

142 E.g., Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 (1978): 336–348; Yehuda T. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1981), 99–100.

Comment

8:1–5 "But God remembered Noah" highlights this verse as the turning point in the flood narrative. Up to this point God has been bringing destruction upon the earth; from here onward he begins to restore what he has destroyed. Yet grammatically speaking the *vav*-consecutive imperfect form is more commonly conjunctive than disjunctive, so we might as easily translate "And God remembered Noah" (KJV; NJPS). Furthermore, speaking of God's remembering Noah does mean he forgot Noah for the duration of the rains and then suddenly recalled him to mind and so began to dry up the flood. Rather, throughout this whole period of destruction and restoration God has remembered Noah and watched over him and his ark, keeping its occupants safe from all harm. "Remembering" in Hebrew is always more than a mental activity; it includes the appropriate actions that flow from such knowledge. Hence the term is used often to describe the behavior that follows from a prior commitment, such as a covenant. To "remember a covenant" is to keep its conditions and fulfill its obligations, while to "forget" it is to disobey it (Ex. 2:24; 6:5).

God's re-creative work begins just as his creative work did,[143] with his sending a Spirit/wind (Hb. *ruakh*) upon the face of the chaotic waters (Gen. 8:1; cf. 1:2). Just as the work of destruction was no mere natural process but God's work, so too the restoration process rests on God's decision and follows his exact timeline. The twin sources of the water for the flood, the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven, are closed up (8:2; cf. 7:11)—the rain ceases and the earth begins to dry out. The 150 days the water takes to dry up (8:3) equal the 150 days the rain "prevailed on the earth" (7:24), so that the ark comes to rest five months after the rain began (five thirty-day months equal 150 days), on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (8:4; cf. 7:11). The seventh month of the Jewish calendar would later include the Feast of Booths, when the Israelites would camp out for a week to remember the wilderness wanderings and look forward to their heavenly inheritance (Lev. 23:24–43), making this date a fitting one for the ark's wilderness wanderings to end and for it to find rest (*vattanakh*; Gen. 8:4). This is probably not the "rest" for which Noah's father, Lamech, named him (*nuakh*; 5:29 ESV mg.), but it is a fitting play on his name.

Ararat, upon whose mountains the ark finishes its journey, is usually identified with Urartu, a region in northern Mesopotamia now part of Turkey. The modern-day Mount Ararat came to be associated with Noah only in the eleventh or twelfth century AD, however. There is no biblical record of any subsequent interest in this region; it did not form a place of pilgrimage for God's people, perhaps in part because of the significant distance involved and the uncertainty of its exact location. However, even Mount Sinai was not generally considered a place of religious interest in biblical times after Israel departed from its sojourn there.[144] There was

143 His deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea at the Exodus follows a similar pattern (Ex. 14:21).

144 The exception is Elijah's journey there in 1 Kings 19, when he is called to recreate Moses' experience on the mountain, which seems to leave him entirely unmoved. (His response in 1 Kings 19:14, after the theophany, is identical to that in 1 Kings 19:10, prior to the Lord's appearing.)

only one place worthy of pilgrimage for God's people, and that was the place where God chose to place his name: Jerusalem.

8:6–13 Even though the ark finds its rest, the occupants must wait a considerable time before it is safe to leave the ark. It is another two and a half months before the tops of the mountains become visible (8:5); the lengthy process of renovation is striking in contrast to the rapid process of creation in Genesis 1. Indeed, waiting is a key theme of this section (vv. 10, 12). Forty days pass before Noah sends out a raven; it fails to return, presumably satisfied with the endless supplies of carrion for it to eat. Then he sends out a dove three times, at weekly intervals, with different results each time. The first time the dove comes back with nothing, having found no place to alight (v. 9); the second time it comes back with a fresh olive twig in its mouth, a sign of hope that the trees are growing above the remaining waters (v. 11); the third time it does not return, presumably because it now finds the earth to be habitable (v. 12).

The significance of the raven and the dove lies in the fact that they are opposites: the raven is an unclean bird, while the dove is not only a clean bird but one suitable for sacrifice. The raven's self-sufficient attitude is suggestive; it does not return to the ark but forges its own path in the new world independently, while the dove meekly returns repeatedly to Noah until it has conveyed to him the message that all is safe. The combined impact of the raven and the dove is ominous, however, suggesting that, though the world Noah is inheriting is new, the old sinful tendencies have not been entirely wiped out by the flood (cf. v. 21).

Finally, on the first day of Noah's 601st year in this world, it is time to open the roof of the ark and survey the scene (v. 13). The first day of a year was considered an auspicious day for a major religious undertaking such as consecrating or reconsecrating a sacred building (e.g., Ex. 40:2; 2 Chron. 29:17), so it seems a fitting day to start afresh in the new world God has given Noah and his family. The face of the ground, from which the Lord had determined to blot out every living creature (Gen. 7:4, 23), is finally dry (8:13).

8:14–19 Even then, with the face of the ground "dry," it is still not time to leave the ark. That awaits the twenty-seventh day of the second month, when "the earth had dried out" (v. 14). The difference between the two dates suggests the time needed for the surface water to disappear and the ground to dry out sufficiently enough to allow Noah and his family to walk on it. More importantly, however, it seems that Noah is waiting for divine sanction to leave the ark. Just as God had told Noah when it was time for him and his menagerie to enter the ark (7:1–4), so Noah must wait until God tells him it is time to leave (8:15–17). The parallels are striking: just as Noah was told to enter the ark with his wife, his sons, and their wives, now he must leave with the same people. The birds, animals, and creeping things that he took in with him must now be brought out by him, so that they may once again be fruitful and multiply on the earth (v. 17; cf. 1:22). And it is so. Noah obeys this commandment too, as detailed in 8:18–19—verses that seem to underline the

fact that not one creature is missing out of all those Noah had brought with him onto the ark. The God who shut Noah into the ark has remembered him and his cargo and brought them safely through the watery trial to a new beginning on the other side.

