

# GENESIS

## INTRODUCTION

### WHY READ THIS BOOK?

From time to time, most people wonder about the deeper questions of life: Why am I here? What is life all about? Genesis takes us back to the beginning of time to find the answers. It tells about many beginnings: the first plants and animals, the first man and woman, the first sin, the first news of God's salvation. It also shows God's dealings with Noah, Abraham and others, demonstrating God's desire to restore the relationship with his people that was broken by Adam and Eve's sin.

### WHO WROTE THIS BOOK AND WHEN?

Moses probably wrote Genesis between 1446 and 1406 BC. But since he was not an eyewitness to the earliest events, he relied on revelation from God and perhaps earlier oral or written records.

### WHAT PERIOD OF HISTORY DOES IT COVER?

From the time of the creation (a date that can only be speculated) to the time when the Hebrews arrived in Egypt and grew into a nation (about 1800 BC).

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

To show that when God made the creation, it was good. But Genesis goes on to say that when sin entered the world, it corrupted everything. Genesis describes the beginning of God's plan for salvation. It provides the framework on which the rest of the Bible builds.

### TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

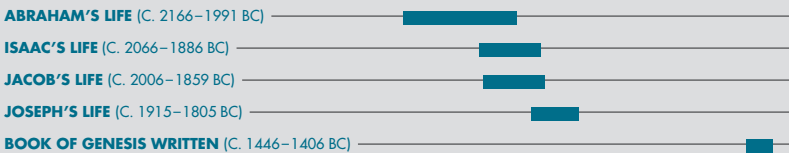
Since this book announces that *all peoples on earth will be blessed* through Abraham (12:3), it seems fair to conclude that all people can benefit from the account of this patriarch and his descendants.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GENESIS:

Notice the focus Genesis places on the relationship between God and humanity — a relationship broken in the garden and restored through sacrifices and personal encounters with God. By centering on relationships (with God and others), Genesis is key in understanding the Big Ideas of Christian Basics, The Supernatural, Suffering, Self-Image, Community, and Sex and Dating.

### WHEN DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

2200 BC 2100 2000 1900 1800 1700 1600 1500 1400



**Why did God’s Spirit hover over the dark waters of the earth? (1:2)**

To preserve what God had already created and to prepare it for further creation. This verse acknowledges the Holy Spirit’s role in the creation process.

**Why measure a day from evening to morning? (1:5,8,13,19,23,31)**

In the creation process, God inserted daylight into what previously had been only darkness. Evening was the first transition from one day to another. Because of this, the Hebrew calendar considers sunset the beginning of a new day.

**How could God create the earth and waters from nothing? (1:9–10)**

Many believe God created *ex nihilo* – Latin for “out of nothing.” The Bible doesn’t explain *how* God actually created. Instead, the point here is that God created *everything* that exists. See the article **How was the earth really made?** (Ps 136:4–9; page 964).

**The Beginning**

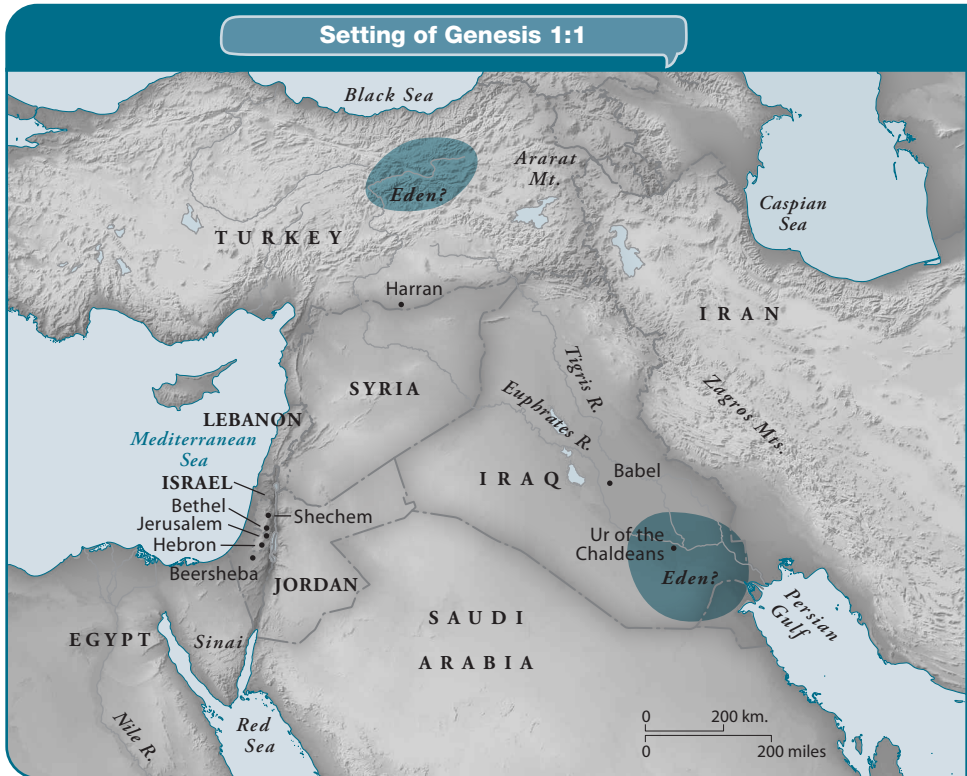
**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

<sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” <sup>7</sup>So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according



to their various kinds.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” <sup>21</sup>So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup>And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup>God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

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

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text *the earth*

#### How could there have been light before God created the sun and the moon? (1:14–16)

Some say the earlier *light* (v. 3) was from some source other than the sun, perhaps emanating from God himself. Others say God created the heavenly bodies, including the sun, moon and stars, but did not reveal them (v. 3) until later when he assigned the sun and moon their duties (v. 14).

#### Did God create dinosaurs at this time? (1:24–31)

It is plausible that God could have made them the fifth or sixth day, but the Bible doesn't specifically mention dinosaurs, though it may refer to them using terms such as *monster* (Ps 74:13), *dragon* (Rev 12:3) or *Behemoth* (Job 40:15–19).

#### Why did God say, *Let us [plural] make mankind in our image?* (1:26)

Some think this describes God speaking to his heavenly court of angels. But it may also hint at the mystery of the Trinity. See the article *What exactly is the Trinity?* (Mt 28:18–20; page 1554).

