

**GOD'S PLAN FOR  
ALL PEOPLE**

**ACT 1**

The Bible contains the best story ever told, providing true answers to important questions such as: Who is God? How does He relate to the world? How can humans know him? How did we get here and why? How will things end for us and our world?

Like every good story, the Bible has a memorable setting, interesting characters, and a grand plot that climaxes in a glorious conclusion. The plot plows ahead with conflicts described at many levels, but ultimately the conflicts are resolved as God moves history toward its appointed purpose. As you read the passages we have designated as Act 1, bear in mind that they are the foundation for Act 2 (God's Covenant People) and Act 3 (God's New Covenant People).

#### THE SETTINGS FOR ACT 1

The settings for Act 1 are broad, beginning with the entire universe and then narrowing down to specific locales on earth. Although places such as Eden, Ararat, and the Tower of Babylon are named, we don't know exactly where they were. This really doesn't matter, for the narrator describes seminal events and conditions that apply to all humans no matter where they live. Further, this part of the story is written in a way that makes the events hard to date. The account starts "in the beginning" and extends to the time of Abraham, which was the dawn of recorded history. Clearly it's more important for us to know *that* these things happened to our ancestors than to know when and where they occurred.

#### MAIN CHARACTERS FOR ACT 1

*God*—He is the Creator of the setting and of all the other characters involved in the plotline. He is known through his words and his works. He will remain the central character throughout the whole Bible; after all it is *his* story. His greatness and goodness are on display in creation and in the pages of Scripture. His justice and mercy are especially seen in the way he responds to human sin. Without

diminishing the gravity of sin, he provides a way for sin to be pardoned.

*The Serpent (Satan)*—Although the details of how and why he came to be in the garden are not explained, the Serpent alters history as the antagonist who acts in opposition to God. After his deception of Adam and Eve, his direct presence disappears for the rest of Act 1. As Satan, he will show up again sporadically in Acts 2 and 3. At the end of the Bible's storyline his final demise is foretold.

*Adam and Eve*—Our first parents are known for the impact of their words and deeds rather than by any description of their appearance. They are human beings made in the image of God, and yet they choose to disobey God. This sets in motion the central conflict of the Bible: rebellion (sin) against God. Since they are the parents of the entire human race, their sin shows that 100% of humanity became rebels against the Creator. It is impossible to understand the human condition today without making reference to Adam and Eve.

*Noah and his family*—These eight persons, imperfect but accounted righteous by God, are set in contrast to the rest of wicked humanity. Noah and his family are best known for building the ark and riding out the flood, but the theological importance of this should not be missed: they become the means by which God provides our ancestors with a fresh start. Even so, in the aftermath of the flood, awful behavior continues with Noah and his descendants. God has given humanity a fresh start, and yet it remains true that all humans are sinners in need of salvation.

*The people of Babylon*—The "whole earth" is again in conflict with the Creator. Individuals go unnamed, but they all receive God's judgment and are scattered. Sadly, in this last episode reported in Act 1, all humans are still rebels.

#### PLOT SUMMARY FOR ACT 1

The plot for Act 1 can be summarized in three phases:

- *God's good creation*
- *Humanity's fall into sin*
- *Humanity's ongoing rebellion*

The action begins with God's creation of the universe from nothing, focusing in on planet Earth and then mankind. The results are said to be "very good." But quickly the scene changes to the temptation and fall of humanity into sin. Sin leads to a death sentence for Adam and all his descendants, and the depressing refrain "then he died" resounds like an ominous drumbeat throughout the biblical genealogies and down to our own day. Later events demonstrate a pattern of broken relationships and rebellion against God: Cain murders Abel out of jealousy; the

human race is so sinful that God sends a worldwide flood; people settle in Babylon (and try to reach heaven on their own) rather than scatter over the earth as God intended.