8:20–22 The first action Noah takes upon emerging from the ark is to build an altar and offer sacrifices (v. 20). Open-air altars could be simple affairs, not requiring a priest to tend them, as a sanctuary would. For that reason these are commonly where the patriarchs offer their sacrifices (e.g., Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18). This offering is not a *minkhah*, a tribute offering, such as Cain and Abel offered (4:3, 4), but rather a whole burnt offering (Hb. *ʿolah*; lit., "ascending offering"), the first explicit atoning sacrifice to be recorded.[145] The whole burnt offering stands in place of the person offering it, who identifies it as representing him by laying hands on the animal (i.e., by leaning on it).[146] It is a ransom payment given to God, frequently with a strong undertone of atonement and substitution (e.g., Lev. 1:4).[147] Here the clean animals and birds suffer the judgment of death that Noah and his family have escaped by grace. The deaths of those animals and birds substitute for redeemed humanity, as it stands represented in Noah and his family.

Particularly striking is the impact this sacrifice is said to have on God: he smells the pleasing smoke of the "ascending offering" and is pacified by it (Gen. 8:21). There is another play on Noah's name here: the Hebrew for "pleasing" (*nikhoakh*) sounds similar to Noah's name (*noakh*)—it is a "rest-giving" aroma. We even hear God's inmost thoughts: because of Noah's sacrifice, never again will the Lord bring a flood of similar magnitude upon the earth—even though[148] the nature of mankind has not changed. Nor will God add to the curse that already exists on the ground (though neither is the curse on the ground lifted, as human experience makes all too clear). The power to bring delight to God's wounded heart resides not in the sacrifices themselves but in that to which they point: the atoning work of Christ, which provides lasting hope even for deeply broken and sinful people like us (Heb. 10:4–10).

Noah's sacrifice is a faithful response to the deliverance he has received, thanking God and seeking atonement for his own sins and those of his family. God receives that offering, just as he received Abel's offering earlier (cf. Gen. 4:4), and he commits himself to preserving the fundamental distinctions that keep the world in balance, "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night" (8:22)—distinctions that had been dissolved in the flood. God also

145 As we saw in Genesis 3–4, many traditional commentators have inferred an atoning significance from the animals slaughtered to provide tunics for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21) and from Abel's *minkhah* (4:4), but neither of these is explicitly an atoning offering in the text.

146 Cf. Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 63.

147 P. P. Jenson, "The Levitical Sacrificial System," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 28.

148 ESV translates the Hebrew *ki* as "for," which makes man's essentially unchanged evil *yetser* ("intention"; cf. 6:5) the reason that God will not again flood the world. It seems more likely that this is a concessive *ki* ("even though"; cf. CSB; NIV; NET); the reason for refraining from continual acts of judgment upon the world is rooted in God's sovereign purpose to redeem a people for himself in Christ, rather than the recalcitrance of humanity. For *ki* as concessive cf. Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1.538–539.

blesses Noah and his renewed covenant with him (cf. 9:9); in this way Noah and God continue to walk together (cf. 6:9).

Response

The flood's work of judgment is complete by the end of Genesis 7, but Noah's work of faithful perseverance is far from done. God could have instantly dried out the land, just as he did in creation (1:9), but instead he chose to leave Noah and his family in the confined quarters of the ark for many more months. Yet, unlike Israel, who rapidly turned to grumbling when forced to remain in the wilderness, Noah and his family apparently wait patiently. Even after the dry ground appears they wait longer for God to give the word to leave the ark. Peter draws the conclusion from the ark narrative that we should also be patient as we wait for the return of the Lord, not accusing the Lord of slowness but recognizing his longsuffering with sinful humanity (cf. 2 Pet. 3:6–9).

Like Noah, we should live righteous and holy lives, walking with God through whatever trials we may face, remembering that the Lord is as sovereign over each of our situations as he was over Noah's experience. If he asks us to go through difficult and tragic circumstances, the Lord will personally seal the door for us too, keeping us safe through the midst of the storm (Isa. 43:2). When the Lord finally determines our time of trial to be over, he will cause the floodwaters to subside around us and call us out of our refuge, having worked in us an endurance and patience that we could not have learned any other way.

Ultimately, Noah's flood was a dress rehearsal for the final cataclysmic destruction of the world, which will complete God's work of a new creation in which righteousness dwells. On that day the inclination of our hearts will be no longer constantly toward evil but only toward good, all the time (2 Pet. 3:12–13). We will be safe on that day, if we are Christians, through faith in Christ, who offered the perfect and unblemished sacrifice on the cross for our sin and the sins of all his people (1 John 2:2). When the Father beholds the suffering of his Son, his wrath is satisfied and his love is kindled, first toward Jesus and then toward all those who are in him. For the sake of Christ he will not execute further judgment upon us, because Jesus has taken it all in our place as the atoning Lamb of God (John 1:29). So on that great day our sins will be fully forgiven and our hearts cleansed, and we too will be able to walk with God in the new Jerusalem that God will bring down from heaven as our eternal home (Rev. 21:2–5).

GENESIS 9

9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and
multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the dread of you shall
be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon
everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your
hand they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for
you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you
shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 And for your lifeblood
I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man.
From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

7 And you,[1] be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and
multiply in it."

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 "Behold, I establish
my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every
living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast
of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast
of the earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall
all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there
be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 And God said, "This is the sign of the
covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that
is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud,
and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When
I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will
remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living crea-
ture of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy
all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the
everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh
that is on the earth." 17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant
that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and
Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) 19 These three were the sons of
Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.[2]

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.[3] 21 He
drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And
Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his
two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on
both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of
their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their
father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his
youngest son had done to him, 25 he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

26 He also said,

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.
27 May God enlarge Japheth,[4]
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant."

28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years. 29 All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

[1] In Hebrew *you* is plural [2] Or *from these the whole earth was populated* [3] Or *Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard* [4] *Japheth* sounds like the Hebrew for *enlarge*

Section Overview

Surviving the flood was just the beginning for Noah and his family. Now that they have emerged from the ark, they face the massive task of rebuilding and repopulating the world. Just as the original creation had been followed by a commissioning and a blessing for the first humans, so too this re-creation will be recommissioned and re-blessed by God. In some ways the world will be the same as it had always been, while in other ways it will be quite different. Noah and his family need reassurance that humanity will not be wiped out repeatedly every ten generations or so, something that seemed eminently plausible given the fact that human nature had not been transformed by the cataclysm (cf. Gen. 8:21). The reassurance comes in the form of a renewal of the covenant between God and Noah, with a new sign of God's commitment to humanity in the shape of the rainbow.