#### What is the image of God? (1:27)

People are God's image-bearers on earth. This means God designed men and women to reflect his characteristics; human beings are intelligent, responsive and relational. Being made in the *image of God* means every human being has inherent worth. See the article *What does it mean to be created in God's image?* (1:27; page 4).

#### How do people subdue the earth? (1:28)

God entrusted humans with the stewardship of the earth's resources, which means overseeing their use. This verse is neither a license to abuse and waste these resources nor a prohibition against their use. God provided animals, minerals, trees, land and water for people to use responsibly. See the article *If God is king over the earth, what's my role in caring for it?* (Job 37:14; page 822).

**Why did God rest? (2:2)**

Because he is all-powerful, God doesn't need rest. But perhaps he stopped working to mark the division between creating the world and running it. In the same way, we need to stop our ongoing work in the world to remember who runs it: God. See the article *Why is the Sabbath so important?* (Ex 16:23–30; page 114).

**Why retell the creation account? (2:4–7)**

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 add, in different ways, to the full picture of creation. The focus of Genesis 2 is the period after the creation of the heavens and the earth, detailing the creation of the first man and woman.

**Did plants come after humans? (2:5–7)**

No. After tracing the creation of the universe in chapter 1, chapter 2 rewinds back to focus on what happened to the humans God created.

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

<sup>31</sup>God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

<sup>2</sup>By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

**Adam and Eve**

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

<sup>5</sup>Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth<sup>a</sup> and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had

<sup>a</sup> 5 Or *land*; also in verse 6

**BIG IDEA 3: SELF-IMAGE  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE  
CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE?**

..... GENESIS 1:27 .....

Galaxies and fruit trees, seabirds and flowers all sprang from the creative mind of God. Humans, however, were modeled after God himself, fashioned in the Creator's own image.

God made humans with his own qualities: emotions, personality and intellect. And God created people with the ability to communicate through speech and through their own acts of creation called “art.” Humans were also created with a spirit, designed for eternal living and friendship with the Creator.

Men and women were given free will. Like God himself, people can make choices. They can choose to follow God or rebel against him. Rebellion was the choice Adam and Eve made in the Garden of Eden (3:1–24). They turned their backs on God and suffered terrible consequences. But in spite of being tarnished by sin, humans still bear God's image. That didn't change.

Humans, even fallen humans, have the capacity and deep inner longing to know God and be his friend. This is where Jesus comes in. He died on the cross to bring people like you and me back into a close relationship with the Creator (2Co 5:18; Col 2:13–14), making it possible for each of us to fully experience what it means to be created in God's incredible image.

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not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, <sup>6</sup>but streams<sup>a</sup> came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD God formed a man<sup>b</sup> from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup>Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup>(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>c</sup> and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>d</sup> <sup>14</sup>The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

<sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

<sup>a</sup> 6 Or mist <sup>b</sup> 7 The Hebrew for *man* (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for *ground* (*adamah*); it is also the name *Adam* (see verse 20). <sup>c</sup> 12 Or good; pearls

<sup>d</sup> 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia

### Why did God make the man from the dust? (2:7)

Pointing out that humans came from the dust of the ground sets up a contrast between their physical similarity to animals and their spiritual similarity to God (1:26). It also hints at their destiny after the fall: They would return to dust (3:19).

### Where was the Garden of Eden? (2:8)

Eden was probably in either ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) or an area encompassing Mesopotamia and extending through Egypt and Ethiopia. See the map **Setting of Genesis** (1:1; page 2).

### Would eating from the tree of life have made Adam and Eve live forever? (2:9)

Genesis 3:22 indicates that eating from the tree of life related directly to living forever. Adam and Eve might have lived forever regardless of the tree of life, but their sin brought death into the world (Ro 5:12). Once they ate of the prohibited tree, God banished them from the garden with all its blessings — including the tree of life. In mercy, however, God determined humans shouldn't live forever in their sins. His plan of redemption was thus set in motion.

### What's wrong with knowing good and evil? (2:17)

Some believe this was a test of human obedience; when Adam and Eve disobeyed, they gained a personal knowledge of evil that brought sin and death into the world. Others believe

## BIG IDEA 9: COMMUNITY

### WHY DID GOD SAY IT'S NOT GOOD FOR THE MAN TO BE ALONE, WHEN GOD WAS THERE?

GENESIS 2:18

God designed people to enjoy and contribute to relationships with other people. While the animals and other creatures were created in pairs, the Lord allowed Adam to come to the self-realization that he needed fellowship, friendship and intimacy that the animal kingdom couldn't possibly provide. All people since that time have realized a deep need to be known, understood and accepted by at least one other person. People need other people. We are created to be part of a community, and Christians feel that in a special way: *You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it* (1Co 12:27). That means if the body of Christ is to function as God intended, Christians need to stick together.

And based on what we know from Jesus' example on earth, God desires that we love him first and that we love other people too. Jesus said that loving others is second only to loving God (Mt 22:37–39).

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that not eating from the tree was only a temporary prohibition. If so, there was nothing wrong with Adam and Eve understanding good and evil, but God intended to bring them through a growing process, which is why he temporarily made the tree off limits.

**Was God tempting Adam and Eve with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (2:17)**

No. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines *tempt* as “entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain.” God didn’t promise either pleasure or gain when he warned Adam and Eve away from the tree. He didn’t entice them to eat the fruit. In fact, he gave Adam and Eve warnings about what would happen if they did eat from the tree.

**Did God create the woman to be the man’s assistant? (2:18)**

No. God made her to be a *helper*. This doesn’t mean that women are inferior to men or that they are designed merely to assist men. God himself is referred to as our *helper* (Heb 13:6). God made the woman for the man as his partner in life, and both genders, male and female, reflect the image of God.

**Why was the woman formed from a rib? (2:21)**

Probably to show interdependence: The woman came from the man, and

<sup>19</sup>Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam<sup>a</sup> no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs<sup>b</sup> and then closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib<sup>c</sup> he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called ‘woman,’  
for she was taken out of man.”

<sup>24</sup>That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup>Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

**The Fall**

**3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

<sup>a</sup> 20 Or the man    <sup>b</sup> 21 Or took part of the man’s side  
<sup>c</sup> 22 Or part

BIG IDEA 2: SEX AND DATING  
**WHY GET MARRIED WHEN SEX IS THE SAME AS MARRIAGE IN GOD’S EYES?**

..... GENESIS 2:24 .....