Despite the ongoing rebellion, there are glimmers of hope. God's mercy breaks through undeserved: Adam and Eve live on to bear children rather than face immediate death for their sin; Noah finds favor with God in spite of his imperfections; after the flood God makes a covenant to preserve human life; God scatters (rather than destroys) the people despite their intention to disobey him.

As you read Act 1, use the lens of "God's plan for all people" to help interpret the story.

## WEEK 1

In our first week of readings, we will cover all of Act 1 in the story of the Bible. This act consists of three scenes:

1. The creation of the world, with human beings as the pinnacle of that creation
2. The fall into sin and its consequences
3. The flood, the first expression of God's judgment on the human race as a whole, as well as his desire to preserve the life he created

Act 1 is very brief in comparison to the other two Acts in the biblical story, but theologically, it is very important. In numerous ways Act 1 lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. In addition to the main events, we will see many expressions of God's desire to have a relationship with people and his grace when people sin. As you read, slow down and notice the details, including moments of tension and crisis, and how these are resolved. This segment of Scripture is packed with important themes that will continue throughout all of Scripture, including the central theme of covenant. As you read Genesis 1 and Psalms, allow the music of these passages to touch you and teach you things about God.

# SCENE 1

## CREATION: THE GOD OF ALL LIFE

With this foundational scene, the plot is set in motion. We observe truths about God, our world, and humanity that are essential for understanding the overall story. First, God is the sovereign Creator of everything. There is no speculation on where God comes from or how he became powerful. He simply is. Second, our world is created good; moreover, the world is not God. The universe depends on him. Third, humans—male and female alike—are made in God’s image. We are not the random result of time and chance. Thus, God holds human beings in high regard and we are accountable to him.

### WEEK 1

## DAY

1

### GENESIS 1-2

ACT 1 • SCENE 1 • READING 1

Notice ways the days of creation relate to each other: day 1 to day 4, day 2 to day 5, and day 3 to day 6. Days 1, 2, and 3 tell of God’s creation of settings to be inhabited, while days 4, 5, and 6 introduce the characters that inhabit those settings. God built both beauty and order into his creation. There was also a progression in creation, a process climaxing in the creation of human beings. According to Genesis 2:2-3, God rested on the seventh day, blessed that day, and declared it holy. In declaring one day of the week special, God built order and rhythm into the weekly human routine.

- ◆ *Identify the order and rhythm of rest in your weekly patterns.*

In Genesis 2 the author took one aspect of the creation account in Genesis 1—the creation of man and woman—and expanded on it. When you read narrative passages in Scripture, remember that God is the hero of the story.

- ◆ *How is God the hero in Genesis 2?*
- ◆ *What does the passage say about the nature and beauty of marriage as God designed it?*

## GENESIS 1-2

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." <sup>7</sup> So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the expanse "sky." Evening came and then morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants 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> Evening came and then morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons and for days and years. <sup>15</sup> They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars. <sup>17</sup> God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, "Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." <sup>21</sup> So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup> Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. <sup>25</sup> So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

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

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." <sup>29</sup> God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, <sup>30</sup> for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky,

and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

**2** So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

<sup>4</sup> These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup> no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.

<sup>6</sup> But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> Gold from that land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.” <sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” <sup>19</sup> The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one will be called “woman,”  
for she was taken from man.

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.



Psalm 8, a reflection on Genesis 1–2, describes our worth and responsibility as human beings. Think about what this psalm means for us as modern believers. Notice the first and last verses of the psalm; God is the real focus here.

Meditate on the description of God in Psalm 104:1-9 and notice how the psalmist responds to God in verses 33-35. The psalms often use rich word pictures to communicate truth.

- ◆ *How did the author paint a picture using word pictures?*

Notice how the words of John 1:1-3, which speak of Jesus as the Word, echo Genesis 1:1.

- ◆ *Read Genesis 1:1 again in light of John 1:1-3 and take a moment to worship Jesus as the Creator of all that is.*

### PSALM 8

*For the choir director: on the Gittith. A psalm of David.*

- 1 LORD, our Lord,  
how magnificent is your name throughout the earth!