Just as the original creation was swiftly followed by a fall, so too this re-creation of the world is marked by Noah's fall into drunkenness. The man who had walked blamelessly with God for six hundred years gets drunk shortly after his new beginning (9:21). Just as Noah's righteousness had implications for his children, so too does his sin. Shem and Japheth seek to preserve their father's dignity, but Ham leaves him exposed to ridicule (vv. 22–23). As a result of this failure to honor his father properly, Ham, and especially his son Canaan, receive a divine curse (vv. 25–27). Divine election is once again choosing its own pathway as God determines who is blessed and who is cursed. Finally, the chapter closes with the deferred ending of Seth's genealogy in chapter 5 as it records the days of Noah's life and his death (v. 28).

Section Outline

IV. The Family History of Noah (6:9–9:29) . . .
  E. A New Beginning (9:1–17)
  F. Blessing and Curse on the Next Generation (9:18–29)

Comment

9:1–7 Just as God blessed Adam and Eve and the original creation with the command "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (1:28), so now that blessing is repeated for Noah and his family (9:1). In some of ancient Near Eastern flood accounts, such as the Atrahasis epic, human overpopulation and noise pollution were the reasons that the gods sent the flood in the first place. As a result, after the flood the gods imposed barrenness, miscarriages, and singleness on mankind to prevent a recurrence of the problem.[149] Utnapishtim, the Noah figure, was rewarded with eternal life and removed from the challenges of everyday survival. Israel's God, on the other hand, is profoundly pro-life and in favor of human flourishing; he calls the gift of children a blessing to be celebrated, not a nuisance to be avoided (Ps. 127:3–4; cf. Matt. 19:14). Noah's own sons and grandchildren are a particular blessing since it is through one of them that the promised seed of the woman must come (Gen. 3:15). God also calls his representatives to get their hands dirty in the task of culture building rather than separating themselves in safe ghettos, away from the problems of everyday life.

However, whereas Adam and Eve had been granted uncomplicated dominion over the lower orders of creation (1:28) in a world in which there was not yet any fear, from now on the animals and birds will fear humans (9:2). These creatures will now learn the need to keep their distance from people, which is ironic and sad since they have so recently survived the flood thanks to contact with Noah and his family. However, that same fear will keep Noah and his descendants safer from potential attacks by wild animals. Creation looks forward longingly to the day when that distance will be closed and friendship between humanity and wild animals—even potentially dangerous ones—will finally be restored (cf. Isa. 11:6–9; Mark 1:13).

One reason for that fear among the animals and birds is the fact that from now on animals, birds, and fish will serve as food for humans (Gen. 9:3). Previously, it appears, humans (and perhaps animals) ate a primarily vegetarian diet (cf. 1:29–30), though it should be noted that those verses describe the pre-fall state of the world. Abel's offering (and indeed the provision of clothing for humanity; 3:21; 4:4) suggests that meat was not entirely off the menu prior to the flood. Nonetheless, here God's permission for man to eat a broad diet is made explicit (9:3).

One single restriction is applied to potential food sources: humans must not eat "flesh with its life, that is, [the] blood" (v. 4). It is striking that there is no reference here to clean and unclean animals; this distinction awaits the Mosaic covenant, although the principle that only certain animals may be sacrificed is already known to Noah (cf. 7:2; 8:20). Nor is it simply blood that is prohibited as food but "flesh with its life." This suggests that the symbolic role of blood as representing the vitality of the animal is significant; partaking of that fresh blood is thought of not simply as tasty or nutritious but explicitly as a way of

149 *ANET*, 104.

absorbing that life-essence. The consumption of blood formed part of certain religious rituals in the ancient world, which is one reason the consumption of blood is utterly forbidden in the Pentateuch.[150] The blood, representing the life, belongs to God alone, since he gave it in the first place, and it is to be returned to God by pouring out the blood either on an altar or on the ground (cf. Lev. 1:5; Deut. 12:16). This principle lies behind accepting the blood of each sacrificial animal as representing its life.

If the life of animals is to be treated with respect by regarding their blood as requiring special treatment, how much more special is the blood of a human being? The shedding of human blood requires an accounting, whether by an animal or by another person (Gen. 9:5). In the case of domestic animals that causes a human death, they are to be put to death (cf. Ex. 21:28); it is plausible that wild animals that killed a person would also have been hunted down, although there is no explicit record of such. Ultimately, whether or not the animal is found and put to death, God himself is the judge who will call that animal to account.

The same principle is true in the case of human murder:[151] justice for the dead person requires a commensurate payment with the life of the guilty party. The chiastic structure of the sentence underlines the appropriateness of the judgment: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). Murder is an assault on the image of God in man, and therefore a form of sacrilege, as well as being an assault on one's brother ("fellow man," 9:5, is in Hb. "his brother," recalling Cain's murder of Abel). It is a crime not merely against a fellow human being, or even against society, but against God, which means that God is a plaintiff in every murder case, demanding an accounting from the guilty party. Capital punishment, rightly administered,[152] is pro-life, inasmuch as it acknowledges the value of the life that has been taken. Given the explosion of violence immediately prior to the flood and the fact that humanity at its core has not been changed, these verses address a foundational element in a just society. The section is then rounded off with an inclusio that repeats the opening command: "Be fruitful and multiply," which is the opposite of murdering one's brother.

9:8–17 God previously established his covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18 (cf. comment on 6:13–22), though few details were given at that point. The word "covenant" (Hb. *berit*) occurs seven times in 9:8–17, highlighting its centrality in this passage. God here reestablishes his covenant with Noah and his sons, as well as with the rest of creation, with explicit application for the future. This universal aspect of the covenant with Noah as being a covenant with all creation distinguishes it from subsequent biblical covenants made only "with you and your seed/offspring" (e.g., 17:7). Although different covenants focus on different

150 Sarna, *Genesis*, 60.
151 The OT law code distinguished clearly between murder and manslaughter. Murder required the death penalty, without the possibility of paying a ransom (Num. 35:31). Manslaughter, on the other hand, was punished by internal exile to one of the Levitical cities for the lifetime of the high priest (Num. 35:22–25).
152 It is appropriate to acknowledge that human court systems do not always administer the death penalty fairly, with wealthy murderers who can afford good lawyers sometimes avoiding it while poorer murderers remain liable.

aspects of life, they are all part of the single eternal covenant (*berit ʿolam*; 9:16; cf. Heb. 13:20) between God and man.