The Bible says that sex makes people *one flesh*. But having sex does not *create* marriage. Rather, sex is designed *for* marriage (Heb 13:4); it is a way for a committed couple to express, reinforce and reenact the marital covenant.

So what are the essential steps for getting married? First, the bride and groom must leave their father and mother. Leaving the family is a public act — this was especially true for the people living in Bible times because they were nomads and village people whose families lived together in large groups. The man and woman broke off other relationships and publicly moved in together. Secret sex has never been considered Biblical marriage.

Second, the couple must be united. A man and a woman are married when they make a commitment to be bound together. For Christians, part of that ceremony includes a commitment before God that the marriage is a lifelong deal (Mt 19:4–6). Merely living together doesn’t equal this commitment.

Finally, the couple must become *one flesh*. For those who are married, becoming one flesh is a wonderful thing: Sexual intimacy strengthens and supports their commitment. But as we’ve seen, marriage is not just about sex. Intercourse symbolizes the whole relationship and reinforces the unity of the couple.

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<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup>“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

<sup>8</sup>Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup>He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

<sup>11</sup>And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

<sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

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

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

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring<sup>a</sup>  
and hers;  
he will crush<sup>b</sup> your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very  
severe;  
with painful labor you will give birth to  
children.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup>To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

<sup>a</sup> 15 Or *seed*    <sup>b</sup> 15 Or *strike*

a man is dependent on a woman to give birth to him. The Hebrew term translated “rib” generally refers to a half, or side (see the NIV text note).

#### Why didn't they die for their sin? (3:2–3)

God did not say they would die immediately; he said they would be sentenced to death or doomed to die. This punishment was carried out when they were banished from the garden and forbidden access to the tree of life. Death was then inevitable. See the article *Why would a loving God judge and condemn people to hell?* (Rev 20:15; (page 1996).

#### Was Adam with Eve when she spoke to the serpent? (3:6)

The text makes it clear that he was with her, which makes Adam's silence puzzling. Why didn't he object? Since Adam had walked and talked with God in the garden, some assume he wouldn't have been tricked as easily as Eve. Paul stated that only the woman was deceived (1Ti 2:13–14). Even if Adam wasn't there, it doesn't make him look any better because he still disobeyed — without any pressure from the serpent.

#### How did Adam and Eve realize they were naked? (3:7)

Loss of innocence leads to shame and feeling exposed. Every human being has, in some way, carried a sense of shame as a result of Adam and Eve's sin.

#### Did God literally and visibly walk in the garden? (3:8)

Perhaps not, because God is spirit. *The sound of the LORD God . . . walking in the garden* is a way of describing the infinite God in human terms. In other words, God's presence was so real that it was as if they heard God's footsteps. However, God may have appeared to them as a *theophany* — a temporary manifestation or appearance of God.

#### LINK (3:15) He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel

This is an early hint of God's plan of salvation through the cross (Ro 16:20; Rev 12:9). See the article *How do I know Satan won't win in the end?* (Ge 3:15; page 8).

#### What do birth pains have to do with sin? (3:16)

Perhaps nothing; the conception and birth of children would remain a blessing from God (1:28). The emphasis here may be on the sorrow of raising children in a sin-tainted world rather than on the pain of childbearing itself.

#### How is a woman's desire for her husband a curse? (3:16)

Note that God did not curse the man and woman; he spelled out what

would happen because death had entered the world through sin. Some see this part of the verse as a warning to women that they will be tempted to allow their desire for sexual intimacy to result in men taking advantage of them. Others see it as an explanation for a woman's struggle for control over her husband. The woman's sexual desire for her husband, as well as her desire to rule over him, would result in trouble and heartache rather than joy and blessing.

**Why guard just the east side? (3:24)**

The Bible doesn't say, though it seems this was the direction in which people moved away from the garden (4:16; 11:2). East may signify simply being outside the garden.

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup>It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

<sup>20</sup>Adam<sup>a</sup> named his wife Eve,<sup>b</sup> because she would become the mother of all the living.

<sup>21</sup>The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. <sup>22</sup>And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. <sup>24</sup>After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side<sup>c</sup> of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

**Cain and Abel**

**4** Adam<sup>a</sup> made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.<sup>d</sup> She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth<sup>e</sup> a man." <sup>2</sup>Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

<sup>a</sup> 20,1 Or *The man*    <sup>b</sup> 20 Eve probably means *living*.  
<sup>c</sup> 24 Or *placed in front*    <sup>d</sup> 1 Cain sounds like the Hebrew for *brought forth* or *acquired*.    <sup>e</sup> 1 Or have *acquired*

**BIG IDEA 14: THE SUPERNATURAL  
 HOW DO I KNOW SATAN  
 WON'T WIN IN THE END?**

GENESIS 3:15

After Adam and Eve sinned, God said to the serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. No, God wasn't talking about killing snakes lurking in your yard. He was talking about the ultimate struggle between Jesus and Satan.

This struggle and the incredible promise of Jesus' victory dates way back to the time Adam and Eve were banished from God's presence. Even at humanity's darkest hour, God had a plan for defeating the enemy.

When Jesus arrived on the planet, Satan kept trying to bring him down. He "struck" Jesus' heel over and over. He struck so hard that the Son of God died on a cross. But Satan was still only striking a heel. He failed to strike a fatal blow.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he crushed Satan's head. Jesus struck with deadly force! Satan was defeated forever (1 Co 15:55). Because of that incredible defeat, we too can defeat death and live eternally with God.

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Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.<sup>3</sup>In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>And Abel also brought an offering — fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup>If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

<sup>8</sup>Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>a</sup> While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.

<sup>11</sup>Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup>When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup>Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

<sup>15</sup>But the LORD said to him, “Not so<sup>b</sup>; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. <sup>16</sup>So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,<sup>c</sup> east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup>Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. <sup>18</sup>To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

<sup>19</sup>Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. <sup>21</sup>His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. <sup>22</sup>Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of<sup>d</sup> bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain’s sister was Naamah.

<sup>23</sup>Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;  
wives of Lamech, hear my words.

<sup>a</sup> 8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have “Let’s go out to the field.”

