

# GENESIS

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>Job 38:4-7; Ps. 33:6;  
136:5; Isa. 42:5; 45:18;  
John 1:1-3; Acts 14:15;  
17:24; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb.  
1:10; 11:3; Rev. 4:11  
<sup>2</sup>Jer. 4:23

## The Creation of the World

**I**n the <sup>a</sup>beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was <sup>b</sup>without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

**1:1–11:26 Primeval History.** The first eleven chapters of Genesis differ from those that follow. Chapters 12–50 focus on one main family line in considerable detail, whereas chs. 1–11 could be described as a survey of the world before Abraham. These opening chapters differ not only in their subject matter from ch. 12 onward, but also because there are no real parallels to the patriarchal stories in other literatures. In contrast to the patriarchal stories, however, other ancient nonbiblical stories do exist recounting stories about both creation and the flood. The existence of such stories, however, does not in any way challenge the authority or the inspiration of Genesis. In fact, the nonbiblical stories stand in sharp contrast to the biblical account, and thus help readers appreciate the unique nature and character of the biblical accounts of creation and the flood. In other ancient literary traditions, creation is a great struggle often involving conflict between the gods. The flood was sent because the gods could not stand the noise made by human beings, yet they could not control it. Through these stories the people of the ancient world learned their traditions about the gods they worshiped and the way of life that people should follow. Babylonian versions of creation and flood stories were designed to show that Babylon was the center of the religious universe and that its civilization was the highest achieved by mankind.

Reading Genesis, readers can see that it is designed to refute these delusions. There is only one God, whose word is almighty. He has only to speak and the world comes into being. The sun and moon are not gods in their own right, but are created by the one God. This God does not need feeding by man, as the Babylonians believed they did by offering sacrifices, but he supplies man with food. It is human sin, not divine annoyance, that prompts the flood. Far from Babylon's tower (Babel) reaching heaven, it became a reminder that human pride could neither reach nor manipulate God.

These principles, which emerge so clearly in Genesis 1–11, are truths that run through the rest of Scripture. The unity of God is fundamental to biblical theology, as is his almighty power, his care for mankind, and his judgment on sin. It may not always be obvious how these chapters relate to geology and archaeology, but their theological message is very clear. Read in their intended sense, they provide the fundamental presuppositions of the rest of Scripture. These chapters should act as eyeglasses, so that readers focus on the points their author is making and go on to read the rest of the Bible in light of them.

**1:1–2:3 God's Creation and Ordering of Heaven and Earth.** The book of Genesis opens with a majestic description of how God first created the heavens and earth and then how he ordered the earth so that it may become his dwelling place. Structured into seven sections, each marked by the use of set phrases, the entire episode conveys the picture of the all-powerful, transcendent God who sets everything in place with consummate skill in conformity to his grand design. The emphasis is mainly on how God orders or structures everything. The structure of the account is as follows: after giving the setting (1:1–2), the author describes the six workdays (1:3–31) and the seventh day, God's Sabbath (2:1–3). Each of the six workdays follows the same pattern: it begins with "and God said," and closes with "and there was evening and

there was morning, the *n*th day." After declaring that God is the Creator of all things (1:1), the focus of the rest of Genesis 1 (beginning at 1:3) is mainly on God bringing things into existence by his word and ordering the created things ("let the waters . . . be gathered together," 1:9), rather than on how the earth was initially created (1:1). Different features indicate this. For example, vegetation is mentioned on day 3, prior to the apparent creation of the sun on day 4. Readers concerned with how to compare this passage with a modern scientific perspective should consult Introduction: Genesis and Science. Viewed in its ancient Near Eastern context, Genesis 1 says that God created everything, but it is also an account of how God has structured creation in its ordered complexity. Readers are introduced in the first three days to Day, Night, the Heavens, Earth, Seas—all these items, and only these, being specifically named by God. In days 4–6 the three distinctive regions are populated: the Heavens with lights and birds; the Seas with fish and swarming creatures; and the Earth with livestock and creeping things. God finally gives authority to human beings, as his vice-regents, to govern all these living creatures. Genesis 1 establishes a hierarchy of authority. Humanity is divinely commissioned to govern other creatures on God's behalf, the ultimate purpose being that the whole earth should become the temple of God, the place of his presence, and should display his glory.

**1:1 In the beginning.** This opening verse can be taken as a *summary*, introducing the whole passage; or it can be read as the *first event*, the origin of the heavens and the earth (sometime before the first day), including the creation of matter, space, and time. This second view (the origin of the heavens and the earth) is confirmed by the NT writers' affirmation that creation was from nothing (Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11). **God created.** Although the Hebrew word for "God," *Elohim*, is plural in form (possibly to express majesty), the verb "create" is singular, indicating that God is thought of as one being. Genesis is consistently monotheistic in its outlook, in marked contrast to other ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation. There is only one God. The Hebrew verb *bara*, "create," is always used in the OT with God as the subject; while it is not always used to describe creation out of nothing, it does stress God's sovereignty and power. **Heavens and the earth** here means "everything." This means, then, that "In the beginning" refers to the beginning of everything. The text indicates that God created everything in the universe, which thus affirms that he did in fact create it *ex nihilo* (Latin "out of nothing"). The effect of the opening words of the Bible is to establish that God, in his inscrutable wisdom, sovereign power, and majesty, is the Creator of all things that exist.