Ancient Near Eastern covenants were always sovereignly decreed by the suzerain, and God's covenants are no exception: it is God's covenant, and he determines with whom he will enter covenant and the terms of that covenant. The human responsibility is simply to submit and accept those terms and conditions or suffer the consequences. In this case, unlike the Sinai covenant, there are no conditions imposed on humanity; God is solemnly and unilaterally binding himself never[153] to repeat the judgment of the flood and destroy the earth once more.

It is customary for biblical covenants to have signs attached to them; for example, the Abrahamic covenant has the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:11). These signs serve as visible and tangible reminders to the parties of the agreement that has been made (cf. Rom. 4:11). In this case the sign is that the Lord has hung his bow (*qeshet*) in the sky as a symbol that it is no longer drawn and pointed toward humanity in judgment (Gen. 9:12–17). In a similar manner, in the Babylonian creation narrative, after the conflict between the gods, Marduk's bow was hung in the sky, although in that case as a constellation of stars rather than as a rainbow.[154] In Noah's case the rainbow becomes a perpetual symbol of peace that is all the more relevant because it occurs in the context of storm clouds that remind observers of the power of God's wrath (cf. Ezek. 1:28). It is not necessary to suppose that the rainbow was a new element in the world after the flood, just as circumcision was not a newly invented ritual when Abraham was instructed to use it as a sign, nor were Israelite sacrifices unknown to their neighbors; God frequently takes up existing elements of human cultures (placed there sovereignly by his own direction) and invests them with new, redemptive significance.[155] What is significant is that this is a sign that only God can put in place, unlike signs such as circumcision, baptism, or the Lord's Supper, highlighting the fact that it is God alone who is bound by this covenant.

The rainbow is thus not merely a comforting reminder to humanity of God's promise; it is a reminder to the Lord himself (Gen. 9:15). This is not because God could forget something. Rather, it represents God's commitment to act according to all that he has promised in the covenant. The need for such a memorial is a regular testimony to man that God would be perfectly justified in once again bringing comprehensive judgment upon the world, since human wickedness continues unchecked (8:21), but he tempers his judgment with mercy—for now. The day will come, of course, when he will consume the heavens and the earth in a mighty conflagration that will usher in the fullness of new creation (cf. 2 Pet. 3:7).

9:18–29 The text now shifts in focus from Noah to his sons, preparing the way for the table of nations in Genesis 10, which will define the relationships between the various nations of Israel's world. Shem, Ham, and Japheth have been named

153 The combination *lo' kol* indicates a comprehensive negation, as in 3:1; cf. Currid, *Genesis 1:1–25:18*, 220.
154 *ANET*, 69.
155 Cf. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 411.

as Noah's sons several times before (Gen. 5:32; 6:10; 7:13), but here they become individual actors in the story for the first time. They are described as "the sons of Noah who went forth from the ark" (9:18), which highlights their mutual experience of salvation and as the ones from whom the whole earth will be repopulated. Ham is also described as the father of Canaan, preparing for the curse that is to come upon the latter because of Ham's sin (v. 18; cf. v. 25). As the ancestor of the inhabitants of the land later promised to Abraham, Ham is of special interest to Moses' original audience. Often in biblical narratives a character's first actions are of pivotal importance for establishing his nature (e.g., Gen. 25:27), and this is certainly true of Canaan, whose origins are corrupt and cursed.

If Noah is a second Adam in being the father of all the living, he is like Adam in other ways as well, not all good. Like Adam, he works the soil (2:15; 9:20), sins (3:6; 9:21) and is ashamed of his nakedness (3:8; 9:21). This underscores God's remark in 8:21 regarding the unchanged evil intent of man's heart. The sin of both bears bitter fruit in the next generations, with Cain killing Abel (4:8) and Ham's son Canaan being condemned to slavery for his father's sin (9:27). This is the last notice of Noah's life, even though he lives for another 350 years (9:28), and it is a sad epitaph for a man who has walked with God for 600 years (7:6).

With the flood behind him, Noah begins to work the soil by planting a vineyard (9:20), just as God planted a garden in Eden (2:8). When he drinks of the wine he has produced, however, he becomes intoxicated and lies exposed in his tent (9:21). There is nothing to suggest that he is the first person ever to engage in viniculture, or that the results of his drinking could not have been predicted. His drunkenness is shameful enough, but it is compounded by his uncovering himself in his tent.

The focus of the narrative is not on Noah's sin, however, but on that of Ham, who sees the "nakedness of his father" and subsequently tells his brothers about it (v. 22). Attempts have been made to explain Ham's sin as some form of physical or sexual abuse of Noah, through the observation that in Leviticus 18:7 "to uncover the nakedness of your father" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse with the person's mother.[156] However, this euphemism is used only of heterosexual sins, especially incest, which is not in view here; the book of Genesis tends to use a different euphemism ("to know") for homosexual rape (Gen. 19:5). Moreover, the obscure phrase in 9:22 is immediately clarified by the following verse, in which Ham's brothers do the exact opposite of what Ham has done by covering up their father with a garment while deliberately "not seeing" his nakedness by walking backward (9:23). This suggests a more literal understanding of the nature of Ham's sin. It is enough that, instead of "covering over" his father's private shame, Ham chooses to publicize it further by announcing it to his brothers (cf. Prov. 20:19 for a warning about "uncovering" secrets). Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, honor their father (Ex. 20:12), even in his dishonorable state, restoring his modesty by covering his nakedness, just as God had done for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21).

156 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 200. The idea of some form of sexual abuse against Noah dates back to the rabbis; cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 66.