<sup>b</sup> 15 Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well*

<sup>c</sup> 16 *Nod* means *wandering* (see verses 12 and 14).

<sup>d</sup> 22 Or *who instructed all who work in*

#### What had Cain done wrong? (4:5–7)

Apparently Cain’s motives and attitudes were unacceptable to God. The Bible tells us that because of Abel’s faith, his sacrifice was better than Cain’s (Heb 11:4). It was not Cain’s offering itself that was wrong; grain and harvest offerings would later be legitimate expressions of worship. But God is pleased with a pure heart, and Cain’s was not pure.

#### How could Cain rule over sin? (4:7)

The point God made to Cain was that Cain would have to decide how he would respond to this test of character. Some say these words actually form a question: “Will you rule over it?” To resist temptation and thus rule over sin requires first a desire and a decision to do so by God’s grace.

#### Who was Cain afraid of? (4:14)

Perhaps other offspring of Adam and Eve, whom Cain feared would want to take revenge. Some speculate that God might have created other humans besides Adam and Eve, and Cain could have been afraid of them. Others think Cain’s fears may have been unfounded. Perhaps Cain’s fears were rooted in his sin.

#### Why didn’t God sentence Cain to death? (4:15)

Possibly because of the small number of people on the earth. It was impractical to introduce capital punishment at this time, and the family would have been badly fractured had Cain’s family members been called on to act as prosecutor, judge, jury, witness and executioner. But later God did sentence murderers to death. See the article *What do Christians believe about the death penalty?* (Nu 35:33–34; page 268).

#### What kind of mark did God put on Cain? (4:15)

No one knows what it looked like. But the meaning of the original Hebrew implies that God put a mark on Cain as a sign or a pledge of protection.

#### Where did Cain find his wife? (4:17)

Adam had *sons and daughters* (5:4), so Cain’s wife was probably a sister (though some speculate that God may have created other human beings besides Adam and Eve). If the whole human race came from a single pair, marriage between close relatives was at first unavoidable. Only later was marriage between siblings prohibited (Lev 18:6–18).

#### Is polygamy an acceptable form of marriage? (4:19)

This is the first mention of polygamy in the Bible, but Lamech is no role model. He was a man of excess — not only taking more than one wife but also killing someone for wounding him (v. 23) and

exaggerating the consequences if someone should take revenge against him for the evil he had done (v. 24; see v. 15). It's unlikely that God approved of these aspects of Lamech's life. Monogamy was God's original intention (2:23–24).

#### How did people learn the name of the Lord? (4:26)

The word used here, *Yahweh*, was not revealed until near the time of Moses, so the importance here isn't what word was used but that people called on the one true God, who was later known as *Yahweh*.

#### Why call females “Mankind”? (5:2)

The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is used here to designate humanity, or human beings in general, as is often the case in Scripture.

#### In what ways are genealogies useful? (5:3–32)

Genealogies demonstrate that God works his plan through individuals over many generations. See the article *Why do I have such a desire to belong?* (1Ch 1:1–54; page 613).

#### Why are women not included in this genealogy? (5:3–32)

Genealogies trace ancestral roots by naming key persons (usually males), not everyone in a family line. The omission of females in this passage probably indicates a cultural preference in the writer's day. When women are listed in genealogies, it is often especially significant (Mt 1:3,5,16).

#### What was the secret to such a long life? (5:3–32)

The Creator made men and women to be immortal. Nevertheless, death — the result of sin — decreased human longevity until 70 or 80 years became a normal life span (compare 6:3; Ps 90:10).

#### Did Enoch escape death? (5:24)

Yes. The Bible confirms that *Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death* (Heb 11:5). In this verse Enoch is said to have *walked faithfully with God*, suggesting an extremely intimate relationship with God that led to an extraordinary departure from this life.

I have killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for injuring me.  
<sup>24</sup>If Cain is avenged seven times,  
then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

<sup>25</sup>Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,<sup>a</sup> saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.”<sup>26</sup>Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time people began to call on<sup>b</sup> the name of the LORD.

#### From Adam to Noah

**5** This is the written account of Adam's family line.

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup>He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind”<sup>c</sup> when they were created.

<sup>3</sup>When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. <sup>4</sup>After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.

<sup>6</sup>When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father<sup>d</sup> of Enosh. <sup>7</sup>After he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>Altogether, Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

<sup>9</sup>When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. <sup>10</sup>After he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>Altogether, Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

<sup>12</sup>When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup>After he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>Altogether, Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died.

<sup>15</sup>When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. <sup>16</sup>After he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup>Altogether, Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

<sup>18</sup>When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. <sup>19</sup>After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>Altogether, Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

<sup>21</sup>When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. <sup>24</sup>Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

<sup>a</sup> <sup>25</sup> Seth probably means *granted*. <sup>b</sup> <sup>26</sup> Or to *proclaim*

<sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup> Hebrew *adam* <sup>d</sup> <sup>6</sup> *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 7-26.

<sup>25</sup>When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. <sup>26</sup>After he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup>Altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

<sup>28</sup>When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. <sup>29</sup>He named him Noah<sup>a</sup> and said, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.” <sup>30</sup>After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup>Altogether, Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

<sup>32</sup>After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

### Wickedness in the World

**6** When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup>the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with<sup>b</sup> humans forever, for they are mortal<sup>c</sup>; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.”

<sup>4</sup>The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup>The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart

<sup>a</sup> <sup>29</sup> Noah sounds like the Hebrew for *comfort*.

<sup>b</sup> <sup>3</sup> Or *My spirit will not remain in*    <sup>c</sup> <sup>3</sup> Or *corrupt*

### Who were the sons of God? (6:2)

Some suggest they were supernatural beings, such as angels (see Job 1:6 and the NIV text note there). Others say they were godly men descended from Seth who married sinful women descended from Cain. A better interpretation may be that they were human rulers in the ancient Middle East who flaunted their power by having large harems. Rulers and judges are sometimes called *gods* or *God* in the Hebrew text (Ps 82:1; see the NIV text notes on Ex 21:6; 22:8; 1Sa 2:25).

### How does God's Spirit contend with people? (6:3)

Probably by keeping them alive. Though the meaning of the Hebrew words translated *contend with* is debated, one ancient translation (the Greek Septuagint) translates this “remain in” (see the NIV text note). If that is the meaning, it suggests that when God takes his Spirit from people, their life on earth ends. This matches the next part of the verse, which says, *for they are mortal*.