- 2 You have covered the heavens with your majesty.  
From the mouths of infants and nursing babies,  
you have established a stronghold  
on account of your adversaries  
in order to silence the enemy and the avenger.

- 3 When I observe your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you set in place,

- 4 what is a human being that you remember him,  
a son of man that you look after him?

- 5 You made him little less than God  
and crowned him with glory and honor.

- 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under his feet:

- 7 all the sheep and oxen,  
as well as the animals in the wild,

- 8 the birds of the sky,  
and the fish of the sea  
that pass through the currents of the seas.


- 9 LORD, our Lord,  
how magnificent is your name throughout the earth!

**PSALM 104**

- 1 My soul, bless the LORD!  
LORD my God, you are very great;  
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.
- 2 He wraps himself in light as if it were a robe,  
spreading out the sky like a canopy,
- 3 laying the beams of his palace  
on the waters above,  
making the clouds his chariot,  
walking on the wings of the wind,
- 4 and making the winds his messengers,  
flames of fire his servants.
- 5 He established the earth on its foundations;  
it will never be shaken.
- 6 You covered it with the deep  
as if it were a garment;  
the water stood above the mountains.
- 7 At your rebuke the water fled;  
at the sound of your thunder they hurried away —
- 8 mountains rose and valleys sank —  
to the place you established for them.
- 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross;  
they will never cover the earth again.
- 10 He causes the springs to gush into the valleys;  
they flow between the mountains.
- 11 They supply water for every wild beast;  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- 12 The birds of the sky live beside the springs;  
they make their voices heard among the foliage.
- 13 He waters the mountains from his palace;  
the earth is satisfied by the fruit of your labor.
- 14 He causes grass to grow for the livestock  
and provides crops for man to cultivate,  
producing food from the earth,
- 15 wine that makes human hearts glad —  
making his face shine with oil —  
and bread that sustains human hearts.
- 16 The trees of the LORD flourish,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 There the birds make their nests;  
storks make their homes in the pine trees.
- 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the cliffs are a refuge for hyraxes.

- 19 He made the moon to mark the festivals;  
the sun knows when to set.
- 20 You bring darkness, and it becomes night,  
when all the forest animals stir.
- 21 The young lions roar for their prey  
and seek their food from God.
- 22 The sun rises; they go back  
and lie down in their dens.
- 23 Man goes out to his work  
and to his labor until evening.
- 24 How countless are your works, LORD!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 25 Here is the sea, vast and wide,  
teeming with creatures beyond number —  
living things both large and small.
- 26 There the ships move about,  
and Leviathan, which you formed to play there.
- 27 All of them wait for you  
to give them their food at the right time.
- 28 When you give it to them,  
they gather it;  
when you open your hand,  
they are satisfied with good things.
- 29 When you hide your face,  
they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to the dust.
- 30 When you send your breath,  
they are created,  
and you renew the surface of the ground.
- 31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
may the LORD rejoice in his works.
- 32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles;  
he touches the mountains,  
and they pour out smoke.
- 33 I will sing to the LORD all my life;  
I will sing praise to my God while I live.
- 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him;  
I will rejoice in the LORD.
- 35 May sinners vanish from the earth  
and wicked people be no more.  
My soul, bless the LORD!  
Hallelujah!

JOHN 1:1-3



**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

< END OF SCENE 1 >

# SCENE 2

## THE FALL: REJECTING GOD'S VISION FOR LIFE

A lot of people talk about “worldview” these days. This refers to the framework someone has for understanding existence and the nature of reality. Scene 1 answered a key question that a worldview must answer: *Where did we come from?* Now scene 2 answers a second: *What's gone wrong with us?* Our first parents choose to rebel against their Creator, becoming sinners. They pass down this sinful nature to their children. The image of God is not destroyed by sin, but it is damaged. We humans are fallen creatures, and we have all followed our ancestors' path of rejecting God's vision for life.