When Noah awakes from his binge and discovers what has happened, he pronounces a blessing and curse upon his children in response to their actions—a blessing and curse that will have an impact not only on them but on their children and their descendants in a lasting way. Just as Noah's sons have been blessed because of Noah's faithfulness, so too Shem and Japheth's lineage will be blessed by their honoring of their father, while Ham's sons, especially Canaan, his youngest, will be cursed because of his parental disrespect. Ham is the youngest of Noah's sons, and often in Genesis the younger son is favored by God, but not in this case. This is not a blanket curse on all Ham's offspring (although it has sometimes been read tendentiously in that way); it is a specific curse on Canaan, the youngest son of Noah's youngest son. Because his father, Ham, failed to honor his own father, Noah, Canaan will receive the opposite of long life in the land (cf. Ex. 20:12): a life of servitude under the descendants of Shem and Japheth.[157] To modern readers a curse on someone who has not personally participated in a sin may seem unfair, but of course the same is true of blessings: God deals corporately with families, not simply individuals.[158] Moreover, God's curse falls not on an "innocent" victim but on one whose sins would have been well known to the original readers. This judgment is completed when the Israelites conquer the Promised Land in Joshua's days and has no further aspect yet to be fulfilled.

In contrast to the curse upon Canaan, the blessings upon Shem and Japheth are much more indirect. Indeed, the blessing on Shem is really a blessing of Shem's God, the Lord (Gen. 9:26), while Japheth's blessing is that as he increases[159] he should dwell in the tents of Shem, sharing fellowship with the brother upon whom the Lord's primary blessing lies (v. 27). This implies that God will be Shem's God in a unique way, such that Japheth will find blessing only in identifying with the line of his brother, an idea that will be developed further as the book of Genesis unfolds.

Indeed, the entire mininarrative has a longer perspective. God chooses for blessing whom he will, younger or older son, and no one can argue with his choices. Shem's and Japheth's behavior are identical, yet their blessings are different: God has chosen the line of Seth to be the line of promise, so the calling for the descendants of Japheth is to identify with the promised seed of the Sethite line. This is a promise that finds almost no fulfillment in the course of the OT, though it is anticipated in Isaiah 66:19–20. However, it is fulfilled richly in the NT, as the gospel comes to the Japhetite world of the Mediterranean in the book of Acts—and even to the descendants of Ham.[160] Yet by the same token God's election is not arbitrary. The judgment that is coming upon the Canaanites in the days of Joshua is related to their father's sin of disrespect, a sin that finds full flower in the Canaanite opposition to the descendants of the line of Shem (and Abraham). Those whom God has chosen for blessing come and place their hope in

157 "His brother" (Gen. 9:25) refers not to Ham's other sons but more broadly to his relatives.
158 Cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 57.
159 "May he increase" (Hb. *yaft*) is a play on Japheth's own name (*yefet*).
160 Cf. Kidner, *Genesis*, 111.

the line of promise that God has provided, whereas those who are reprobate will never come to him—and so face a future of judgment and curse. It is not a case of the "innocent" descendants of Ham being denied the opportunity to repent and believe. There are no innocent descendants of Noah, and the sin of the inhabitants of Canaan is the primary reason for their subjugation and expulsion from the land (Gen. 15:16; 1 Kings 21:26).

The passage closes by completing the genealogy of the line of Seth, interrupted at the end of chapter 5 to include the flood narrative (Gen. 9:28–29). This reminds us that the issue of the two seeds is still with us even after the flood. Not all those who come from Noah will share his faith, and the distribution between believers and unbelievers is not a random distribution. God generally works by calling families, working for the most part through that structure. In this case the line of hope will descend through the line of Shem, whose name means "name" or "renown"; God is the one who gives this renown, not human exploits (6:4).

Response

The ugly reality of the continuing sin of humanity, highlighted in Genesis 8:21, casts its long shadow over the whole of this chapter. What should be a joyful recommissioning, in which humanity and animals alike are commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1), is overshadowed by fear: the fear the animals now have of humans, and the fearful reality that humans will continue to kill their brothers, just as Cain killed Abel (9:6; cf. 4:8). The theme climaxes in Noah's drunkenness, which leads to Ham's sin toward his father and the curse that thereby descends on Ham's descendant, Canaan, and his offspring. Sin is an indelible stain on the human condition as a result of Adam's fall. Even though God singled out one man and his family for redemption, a man who alone in his generation walked with God in righteousness, nothing has fundamentally changed in the heart of man. What can prevent yet another destructive outpouring of God's judgment that this time might wipe out the entirety of the human race?

The answer is God's covenant, which in this chapter is signified by the rainbow, representing the light of God's favor that continues to shine through the deep storm clouds of his wrath (9:13). The sign is necessary because of the continuing sin of mankind that constantly cries out for judgment. Yet God commits himself to hang up his battle bow and shine his favor on Noah and (some of) his descendants through the line of Seth. God has not forgotten his promise to bruise the head of the serpent and return humanity to his side through the seed of the woman (3:15). Renewing his covenant with Noah is a renewal of that commitment.

However, though the covenant is renewed here with Noah, its foundation cannot be Noah's personal righteousness. Even though Noah was uniquely righteous in his own generation—one of only two people in the Bible who "walked with God" (6:9)—if the covenant rested on Noah's righteousness it would have been rapidly undermined by his fall into drunkenness. God alone can provide the righ-

teous head whose obedience provides us with the perfect righteousness we need in order to stand forever in the sunlight of God's favor; he did so in the person of Jesus, to whom Noah was looking forward by faith ahead of time. At the cross of Christ the wrath of God and his favor met just as they did in the rainbow; the dark clouds of God's wrath were poured out on Jesus in our place so that we might live forever in the light of the Father's smile. Jesus' lifeblood was shed unjustly by men and yet became the means by which our lives are redeemed. Through his curse we receive blessing forever.

GENESIS 10

10 These are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

2 The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 5 From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations.

6 The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man.[1] 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and 12 Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. 13 Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom[2] the Philistines came), and Caphtorim.

15 Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, 16 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 18 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. 19 And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth,[3] children were born. 22 The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg,[4] for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the

direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. 31 These are the sons of
Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.
32 These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies,
in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth
after the flood.