### Did God set a life span of 120 years? (6:3)

Some think that's what the first part of this verse means (see the preceding note). But if so, there are plenty of exceptions, since many individuals lived to be much older than 120 years (11:10–32). Even later, Abraham reached 175; Isaac, 180; and Jacob, 147. The 120 years may refer to the time of reprieve that God gave humanity before sending the flood.

## BIG IDEA 1: CHRISTIAN BASICS

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WALK WITH GOD?

GENESIS 5:21 – 24

Bible experts say that “walking with God” was an ancient expression that referred to an intimate relationship with God. So when this list of names says Enoch *walked faithfully with God*, it means Enoch knew God intimately. He lived his life focused on his relationship with God. While others in the Bible also served God, Enoch's life did not end with death like it did for everyone else in this list.

Hebrews 11:5–6 explains that Enoch skipped death; he was taken from this life because he *pleased God*. It goes on to say that anyone who wants to approach God must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek to know him.

God's response to Enoch's devoted faith is interesting. So many people view the God of the Old Testament as being harsh, damning and cruel. But God responded to Enoch's devotion with mercy and protection. Because Enoch made it his mission in life to please God and walk with him, God showed Enoch grace and saved him from death.

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For the next article in Big Idea 1, go to page 31

**Who were the Nephilim ... the heroes of old? (6:4)**

*Nephilim* may refer to persons of great physical stature, even giants (Nu 13:32–33). But here it probably means princes or aristocrats — men of political stature.

**How did Noah walk with God? (6:9)**

By living righteously and in close communion with the Lord. In the Hebrew mind, describing how one “walks” is a description of how one lives.

**What was this ark? (6:14)**

The large barge that Noah built. The Hebrew word means “box” or “coffin.”

**Why did God destroy other creatures besides humans? (6:17)**

God was teaching our earliest ancestors about his holiness. Because God is holy, the sins that people commit are hideous, detestable and deserving of his wrath. Sin had contaminated everything God made (Ro 8:20–21). It’s difficult for us to comprehend how powerful and terrible sin and its consequences are because we don’t fully comprehend God’s holiness.

**Why did God establish a covenant with Noah? (6:18)**

To provide redemption for the fallen human race. The covenant God established with Noah (9:1,7) renewed God’s earlier blessings and reaffirmed God’s love and purpose for his people.

**How did Noah know what animals were clean and unclean? (7:2–3)**

Specific laws regarding what was *clean* and *unclean* were not given until many years later (Lev 5:2; 11:1–43). Noah could have understood *clean* and *unclean* in cultural terms. Or perhaps God revealed which animals were clean and unclean but the Bible gives only a summarized version of what God said to Noah.

**Why take more clean than unclean animals? (7:2–3)**

So Noah and his family could eat and offer sacrifices to God after the flood (8:20). The practice of using clean rather than unclean animals for both ritual and food purposes was observed long before the Law of Moses laid out specific instructions (Lev 11:1 — 15:1–33).

was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup>So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — for I regret that I have made them.” <sup>8</sup>But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

**Noah and the Flood**

<sup>9</sup>This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

<sup>10</sup>Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup>Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. <sup>12</sup>God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. <sup>13</sup>So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup>So make yourself an ark of cypress<sup>a</sup> wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. <sup>15</sup>This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. <sup>16</sup>Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit<sup>c</sup> high all around.<sup>d</sup>

Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. <sup>17</sup>I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup>But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. <sup>19</sup>You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. <sup>20</sup>Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup>You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

<sup>22</sup>Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

**7** The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. <sup>2</sup>Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, <sup>3</sup>and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. <sup>4</sup>Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

<sup>a</sup> 14 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. <sup>b</sup> 15 That is, about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high or about 135 meters long, 23 meters wide and 14 meters high <sup>c</sup> 16 That is, about 18 inches or about 45 centimeters <sup>d</sup> 16 The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.

<sup>5</sup>And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

<sup>6</sup>Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. <sup>7</sup>And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. <sup>8</sup>Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, <sup>9</sup>male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

<sup>11</sup>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month — on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup>And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

<sup>13</sup>On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. <sup>14</sup>They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. <sup>15</sup>Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. <sup>16</sup>The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

<sup>17</sup>For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. <sup>19</sup>They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. <sup>20</sup>The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.<sup>a,b</sup> <sup>21</sup>Every living thing that moved on land perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. <sup>22</sup>Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. <sup>23</sup>Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah and his wife, and those with him in the ark.

<sup>24</sup>The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

**8** But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. <sup>2</sup>Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. <sup>3</sup>The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, <sup>4</sup>and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

<sup>a</sup> 20 That is, about 23 feet or about 6.8 meters    <sup>b</sup> 20 Or rose more than fifteen cubits, and the mountains were covered

#### What did Noah and his family eat while in the ark? (7:7)

People and animals originally lived on food from plants and trees (1:29–30). So Noah presumably stored up seeds, fruits and grains for the people and the animals to eat on the ark. After the flood, which destroyed all vegetation, Noah's family was given permission to eat meat (9:3–4).

#### Did God cause the animals to come to Noah? (7:9)

We can't know for sure. Some think Noah went on safaris to gather the animals while the ark was under construction. Others believe the animals responded to some instinctive sense that disaster was imminent. Still others speculate that a glacial movement of some kind caused a mass migration of animals.

#### What made these springs burst forth? (7:11)

Probably a tremendous upheaval of the ocean floor and/or perhaps the effects of a great earthquake that caused subterranean water to rise to the surface.

#### How did Noah oversee a floating zoo? (7:14)

Noah had to take enough provisions to feed the eight humans and all the animals on board. The many questions that arise (for example, Didn't the animals get restless? How did the meat-eaters survive?) cannot be answered other than to say that God was in control.

#### Were fish and sea creatures also destroyed? (7:23)

The text speaks only of creatures on the ground and in the air, so perhaps creatures living in water were spared.

#### What does it mean that God remembered Noah? (8:1)

In the Old Testament, *to remember* means "to take care of." It emphasizes God's decision to preserve Noah's life.