WEEK 1

DAY

3

GENESIS 3–5

ACT 1 • SCENE 2 • READING 1

Watch for the patterns of human sin depicted in Genesis 3–4:

- Temptation to question God's Word: “Did God really say . . . ?” (3:1).
- The false promise of desire
- The experience of shame and consequences of sin

Also notice the attempt to blame others for sin, the refusal to take responsibility for sinful actions. Finally, notice that in chapter 4 the problem was not just with Cain's offering but with Cain himself; this is a key to understanding the story.

◆ *How do these stories reflect your own battle with temptation?*

GENESIS 3–5

**3** Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can't eat from any tree in the garden?’”

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

<sup>4</sup>“No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>“In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup>The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate

ACT 1 • SCENE 2 • READING 1

it.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew 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 walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

<sup>11</sup> Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, "The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

<sup>13</sup> So the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

And 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,  
you are cursed more than any livestock  
and more than any wild animal.  
You will move on your belly  
and eat dust all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains;  
you will bear children with painful effort.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
yet he will rule over you.

<sup>17</sup> And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':

The ground is cursed because of you.  
You will eat from it by means of painful labor  
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> You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow  
until you return to the ground,  
since you were taken from it.  
For you are dust,  
and you will return to dust."

<sup>20</sup> The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. <sup>21</sup> The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> The LORD God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever."<sup>23</sup> So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which

he was taken.<sup>24</sup> He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

**4** The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "I have had a male child with the LORD's help."<sup>2</sup> She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground.<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the LORD.<sup>4</sup> And Abel also presented an offering — some of the first-born of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup> but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?<sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

<sup>8</sup> Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And 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 guardian?"

<sup>10</sup> Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!<sup>11</sup> So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed.<sup>12</sup> If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

<sup>13</sup> But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!<sup>14</sup> Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me."

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD replied to him, "In that case, whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." And he placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him.<sup>16</sup> Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup> Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son.

<sup>18</sup> Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.<sup>19</sup> Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah.<sup>20</sup> Adah bore Jabal; he was the first of the nomadic herdsmen.<sup>21</sup> His brother was named Jubal; he was the first of all who play the lyre and the flute.<sup>22</sup> Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

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

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;  
wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words.  
For I killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for striking me.

<sup>24</sup> If Cain is to be avenged seven times over,  
then for Lamech it will be seventy-seven times!

<sup>25</sup> Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given me another offspring in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."<sup>26</sup> A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

**5** This is the document containing the family records of Adam. On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God; <sup>2</sup> he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.

<sup>3</sup> Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. <sup>4</sup> Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup> So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

<sup>6</sup> Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. <sup>7</sup> Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup> So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

<sup>9</sup> Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. <sup>10</sup> Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup> So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

<sup>12</sup> Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup> Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup> So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

<sup>15</sup> Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. <sup>16</sup> Mahalalel lived 830 years after he fathered Jared, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup> So Mahalalel's life lasted 895 years; then he died.

<sup>18</sup> Jared was 162 years old when he fathered Enoch. <sup>19</sup> Jared lived 800 years after he fathered Enoch, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup> So Jared's life lasted 962 years; then he died.

<sup>21</sup> Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. <sup>22</sup> And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup> So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. <sup>24</sup> Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.

<sup>25</sup> Methuselah was 187 years old when he fathered Lamech. <sup>26</sup> Methuselah lived 782 years after he fathered Lamech, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup> So Methuselah's life lasted 969 years; then he died.

<sup>28</sup> Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered a son. <sup>29</sup> And he named him Noah, saying, "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." <sup>30</sup> Lamech lived 595 years after he fathered Noah, and he fathered other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup> So Lamech's life lasted 777 years; then he died.

<sup>32</sup> Noah was 500 years old, and he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.