1 Or *he began to be a mighty man on the earth* 2 Or *from where* 3 Or *the brother of Japheth the elder* 4 *Peleg* means *division*

Section Overview

Genealogies are not most people's favorite part of reading the Bible. It is hard for us to make sense out of a list of names, most of which we know little or nothing about. Yet genealogies were important in the ancient world as a kind of road map indicating the connections between people. These connections could reach back through time, as is the case for linear genealogies such as the one in Genesis 5.[161] In these genealogies, though there may be some small details introduced about people along the way, the most important links in the chain are the first and the last, who are linked together firmly by descent. So in Genesis 5 the primary focus is on the link between Noah and Seth, highlighting the line through whom the promise would descend. Noah is the heir of that great promise, not just a random righteous person selected by God for salvation.

Segmented genealogies like the one in Genesis 10, on the other hand, serve to group and distinguish families horizontally (though there is often a vertical element as well). This is the kind of genealogy one uses to decide whom to invite to a family reunion. Generally, someone does not reach out to everyone in the world who happens to share his last name. Rather, such a person might go back a generation or two and then forward and sideways to invite all his cousins. The further back one goes, the larger the reunion, with more people being counted as family. At the same time, other individuals will be excluded from that particular definition of the family, being included in someone else's family instead.

In this way Genesis 10 locates Israel among the seventy[162] nations that are identified at this point in history. Other nations also descended from Shem are relatively close family to the descendants of Abraham (even though not Israelites themselves). Meanwhile, others are less close relatives, being descended from Japheth or Ham. With them Israel has less to do. This listing of the origins of nations reverberates elsewhere in the OT as history plays itself out, showing that God has planned out everything from the earliest days of his world.[163] It also identifies the entire human race as members of one family, despite their diversity. It is hard to date this table, though a careful analysis of which nations are absent and which are present suggests a date somewhere in the second millennium BC.[164]

161 On the distinction between linear and segmented genealogies cf. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 9.
162 Excluding Nimrod, who is listed as an individual, not the father of a nation. Seventy is a number of completeness—like seven, only on a larger scale (cf. Gen. 46:27; Luke 10:1).
163 As in Ezekiel 38, e.g., where Genesis 10 is clearly the source for a comprehensive list of enemies from all four points of the compass who will be gathered against the Lord's renewed people for one final battle.
164 Daniel I. Block, "The Table of Nations," *ISBE*, 4:712.

Section Outline

V. The Family History of Noah's Sons (10:1–11:9)
   A. The Table of Nations (10:1–32)

Comment

10:1–5 This passage begins a new section according to the *toledot* formula: "These are the generations of . . ." (Gen. 10:1; cf. comment on 2:4–7). In this case the *toledot* outlines the family history of Noah's sons—that is, the various lines that come from Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Their descendants are all born after the flood (10:1), since there were only eight people on the ark: Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, and their respective wives (1 Pet. 3:20). The genealogy does not begin with Shem, even though he is the oldest (cf. Gen. 10:21); as the line of promise, his line is held back so that it can lead into the story of Abraham. Instead the genealogy starts with Japheth, the second son.[165] As a segmented genealogy, its purpose is to express relative kinship between nations and peoples and to define who is "not far from the kingdom of God" (the Shemite line; cf. Mark 12:34) in contrast to those who are more distant (the lines of Japheth and Ham). At the same time, there is no bar preventing anyone from coming as an individual and being added to God's kingdom, and Isaiah anticipates the day when both Japhethite and Hamite nations will come flocking to Israel's God (Isa. 19:21–23; 66:19–20).

The Japhethite family seems to have settled in a wide sweep from the Aegean Sea in the west to the area north of the Caspian Sea in the east, on the most distant horizon of Israelite vision. There is an awareness that many of these different groups have their own distinct languages, which anticipates the result of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

Of the seven sons and seven grandsons of Japheth it is possible to identify many of these people groups from other ancient sources. Gomer (Gen. 10:2) represents the warlike *gimirrai*, who originated in the Crimea but were pushed southward across the Caucasus by the Scythians at the end of the eighth century BC.[166] Magog is similarly in "the uttermost parts of the north" in Ezekiel 38:6, which need not refer to anywhere further north than the nations surrounding it in Genesis 10. The Madai are more familiar to most Bible readers as the Medes (cf. Esther and Daniel). Javan represents the Ionian Greeks and later became a term more generally used for the inhabitants of Greece. Tubal and Meshech likely refer to the *Tabal* and *Mushku* peoples of central and eastern Anatolia, who appear in cuneiform texts from the first half of the first millennium BC,[167] while Tiras may perhaps be related to the Etruscans.[168]

165 Even though the standard formula is "Shem, Ham, and Japheth," Ham is the youngest son according to Genesis 9:24.
166 Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier: Invading Hordes from the Russian Steppes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 51.
167 Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Meshech, Tubal, and Company: A Review Article," *JETS* 19 (1976): 243–245.
168 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 217.

To match the seven sons of Japheth seven grandsons are also listed, from the lines of Gomer and Javan. Gomer's offspring are located in Asia Minor: Ashkenaz represents the Scythians, who lived between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea; Togarmah is known in Assyrian as *Tilgarimmu*, located in Armenia;[169] while Riphath ("Diphath" in 1 Chron. 1:6 ESV mg.) is otherwise unknown. Meanwhile, Javan's offspring occupy coastal areas and islands of the Mediterranean: Cyprus ("Elishah" = Alashiya from Egyptian and cuneiform texts of the 2nd millennium; also "the Kittim" = inhabitants of Kition/Larnaca), Spain ("Tarshish" = Tartessus?), and Dardenia or Rhodes ("Dodim" or "Rodim"; 1 Chron. 1:7).[170]

These names are not to be thought of as an exhaustive survey of the people groups of the area; the text suggests that others—the "coastland peoples" (Gen. 10:5)—will also come from them. But the names and groupings demonstrate some real knowledge and understanding of the geography and history of the Mediterranean world.

10:6–20 After Japheth's sons come the sons of Noah's youngest son, Ham (v. 6). These are focused in a wide sweep to the south and west of the Mediterranean. Four sons are attributed to Ham: Cush (Upper Egypt), Egypt (more precisely Lower Egypt), Put (Libya), and Canaan, who was introduced in the previous chapter. Links between Egypt and the Canaanite city-states prior to Israel's conquest are well attested.[171] The identification of Canaan in both biblical and ancient sources fluctuates between a people and a geographical location.