**What did Noah learn from releasing the raven? (8:6–7)**

Noah used the raven to determine the readiness of the land for habitation. Even though the ark had run aground, Noah needed to know whether or not other land was appearing. A raven is an intelligent scavenger. Noah probably assumed the raven would be able to find dead animals washed ashore and thus show Noah where there was land. However, the raven didn't prove to be a reliable indicator since it was able to keep flying, waiting for land to appear.

**What's special about an olive leaf? (8:11)**

This leaf would have been taken from a tree on the lower plains that was sprouting leaves again — an olive tree often resprouts even after it seems the tree has died. The olive branch has become a symbol for peace, perhaps because it signaled the end of God's judgment.

**Do human beings have any good inclinations? (8:21)**

Because God created us in his image, we have undeniable value. But this verse emphasizes the pervasive corruption of human nature, which constantly resists the holiness, purity and intimacy with God that we were created for.

**Why did God promise not to repeat such judgment? (8:21–22)**

It seems likely that his decision was more than just a response to Noah's prayer and sacrifice. Perhaps God had all of human history in view and wanted to ensure that the normal cycles and processes of nature would continue unabated for as long as the earth would last. People can count on summer and winter, day and night, seedtime and harvest — these will never again cease as long as the earth endures.

**Why make animals fear humans? (9:2)**

Perhaps to emphasize the supremacy of human beings over animals (1:26,28) during this new beginning in the history of humans. It also may have been a way of protecting Noah's descendants after the flood. Because of the fall, some animals were dangerous to humans.

<sup>6</sup>After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark <sup>7</sup>and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. <sup>9</sup>But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. <sup>10</sup>He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. <sup>11</sup>When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. <sup>12</sup>He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

<sup>13</sup>By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. <sup>14</sup>By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.

<sup>15</sup>Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>17</sup>Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you — the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground — so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it."

<sup>18</sup>So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. <sup>19</sup>All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds — everything that moves on land — came out of the ark, one kind after another.

<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. <sup>21</sup>The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though<sup>a</sup> every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

<sup>22</sup>"As long as the earth endures,  
seedtime and harvest,  
cold and heat,  
summer and winter,  
day and night  
will never cease."

**God's Covenant With Noah**

**9** Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. <sup>3</sup>Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I give you the green plants, I now give you everything.

<sup>a</sup> 21 Or *humans, for*

<sup>4</sup>“But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. <sup>5</sup>And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

<sup>6</sup>“Whoever sheds human blood,  
by humans shall their blood be shed;  
for in the image of God  
has God made mankind.

<sup>7</sup>As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

<sup>8</sup>Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: <sup>9</sup>“I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

<sup>12</sup>And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: <sup>13</sup>I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. <sup>16</sup>Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

<sup>17</sup>So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

### The Sons of Noah

<sup>18</sup>The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) <sup>19</sup>These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth.

<sup>20</sup>Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded<sup>a</sup> to plant a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup>But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

<sup>24</sup>When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup>he said,

“Cursed be Canaan!  
The lowest of slaves  
will he be to his brothers.”

<sup>a</sup> 20 Or *soil*, was the first

### What was wrong with bloody meat? (9:4)

Life is to be treated as a gift from God, and under no circumstances is life to be treated casually. Because *the life of a creature is in the blood* (Lev 17:11; see Lev 17:14; Dt 12:23), the meat had to be thoroughly drained of its blood before it could be eaten. See *Why does God say the life of every creature is in its blood?* (Lev 17:11; page 183).

### How does God hold animals accountable? (9:5)

Animals are subject to possible punishment for taking a human life. Animals are not guilty of murder in the same way humans are. However, just as people must not treat the blood of animals carelessly by leaving it in the meat they eat, so animals are to be held accountable for the lifeblood of the human beings they kill (Ex 21:28–29).

### Why respond to killing with more killing? (9:6)

To instill a respect for the image of God in all people. To destroy human life is to attack the image of God. Such a terrible offense could only be rectified by taking the life of the murderer. See the article *What do Christians believe about the death penalty?* (Nu 35:33–34; page 268). Some believe Jesus later changed the way we should respond to murderers (Mt 5:21–22,38–39; Jn 8:7).

### How can something with a natural explanation be a sign from God? (9:13)

The rainbow probably had been in the sky previously. In fact, the Hebrew grammar is explicit in saying that it was now “to become” a sign. If so, God gave meaning to a natural phenomenon to remind people of his promise.

### Might God destroy all living creatures by another means? (9:15)

Though God promised not to destroy all life in another flood, he could do so in another way, such as by fire. The apostle Peter wrote that someday the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire (2Pe 3:3–7,10–13). The present world order, including this earth, will one day give way to Christ’s kingdom and a *new heaven and a new earth* (Rev 21:1; compare 2Pe 3:7). See the article *How can I not be terrified of the end of the world?* (Rev 6:12–17; page 1978).

### How could different races descend from three sons of one couple? (9:19)

The term *race* describes, in large part, variations that occur naturally when people are separated by geographic barriers or distances. Geneticists have shown that skin color, which depends on the amount of melanin present,

can change over a few generations. Language also changes naturally with geographic isolation of people groups. Separated by geography and language, cultures and traditions diversify. But it all started with Noah. Acts 17:26 says, *From one man [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth.*

**What did Ham do wrong? (9:22–25)**

Instead of simply covering his father, he left him naked and went to tell his brothers. That showed disrespect for his father. Some point out that it was Noah (first intoxicated and then hung over), not God, who directly accused Ham of wrongdoing. See the following note.

**Why did Noah curse his grandson instead of his son Ham? (9:25)**

Curses often applied to a person's legacy and affected future generations (Ex 20:4–5). But in this case, we simply don't know the reason. Remember, this was Noah's curse, not God's.

**Why list all these unfamiliar names? (10:1–32)**

See *In what ways are genealogies useful?* (5:3–32; page 10).

**Where did Ham and his descendants live? (10:6–20)**

Ham's descendant Egypt is associated with the nation of Egypt. Cush is associated with Nubia (Sudan); Put with Libya; Canaan with Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine. But Ham's descendants cannot be identified today by any ethnic or geographic categories. During the days of slavery (AD 1600–1863), the “curse of Ham” was widely referenced to justify the enslavement of Africans. This clearly was a misuse of Scripture.

**Was this the same Nineveh that Jonah later visited? (10:11)**

Yes. Nineveh became the capital city of Assyria in about 700 BC, and Jonah reluctantly went there to call the people to repentance. Though the Ninevites responded to his message (Jnh 3:5), they later reverted to their former wickedness and were destroyed in 612 BC. Nineveh's fall is the theme of the book of Nahum.