< END OF SCENE 2 >

# SCENE 3

## THE FLOOD: GOD JUDGES AND MAKES A COVENANT TO PRESERVE LIFE

We now fast-forward to the time of Noah. The conflict of righteousness versus sin is on display. God's actions demonstrate his character and power. As Sovereign, he exercises his right to condemn and punish evil. He intervenes in creation as it pleases him, sending a global disaster. Yet he is also merciful, sparing one family for a new beginning. Further, he loves humanity so much that he enters a covenant (binding agreement), promising to withhold another such flood. The episode about scattering the people of Babylon shows God's justice and mercy. It also shows that human sin is an ongoing problem.

### WEEK 1

## DAY 4

### GENESIS 6-7

### ACT 1 • SCENE 3 • READING 1

Watch for details as you read today. Also keep the big picture in mind: the pervasiveness of sin and its devastating consequences. Notice what we learn about God in the first eight verses of Genesis 6, keeping in mind that he is the main actor in the story. Watch for expressions of God's grace and his desire to preserve life in the midst of judgment. Also notice what we learn about Noah as the story continues: he was a righteous man and walked with God. Noah's responses called for a great deal of trust in God in the face of cataclysmic events, yet at times it is difficult for us to trust God in minor events of everyday life. Perhaps Noah's walk with God was the key.

◆ *How might you express your trust in God today and learn to walk with God every day?*

### GENESIS 6-7

**6** When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them,<sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves.<sup>3</sup> And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years."<sup>4</sup> The Nephilim were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.

<sup>5</sup> When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time,<sup>6</sup> the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth,

together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky — for I regret that I made them.”<sup>8</sup> Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God.<sup>10</sup> And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup>Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness.<sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth.<sup>13</sup> Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

<sup>14</sup>“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside.<sup>15</sup> This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.<sup>16</sup> You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

<sup>17</sup>“Understand that I am bringing a flood — floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with 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 with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives.<sup>19</sup> You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.<sup>20</sup> Two of everything — from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds — will come to you so that you can keep them alive.<sup>21</sup> Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.”<sup>22</sup> And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

**7** Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.<sup>2</sup> You are to take with you seven pairs, a male and its female, of all the clean animals, and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and its female,<sup>3</sup> and seven pairs, male and female, of the birds of the sky — in order to keep offspring alive throughout the earth.<sup>4</sup> Seven days from now I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing I have made I will wipe off the face of the earth.”<sup>5</sup> And Noah did everything that the LORD commanded him.

<sup>6</sup>Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came and water covered the earth.<sup>7</sup> So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters.<sup>8</sup> From the animals that are clean, and from the animals that are not clean, and from the birds and every creature that crawls on the ground,<sup>9</sup> two of each, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, just as God had commanded him.<sup>10</sup> Seven days later the floodwaters came on the earth.

<sup>11</sup>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 sources of the vast watery depths burst open, the floodgates of the sky were opened,<sup>12</sup> and the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.<sup>13</sup> On that same day Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, entered the ark, along with Noah’s wife and his three sons’ wives.<sup>14</sup> They entered it with all the wildlife according to their kinds, all livestock according to their kinds, all the creatures that crawl on the earth according to their kinds, every flying creature — all the birds and every winged creature — according to their kinds.<sup>15</sup> Two of every creature that has the breath of life in it came to Noah and entered the ark.<sup>16</sup> Those that entered, male and female of every creature, entered just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in.

<sup>17</sup>The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. <sup>19</sup>Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. <sup>20</sup>The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet. <sup>21</sup>Every creature perished — those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. <sup>22</sup>Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils — everything on dry land died. <sup>23</sup>He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. <sup>24</sup>And the water surged on the earth 150 days.



Read Genesis 8:15–9:7, discerning how these verses echo the first three chapters of Genesis.

- ◆ *Why might the author have included these echoes?*

Now read chapter 9 and notice the differences from Genesis 1–3.