Cush's genealogy goes two generations deep (seven descendants in all, encompassing a number of people groups known from the Arabian peninsula). The peoples who occupied places such as Seba and Sheba were very wealthy during biblical times due to their control of trade routes from Africa and further afield at a time when oceangoing ships were a very limited and unreliable form of transport.

Mizraim (Egypt) also has seven descendants, who become the focus in verses 13–14. The identities of most of these peoples is uncertain, though several have an Egyptian or North African connection. The Ludim are associated with Cush and Put in Jeremiah 46:9 and Ezekiel 30:5, while the Pathrusim are connected with Pathros ("Southland" in Egyptian and therefore another word for Upper Egypt). The Caphtorim (Akkadian *kaptaru*) originated in Crete but spread from there to colonize various coastal areas of the Mediterranean (Deut. 2:23), which explains their identification with the Philistines, or "Sea Peoples" (cf. Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7).[172]

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169 Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 75.
170 Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 334.
171 Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 445.
172 The exact origin and history of the Philistines is complex and disputed. Generally they are associated with the "Sea Peoples" who migrated in the twelfth century BC to the coastal areas adjoining Israel, where they quickly became a significant problem for Israel from the time of the later Judges onward. On this view references to the Philistines in Genesis (cf. Gen. 21:32; 26:1) are often thought to be anachronisms. Yet it is possible that there were earlier migrations of people who called themselves *pilishtim*, from either Crete or Egypt, whose name was taken over by the later invaders. Genesis 10:14 attributes the origins of the Philistines not to the Caphtorim (unlike Amos and Jeremiah) but to the otherwise unknown Casluhim. Perhaps the two groups were related. There is much that remains unknown about this period of history.

Meanwhile, Canaan is attributed no fewer than eleven offspring (Gen. 10:15–19), highlighting their importance from an Israelite perspective. Sidon is attributed firstborn position (v. 15), with no mention of Tyre, which later becomes a more significant city, attesting to the antiquity of the listing. The Sidonians are later usually distinguished from Canaanites (e.g., Josh. 13:4), though their lands are adjoining. The Hittites (sometimes "sons of Heth"; Gen. 23:3 ESV mg.) are a smaller tribal group resident within Canaan, not the much larger Hittite empire of Asia Minor and northern Syria.[173] The Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites, along with the Hethites, were all peoples living in the land at the time of Joshua's conquest, though this exact combination does not occur anywhere else (Josh. 3:10 is perhaps the closest). The Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites (Gen. 10:17–18) do not appear in the conquest narrative, however, perhaps because these were coastal and border towns that remained outside Israelite control.

The importance of the land of Canaan to this genealogy is shown by a brief mention of its borders (v. 19). This description is not as detailed as the later borders defined in Numbers 34:2–12 or Ezekiel 47:15–20, simply comprising a brief delineation of the limits on the western side (from north to south, from Sidon to Gaza) and then on the eastern side (from south to north, from Sodom and Gomorrah to the unknown Lasha).[174] Some have suggested that these borders broadly match those of the Egyptian province that emerged following a treaty between the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II and the Hittite King Hattusilis III (c. 1280 BC).[175]

In the middle of the passage the focus shifts to Nimrod, who is assigned the parentage of many of Israel's later enemies in Mesopotamia, especially Assyria and Babylon (Gen. 10:10–12). It is not coincidental that the chief opponents of the line of promise are found among the descendants of Ham, the cursed youngest child of Noah. Nimrod is unusual in the entire list in that his importance is as an individual rather than as a people group, though he founds a number of key cities. He also uniquely receives a brief biographical sketch, describing characteristics that he is undoubtedly assumed to pass on to the cities that he founds.

Nimrod is described as a "mighty man" (Hb. *gibbor*; v. 8), that is, a warrior, and a "mighty hunter [*gibbor tsaid*] before the LORD" (v. 9). These two images immediately conjure up visions of the portrayals of Assyrian kings and gods in their monumental reliefs, such as those from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, now housed at the British Museum.[176] Both kings and gods are portrayed as hunting lions and bulls, as well as engaged in warfare, so Nimrod certainly epitomizes the later Assyrian

173 Andrew Steinmann, *Genesis*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 127.
174 Lasha is usually located in the Dead Sea area, not far from Sodom and Gomorrah; however, that leaves the border incomplete, covering only two sides of the territory, rather than four, as all the other border definitions do. That would be remedied if Lasha were located somewhere in the northeast of Canaan. However, despite attempts to emend Lasha to Laish, such a conclusion remains speculative.
175 Sarna, *Genesis*, 77.
176 Cf. Mary Katherine Y. H. Hom, "A Mighty Hunter before YHWH: Genesis 10:9 and the Moral-Theological Evaluation of Nimrod," *VT* 60 (2010): 68.

and Babylonian image of masculine power. Whether Nimrod can be identified with a known figure from Babylonian history, either human or divine,[177] is much more uncertain; his attributes were not restricted to any one individual but were widespread throughout that society. In this he resembles the "men of renown" in Genesis 6:4—hardly a positive comparison.

The description of Nimrod as a mighty hunter "before the LORD" (10:9) is particularly challenging to interpret. Some have taken it as positive affirmation of Nimrod, while others render it in the opposite direction—"a mighty hunter against the Lord," an interpretation influentially advanced by Augustine.[178] Although the etymology of Nimrod's name is not explored in the text, it could easily be read as "Let us rebel," which would fit with the links between his account, the subsequent narrative of the Tower of Babel (11:1–9), and the general role of Babylon throughout the biblical text.[179] Yet even his rebellion is "before the Lord," under his oversight and control rather than that of the gods of Assyria and Babylon.[180]

Nimrod's kingdom begins in the land of Shinar, a place associated invariably with idolatry and false worship in the Bible (cf. Isa. 11:11; Dan. 1:2), where he founds the cities of Babylon (Babel), Uruk (Erech), Akkad, and Calneh (Gen. 10:10); from there he moves on to found Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Kalkhu (Calah), and Resen; the description "the great city" recalls the similar description of Nineveh (and its environs?) in Jonah 1:2. Nimrod is thus credited with establishing the heartland of the later Assyrian and Babylonian empires, places that will later be associated with infamy from an Israelite perspective. Indeed, the dark shadow of Mesopotamian aggression is already being felt in Canaan as early as Genesis 14, following the pattern that Nimrod first sets for those aggressors.