<sup>26</sup>He also said,

“Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem!  
May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

<sup>27</sup>May God extend Japheth's<sup>a</sup> territory;  
may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,  
and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.”

<sup>28</sup>After the flood Noah lived 350 years. <sup>29</sup>Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

**The Table of Nations**

**10** This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

*The Japhethites*

- <sup>2</sup>The sons<sup>b</sup> of Japheth:  
Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek and Tiras.
- <sup>3</sup>The sons of Gomer:  
Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah.
- <sup>4</sup>The sons of Javan:  
Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittites and the Rodanites.<sup>c</sup> <sup>5</sup>(From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)

*The Hamites*

- <sup>6</sup>The sons of Ham:  
Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan.
- <sup>7</sup>The sons of Cush:  
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteka.  
The sons of Raamah:  
Sheba and Dedan.
- <sup>8</sup>Cush was the father<sup>d</sup> of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.” <sup>10</sup>The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in<sup>e</sup> Shinar.<sup>f</sup> <sup>11</sup>From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir,<sup>g</sup> Calah<sup>h</sup> and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah—which is the great city.
- <sup>13</sup>Egypt was the father of  
the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,<sup>i</sup> Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites.

<sup>a</sup> *27 Japheth* sounds like the Hebrew for *extend*.  
<sup>b</sup> *2 Sons* may mean *descendants* or *successors* or *nations*; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31. <sup>c</sup> *4* Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:7); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Dodanites*  
<sup>d</sup> *8 Father* may mean *ancestor* or *predecessor* or *founder*; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26. <sup>e</sup> *10* Or *Uruk and Akkad — all of them in* <sup>f</sup> *10* That is, *Babylonia*  
<sup>g</sup> *11* Or *Nineveh with its city squares*

<sup>15</sup>Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn,<sup>a</sup> and of the Hittites, <sup>16</sup>Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, <sup>17</sup>Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, <sup>18</sup>Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite clans scattered <sup>19</sup>and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, as far as Lasha.

<sup>20</sup>These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

*The Semites*

<sup>21</sup>Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was<sup>b</sup> Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.

<sup>22</sup>The sons of Shem:  
Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

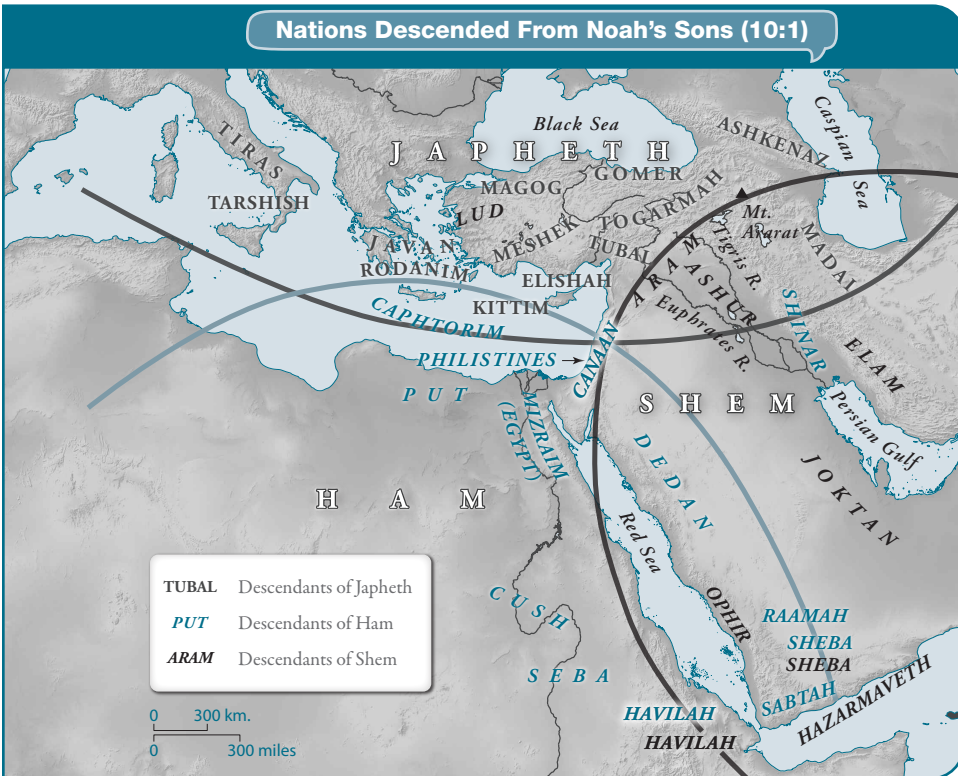
<sup>23</sup>The sons of Aram:  
Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshek.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Arphaxad was the father of<sup>d</sup> Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.

<sup>a</sup> *15 Or of the Sidonians, the foremost*    <sup>b</sup> *21 Or Shem, the older brother of*    <sup>c</sup> *23 See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew Mash.*    <sup>d</sup> *24 Hebrew; Septuagint father of Cainan, and Cainan was the father of*

**Who were the sons of Eber? (10:21)**

Eber was the ancestor of Abram (11:10–26), and from Eber’s name we get the term *Hebrew* (14:13). So this term refers to all the offspring of Abram, whose name became Abraham.



**In what way was the earth divided? (10:25)**

Probably by the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel (11:8–9). Because *Peleg* in Hebrew means “division” (see the NIV text note on 10:25), he may have received his name in memory of this event.

**Who are the modern descendants of Noah’s sons? (10:32)**

The Semitic peoples are descendants of Shem. People from Egypt, Ethiopia, North Africa and Canaan are generally thought to be descendants of Ham. People with Indo-European roots are usually considered to have come from the line of Japheth.

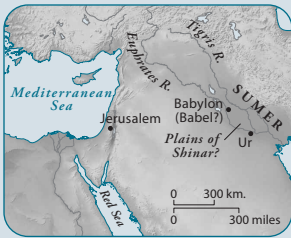
**What was the first language? (11:1)**

No one knows. *One language* may mean there was a common language understood by all groups of people at that time, though each group had its own distinct dialect (10:5,20,31).