- ◆ *How do these differences develop the overall story of Genesis?*

A covenant with God is often at the heart of the story of the Old Testament. A covenant is basically an agreement between two parties. God established a covenant with the Jewish people, first through Abraham, and then renewed it with various leaders throughout the Old Testament. The covenant stated that if the people kept God’s law, he would be their God, and they would be his people.

- ◆ *What role does the covenant play in Genesis 9?*

Reflect especially on verse 5 of Psalm 12. Worship God as One who rises up to help those burdened by evil people, providing a safe place for them. If you are being hurt by wickedness, cry out to God for help even as you worship.

### GENESIS 8–9

**8** God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside.<sup>2</sup> The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped.<sup>3</sup> The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the water had decreased significantly.<sup>4</sup> The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

<sup>5</sup>The water continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible.<sup>6</sup> After forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made,<sup>7</sup> and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.<sup>8</sup> Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth’s surface had gone down,<sup>9</sup> but the dove found no resting place for its foot. It returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface of the whole earth. He reached out and brought it into the ark to himself.<sup>10</sup> So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again.<sup>11</sup> When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth’s surface had gone down.<sup>12</sup> After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but it did not return to him again.<sup>13</sup> In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the

ark's cover and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. <sup>14</sup>By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

<sup>15</sup>Then God spoke to Noah, <sup>16</sup>"Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup>Bring out all the living creatures that are with you — birds, livestock, those that crawl on the earth — and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." <sup>18</sup>So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, came out. <sup>19</sup>All the animals, all the creatures that crawl, and all the flying creatures — everything that moves on the earth — came out of the ark by their families.

<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, he said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth onward. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

<sup>22</sup> As long as the earth endures,  
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
summer and winter, and day and night  
will not cease."

**9** God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority. <sup>3</sup>Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. <sup>4</sup>However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it. <sup>5</sup>And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person's life.

<sup>6</sup> Whoever sheds human blood,  
by humans his blood will be shed,  
for God made humans in his image.

<sup>7</sup>But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it."

<sup>8</sup>Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>"Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you — birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you — all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again 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 future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature. <sup>16</sup>The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on earth." <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and every creature on earth."

<sup>18</sup> Noah's sons who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. <sup>19</sup> These three were Noah's sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.

<sup>20</sup> Noah, as a man of the soil, began by planting a vineyard. <sup>21</sup> He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. <sup>22</sup> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup> Then Shem and Japheth took a cloak and placed it over both their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father naked.

<sup>24</sup> When Noah awoke from his drinking and learned what his youngest son had done to him, <sup>25</sup> he said:

Canaan is cursed.

He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers.

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

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;

Let Canaan be Shem's slave.

<sup>27</sup> Let God extend Japheth;  
let Japheth dwell in the tents of Shem;  
let Canaan be Shem's slave.

<sup>28</sup> Now Noah lived 350 years after the flood. <sup>29</sup> So Noah's life lasted 950 years; then he died.

## PSALM 12

*For the choir director: according to Sheminith. A psalm of David.*

- 1 Help, LORD, for no faithful one remains;  
the loyal have disappeared from the human race.
- 2 They lie to one another;  
they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts.
- 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips  
and the tongue that speaks boastfully.
- 4 They say, "Through our tongues we have power;  
our lips are our own — who can be our master?"
- 5 "Because of the devastation of the needy  
and the groaning of the poor,  
I will now rise up," says the LORD.  
"I will provide safety for the one who longs for it."
- 6 The words of the LORD are pure words,  
like silver refined in an earthen furnace,  
purified seven times.
- 7 You, LORD, will guard us;  
you will protect us from this generation forever.
- 8 The wicked prowl all around,  
and what is worthless is exalted by the human race.