10:21–32 Lastly we come to the line of promise, the descendants of Shem. This is why his genealogy has been saved until last, even though he is the firstborn (Gen. 10:21). Shem is described as the father of all those descended from Eber (v. 21). There is an obvious connection between the name Eber (Hb. *'eber*) and the people group "the Hebrews" (*'ibrim*), the term outsiders typically used to identify Israelites (Gen. 14:13; 39:14; Jonah 1:9).[181] In Genesis 10, however, Eber is the father of many more descendants than simply Israelites, and the term "Hebrew" may originally have denoted a wider referent than merely the Israelites.

The word *'eber* can mean "region beyond," especially in terms of rivers (cf. Gen. 50:10; Num. 21:13); in Akkadian sources the land to the west of the Euphrates was called *'eber nari*, often with reference to Syria,[182] which plausibly explains the name. Attempts have often been made to connect the title "Hebrew" with the *Habiru*, a

177 *HALOT* suggests a possible connection with the Assyrian god Ninurtu or the king Tukulti-Ninurtu (1235–1138 BC), but any resemblance is very tentative. As Sarna (*Genesis*, 73) points out in a classic understatement, "It is not easy, however, to connect the name Nimrod with Tukulti-Ninurtu."
178 Augustine, *City of God*, 16.4.
179 Waltke, *Genesis*, 168–169.
180 Hom, "Mighty Hunter before YHWH," 66.
181 Von Rad, *Genesis*, 362.
182 Sarna, *Genesis*, 78.

wandering group of rebels and mercenaries who appear in various ancient Near Eastern sources throughout the second millennium BC, but these attempts have not been compelling.

Unlike the genealogies of Japheth and Ham, which are wide but no more than a couple of generations deep, the genealogy of Shem traces multiple generations, although (of necessity) incompletely. Shem's five sons are the foundation for the family, including well-known peoples such as the Elamites, the Assyrians, and the Arameans (Gen. 10:22). Later narratives indicate a particularly close relationship between Abraham's family and certain Arameans, even though they are not especially close in the genealogy (cf. Gen. 25:20; 28:5).[183]

Arpachshad is the son of Shem through whom the promise will descend, in spite of his curiously non-Hebrew sounding name (10:24).[184] The latter part of the name may be linked with the "Chaldeans" (*kasdim*), who occupied part of Babylon and came to dominate it in the days of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar. In the context of the genealogy, however, his role is simply to father Shelah, who fathers Eber (cf. above on "Hebrew"), who is himself the father of Peleg (v. 25). Unusually for a person forming a link in the chain of a linear genealogy, Peleg is given a biographical note that—like the earlier description of Nimrod—anticipates the Tower of Babel in 11:1–9: "In his days the earth was divided" (10:25).[185]

As the line of promise, Peleg's line will not be picked up until later, after the Tower of Babel narrative (Gen. 11:18). Instead the present genealogy focuses on the non-elect line, through Joktan. The descendants of Joktan, where they can be identified, belong to southwest Arabia,[186] an unexpected place to find Semitic connections. Ophir was famous for its gold (1 Kings 9:28), as was neighboring Havilah (Gen. 10:29; cf. 2:11). The extensive listing of sons, many representing unidentifiable places and people groups, highlights the importance of Joktan (and thus also Peleg) as the generation in which there is a decisive parting of the ways (10:25). These are Israel's "separated kinsmen," but the emphasis is more on "separated" than on "kinsmen."

This point is drilled home by the conclusion of this part of the genealogy in verse 32: "From these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood." The line of promise is extending down through the generations, even as mankind is fruitful and multiplies from a single family into a massive family of nations according to God's command (9:1). Yet as the example of Nimrod shows—soon to be reinforced by the narrative of the Tower of Babel—that expansion and spreading out may often be driven by a violent and rebellious spirit.

Response

The purpose of the table of nations is twofold. First, it identifies all the nations and ethnic groups on earth as being descended from Noah and his wife. In this

183 Uz, a son of Aram (Gen. 10:23), presumably gives his name to the region where Job lives (Job 1:1).
184 Sarna suggests a link with Hurrian names, which often begin with *Arip-* (*Genesis*, 78).
185 There is a wordplay here on the similarly sounding "divided" (*niflega*) and Peleg (*peleg*).
186 Waltke, *Genesis*, 183.

sense all human beings everywhere are brothers and sisters, part of the same family, all together made in the image of God, whether Jew or Greek, male or female, king or slave. This emphasis provides a profound basis to confront the xenophobia, sexism, and class distinctions that were rife in ancient times, as they are in our own.

Yet on top of that fundamental unity is a fundamental distinction that divine election brings. Only one of Noah's sons is the bearer of the line of promise: Shem. And only one family from Shem will continue that line until it finds its immediate focus in Abraham (11:26). That divine election is preserved precisely in the distinction of Abraham and his offspring from all other families on earth, which is why genealogies connecting God's people to their ancestral families subsequently become so important to the Israelite community (cf. Josh. 22:14; 1 Chronicles 1–9; Ezra 10:16). The other nations will find blessing only through submitting themselves to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:1–3; Acts 3:25).

Ultimately it is in Christ that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Along with kosher food, the need for genealogies that identify a kosher ethnicity have been done away with, for Abraham's descendants are those who share his faith in Christ, not simply those who come from him physically (Rom. 4:16).

This fundamental division in humanity—ultimately, into those who have faith in Christ and those who do not—is alluded to in the reference to the division in the time of Peleg (Gen. 10:25), a division that comes to the fore in the Tower of Babel narrative that follows (11:1–9). There the city founded by Nimrod demonstrates its penchant for false worship. Babel's worship seeks to create an artificial unity based on human religiosity without regard to the true God, a worship that elevates man and seeks to make a name for itself, rather than humbly seeking God and glorifying his name. That quest for blessing by that path is inevitably fruitless, since only the true God has the power to bless his people.

GENESIS 11:1–9

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And
as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of
Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us
make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone,
and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a
city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for
ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." 5 And the
LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man