**Why was it wrong to build a tower? (11:4)**

Perhaps it was an act of defiance against God’s command to *fill the earth* (1:28) because the builders clearly said they didn’t want to be *scattered over the face of the whole earth*. However, this tower may have been built not for humans to ascend toward heaven but as a way for God to be worshiped by people. If so, they had begun to think they could gain God’s favor by working to achieve their own salvation. In either case, God saw it as people unifying themselves against his sovereignty.

**THE TOWER OF BABEL (11:4)**



**How could this project make nothing impossible for human-kind? (11:6)**

The phrase *nothing . . . will be impossible* refers to human potential for doing evil. It’s similar to our figure of speech “anything can happen.” When people unite around selfish interests, the results can be dangerous. History demonstrates the tragic results of people using their power in the wrong way. In this case, God scattered the people to undermine their destructive behavior.

<sup>25</sup>Two sons were born to Eber:

One was named Peleg,<sup>a</sup> because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

<sup>26</sup>Joktan was the father of

Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,  
<sup>27</sup>Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, <sup>28</sup>Obal, Abimael,  
Sheba, <sup>29</sup>Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

<sup>30</sup>The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

<sup>31</sup>These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

<sup>32</sup>These are the clans of Noah’s sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

**The Tower of Babel**

**11** Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. <sup>2</sup>As people moved eastward,<sup>b</sup> they found a plain in Shinar<sup>c</sup> and settled there.

<sup>3</sup>They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup>Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

<sup>5</sup>But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

<sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup>That is why it was called Babel<sup>d</sup> — because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

**From Shem to Abram**

<sup>10</sup>This is the account of Shem’s family line.

Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father<sup>e</sup> of Arphaxad. <sup>11</sup>And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>12</sup>When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. <sup>13</sup>And after he became the father

<sup>a</sup> *25 Peleg* means *division*. <sup>b</sup> *2 Or from the east; or in the east* <sup>c</sup> *2 That is, Babylonia* <sup>d</sup> *9 That is, Babylon; Babel sounds like the Hebrew for confused.*

<sup>e</sup> *10 Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 11-25.

of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. <sup>15</sup>And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>16</sup>When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. <sup>17</sup>And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>18</sup>When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. <sup>19</sup>And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>20</sup>When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. <sup>21</sup>And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>22</sup>When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. <sup>23</sup>And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>24</sup>When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. <sup>25</sup>And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>26</sup>After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

### Abram's Family

<sup>27</sup>This is the account of Terah's family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. <sup>28</sup>While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. <sup>29</sup>Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah. <sup>30</sup>Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.

<sup>31</sup>Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

<sup>32</sup>Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

### The Call of Abram

**12** The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

<sup>a</sup> 12,13 Hebrew; Septuagint (see also Luke 3:35,36 and note at Gen. 10:24) 35 years, he became the father of Cainan. <sup>13</sup>And after he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters

#### Why did God say, *Come, let us [plural] go down?* (11:7)

See *Why did God say, Let us [plural] make mankind in our image?* (1:26; page 3) and the article *What exactly is the Trinity?* (Mt 28:18–20; page 1554).

#### Why did God want to scatter people? (11:9)

When large numbers of people concentrate in huge cities, it seems to bring out the worst in humanity. Crime, social ills and other tragedies seem to increase when people are crowded together. So God may have scattered people for their own good, to protect them from themselves.

#### What might account for this rapidly decreasing life span? (11:10–32)

See *What was the secret to such a long life?* (5:3–32; page 10).

#### Why did Terah set out for Canaan? (11:31)

We don't know why Terah joined Abram in leaving Ur. Abram's ancestors were pagans and did not serve the Lord (Jos 24:2). But Terah may have been influenced by his son Abram, who had heard from God.

#### How did God speak to Abram? (12:1)

Supernatural experiences cannot be fully expressed in natural language, but somehow people have the capacity to hear from the Creator. The Bible describes this in various ways. Here God spoke to Abram; later God appeared to Abram and spoke to him (v. 7) and still later God's words came in a vision (15:1). Another time God appeared to Abram as a man (18:1–15). At the heart of each of these encounters was a rational and personal message from God. See *Why would the Lord come to Abraham in human form?* (18:10; page 26).

**In what way would Abram bless all peoples on earth? (12:3)**

God used Abram to demonstrate his heart and purpose for the world. God desired to redeem the people of the world from the depths to which they had fallen when Adam sinned. Eventually, through Abram's family line, God sent Jesus to offer redemption to the whole world.

**ABRAM'S JOURNEYS (12:4)**



**What was the great tree of Moreh? (12:6)**

One of several large trees in Canaan that were prominent sacred places. This tree was a center for the worship of pagan gods, a spot known to all the locals. Abram built an altar there to the one true God — an implicit challenge to the false gods of Canaan.

**Why did Abram build altars? (12:7–8)**

Offering sacrifices on an altar was the normal way to express religious devotion in Canaanite culture. But because the places and means used to worship other gods in Canaan were not appropriate for worshipping the Lord, Abram built new altars to worship the true God.

**Why did Egypt have food when other countries didn't? (12:10)**

Other countries were vulnerable to drought, but in Egypt the Nile River provided water for irrigating crops. In times of famine, the Nile region was the only place with consistent harvests, which made Egypt the breadbasket for the whole region.

**Was it wrong for Abram to lie to save his life? (12:11–20)**

Technically, Abram's ruse was a half-truth because Sarai was his half sister (20:12) as well as his wife. Still, on two occasions (here and at 20:1–18), Abram passed off his beautiful wife Sarai as his sister for fear of being killed by powerful men who would then take her as a wife or concubine. These narratives record what Abram said and did, including the consequences to others. Scripture does not say his choices were right or that he didn't have other options. Sometimes lying may seem justified, but God expects us to trust him and do what is right, even if the consequences appear unfavorable.

<sup>2</sup>“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. <sup>5</sup>He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

<sup>6</sup>Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring: I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

<sup>8</sup>From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

**Abram in Egypt**

<sup>10</sup>Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. <sup>11</sup>As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. <sup>13</sup>Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

<sup>14</sup>When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. <sup>15</sup>And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. <sup>16</sup>He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

<sup>17</sup>But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup>So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!” <sup>20</sup>Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Or be seen as blessed    <sup>b</sup> 3 Or earth / will use your name in blessings (see 48:20)    <sup>c</sup> 7 Or seed