**1:2** The initial description of the **earth** as being **without form and void**, a phrase repeated within the OT only in Jer. 4:23, implies that it lacked order and content. The reference to **darkness . . . over the face of the deep** points to the absence of light. This initial state will be transformed by God's creative activity; **the Spirit of God was hovering**. This comment creates a sense of expectation; something is about to happen. There is no reason to postulate that a long time elapsed between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, during which time the earth became desolate and empty. Critical scholars argue that the word "deep" (Hb. *tehom*) is a remnant of Mesopotamian mythology from the creation account called Enuma Elish. Marduk, in fashioning the universe, had also to vanquish Tiamat, a goddess of chaos. These scholars believe that the Hebrew God had to conquer the chaos deity Tiamat in the form of the "deep" (notice the similarity of

<sup>3</sup>And God said, <sup>c</sup>“Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And 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. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, <sup>d</sup>“Let there be an expanse<sup>1</sup> in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>And God made<sup>2</sup> the expanse and <sup>e</sup>separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were <sup>f</sup>above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven.<sup>3</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, <sup>g</sup>“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth,<sup>4</sup> and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup>And God said, <sup>h</sup>“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants<sup>5</sup> yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <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 expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for <sup>i</sup>signs and for <sup>j</sup>seasons,<sup>6</sup> and for days and years,<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God <sup>k</sup>made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser

<sup>1</sup> Or a canopy; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20 <sup>2</sup> Or fashioned; also verse 16 <sup>3</sup> Or Sky; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 <sup>4</sup> Or Land; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1 <sup>5</sup> Or small plants; also verses 12, 29 <sup>6</sup> Or appointed times

<sup>3</sup>2 Cor. 4:6  
<sup>6</sup> Job 37:18; Ps. 136:5; Jer. 10:12; 51:15  
<sup>7</sup> Prov. 8:27-29 <sup>Ps.</sup> 148:4  
<sup>9</sup> Job 38:8-11; Ps. 33:7; 136:6; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5  
<sup>11</sup> <sup>Ps.</sup> 104:14  
<sup>14</sup> Jer. 10:2; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:30, 31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25 <sup>Ps.</sup> 104:19  
<sup>16</sup> Deut. 4:19; Ps. 136:7-9

the two words *tehom* and “Tiamat”). There are many linguistic reasons, however, for doubting a direct identification between the two. In any event, there is no conflict in Genesis or in the rest of the Bible between God and the deep, since the deep readily does God’s bidding (cf. 7:11; 8:2; Ps. 33:7; 104:6).

**1:3–5 And God said.** In ch. 1 the absolute power of God is conveyed by the fact that he merely speaks and things are created. Each new section of the chapter is introduced by God’s speaking. This is the first of the 10 words of creation in ch. 1. **Let there be light.** Light is the first of God’s creative works, which God speaks into existence. **the light was good** (v. 4). Everything that God brings into being is good. This becomes an important refrain throughout the chapter (see vv. 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). **God called the light Day** (v. 5). The focus in v. 5 is on how God has ordered time on a weekly cycle; thus, “let there be light” may indicate the dawning of a new day. God is pictured working for six days and resting on the Sabbath, which is a model for human activity. Day 4 develops this idea further: the lights are placed in the heavens for signs and seasons, for the purpose of marking days and years and the seasons of the great festivals such as Passover. This sense of time being structured is further emphasized throughout the chapter as each stage of God’s ordering and filling is separated by evening and morning into specific days. **there was evening and there was morning, the first day.** The order—evening, then morning—helps the reader to follow the flow of the passage: after the workday (vv. 3–5a) there is an evening, and then a morning, implying that there is a nighttime (the worker’s daily rest) in between. Thus the reader is prepared for the next workday to dawn. Similar phrases divide ch. 1 into six distinctive workdays, while 2:1–3 make a seventh day, God’s Sabbath. On the first three days God creates the environment that the creatures of days 4–6 will inhabit; thus, sea and sky (day 2) are occupied by fish and birds created on day 5 (see chart below). By a simple reading of Genesis, these days must be described as days in the life of God, but how his days relate to human days is more difficult to determine (cf. Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8). See further Introduction: Genesis and Science.