Genealogies in the Bible strike some readers as uninteresting. However, these are part of God's Word, and we can learn from them. Among other things, the genealogies give us a sense of the passing of time, moving the story along. We also get a picture of the connectedness of people and events in the Bible's narrative. This is not a patchwork of loosely connected stories, but one story God is writing on the world. Meditate on the contrasts you find in Genesis 11:1-9. Now read the passage in light of Acts 2:1-21, noticing both the contrasts and the parallels with that passage. One problem reflected in Genesis 11 is that these people had an arrogant disregard for God's mandate to "fill the earth" (Gn 9:1). Think about how that mandate was ultimately fulfilled through the church in Acts as it advanced the kingdom of God in the world.

- ◆ *How are you called to participate in God's mandate to "fill the earth" by sharing the good news with others?*

#### GENESIS 10–11

**10** These are the family records of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They also had sons after the flood.

<sup>2</sup> Japheth's sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. <sup>3</sup> Gomer's sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. <sup>4</sup> And Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. <sup>5</sup> From these descendants, the peoples of the coasts and islands spread out into their lands according to their clans in their nations, each with its own language.

<sup>6</sup> Ham's sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. <sup>7</sup> Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. And Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>8</sup> Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. <sup>9</sup> He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD." <sup>10</sup> His kingdom started with Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. <sup>11</sup> From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, <sup>12</sup> and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

<sup>13</sup> Mizraim fathered the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, <sup>14</sup> Pathrus, Casluh (the Philistines came from them), and Caphtor.

<sup>15</sup> Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, <sup>16</sup> as well as the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, <sup>17</sup> the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, <sup>18</sup> the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered. <sup>19</sup> The Canaanite border went from Sidon going toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and going toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.

<sup>20</sup> These are Ham's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

<sup>21</sup> And Shem, Japheth's older brother, also had sons. Shem was the father of all the sons of Eber. <sup>22</sup> Shem's sons were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

<sup>23</sup> Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

<sup>24</sup> Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. <sup>25</sup> Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg, for during his days the earth was divided; his brother was

named Joktan.<sup>26</sup> And Joktan fathered 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 Joktan's sons.<sup>30</sup> Their settlements extended from Mesha to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

<sup>31</sup> These are Shem's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

<sup>32</sup> These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood.

**11** The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary.<sup>2</sup> As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.<sup>3</sup> They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.)<sup>4</sup> And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building.<sup>6</sup> The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.<sup>7</sup> Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech."<sup>8</sup> So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

<sup>10</sup> These are the family records of Shem. Shem lived 100 years and fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.<sup>11</sup> After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>12</sup> Arpachshad lived 35 years and fathered Shelah.<sup>13</sup> After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>14</sup> Shelah lived 30 years and fathered Eber.<sup>15</sup> After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>16</sup> Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg.<sup>17</sup> After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>18</sup> Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu.<sup>19</sup> After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>20</sup> Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug.<sup>21</sup> After he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>22</sup> Serug lived 30 years and fathered Nahor.<sup>23</sup> After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>24</sup> Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah.<sup>25</sup> After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters.<sup>26</sup> Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

<sup>27</sup> These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot.<sup>28</sup> Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah's lifetime.<sup>29</sup> Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.<sup>30</sup> Sarai was unable to conceive; she did not have a child.

<sup>31</sup> Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran's son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.<sup>32</sup> Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.



What a week of readings! We have celebrated God's greatness in Psalms. We've moved from God's creating the universe and humanity, to the fall and then to the flood, and on through many generations. These accounts of our shared ancestors cheer us (because we too bear God's image) and shame us (because all our ancestors were rebels). God's saving plan, revealed in the rest of Scripture, is necessary because we cannot save ourselves.

**PRAYER/MEDITATION**

Thank you, God, for these accounts describing both the origin of my race and the awfulness of sin against you. O God of creation, I praise you for your greatness and your goodness. You wisely made all things and gave the earth to humanity to care for it. I submit myself to you again today as my loving Creator. Thanks for the privilege of bearing your image. Help me never forget the glory and the guilt of being Adam and Eve's descendant. Amen.

< END OF SCENE 3 >