Location	Inhabitants
1. Light and dark	4. Lights of day and night
2. Sea and sky	5. Fish and birds
3. Fertile earth	6. Land animals (including mankind)
7. Rest and enjoyment	

**1:6–8 waters.** Water plays a crucial role in ancient Near Eastern creation literature. In Egypt, for example, the creator-god Ptah uses the preexistent waters (personified as the god Nun) to create the universe. The same is true in Mesopotamian belief: it is out of the gods of watery chaos—Apsu, Tiamat, and Mummu—that creation comes. The biblical creation account sits in stark contrast to such dark mythological polytheism. In the biblical account, water at creation is no deity; it is simply something God created, and it serves as material in the hands of the sole sovereign Creator. As light was separated from darkness, so waters are separated to form an **expanse** (vv. 6–7), which God calls **Heaven** (v. 8). As the esv footnote illustrates by offering the alternative term “sky,” it is difficult to find a single English word that accurately conveys the precise sense of the Hebrew term *shamayim*, “heaven/heavens.” In this context, it refers to what humans see above them, i.e., the region that contains both celestial lights (vv. 14–17) and birds (v. 20).

**1:9–13** Two further regions are organized by God: the **dry land** forming **Earth**, and the **waters** forming **Seas** (vv. 9–10). These are the last objects to be specifically named by God. God then instructs the earth to bring forth **vegetation** (vv. 11–12). While the creation of vegetation may seem out of place on day 3, it anticipates what God will later say in vv. 29–30 concerning food for both humanity and other creatures. The creation of distinctive locations in days 1–3, along with vegetation, prepares for the filling of these in days 4–6.

**1:14–19** This section corresponds closely with the ordering of Day and Night on the first day, involving the separation of light and darkness (vv. 3–5). Here the emphasis is on the creation of **lights** that will govern time, as well as providing **light upon the earth** (v. 15). By referring to them as the **greater light** and **lesser light** (v. 16), the text avoids using terms that were also proper names for pagan deities linked to the sun and the moon. Chapter 1 deliberately undermines pagan ideas regarding nature’s being controlled by different deities. (To the ancient pagans of the Near East, the gods were personified in various elements of nature. Thus, in Egyptian texts, the gods Ra and Thoth are personified in the sun and the moon, respectively.) The term **made** (Hb. *ʾasah*, v. 16), as the esv footnote shows, need only mean that God “fashioned” or “worked on” them; it does not of itself imply that they did not exist in any form before this. Rather, the focus here is on the way in which God has ordained the sun and moon to order and define the passing of time according to his purposes. Thus the references to **seasons** (v. 14) or “appointed times” (esv footnote) and to **days and years** are probably an allusion to the appointed times and patterns in the Hebrew calendar for worship, festivals, and religious observance (Ex. 13:10; 23:15).

**1:16 and the stars.** The immense universe that God created (see note on

18/Jer. 31:35  
 21<sup>m</sup>Ps. 104:25, 26  
 22<sup>c</sup>ch. 8:17; 9:1  
 26<sup>c</sup>ch. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8  
<sup>f</sup>ch. 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7;  
 Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10;  
 James 3:9 <sup>c</sup>ch. 9:2; Ps.  
 8:6–8; James 3:7  
 27<sup>c</sup>ch. 2:18, 21–23; 5:2;  
 Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:4;  
 Mark 10:6  
 28<sup>c</sup>ch. 9:1, 7

light to rule the night—and the stars. <sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the 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 waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds<sup>1</sup> fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” <sup>21</sup>So <sup>m</sup>God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>And God blessed them, saying, <sup>n</sup>“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply 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 earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup>And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, <sup>o</sup>“Let us make man<sup>2</sup> in our image, <sup>p</sup>after our likeness. And <sup>q</sup>let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

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

<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them. And God said to them, <sup>s</sup>“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the

<sup>1</sup>Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20 <sup>2</sup>The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

Isa. 40:25–26) is mentioned here only in a brief phrase, almost as if it were an afterthought. The focus of Genesis 1 is on the earth; the focus of the rest of the Bible is on man (male and female) as the pinnacle of God’s creation and the object of his great salvation.

**1:20–23** Having previously described the creation of the **waters** and the **expanse of the heavens**, this section focuses on how they are filled with appropriate creatures of different kinds. As reproductive organisms, they are blessed by God so that they may be fruitful and fill their respective regions.

**1:21** The term for **great sea creatures** (Hb. *tannin*) in various contexts can denote large serpents, dragons, or crocodiles, as well as whales or sharks (the probable sense here). Some have suggested that this could also refer to other extinct creatures such as dinosaurs. Canaanite literature portrays a great dragon as the enemy of the main fertility god Baal. Genesis depicts God as creating large sea creatures, but they are not in rebellion against him. He is sovereign and is not in any kind of battle to create the universe.

**1:24–31** This is by far the longest section given over to a particular day, indicating that day 6 is the peak of interest for this passage. The final region to be filled is the dry land, or Earth (as it has been designated in v. 10). Here a significant distinction is drawn between all the living creatures that are created to live on the dry land, and human beings. Whereas vv. 24–25 deal with the “living creatures” that the earth is to bring forth, vv. 26–30 concentrate on the special status assigned to humans.

**1:24–25 livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth.** These terms group the land-dwelling animals into three broad categories, probably reflecting the way nomadic shepherds would experience them: the domesticatable stock animals (e.g., sheep, goats, cattle, and perhaps camels and horses); the small crawlers (e.g., rats and mice, lizards, spiders); and the larger game and predatory animals (e.g., gazelles, lions). This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and it is hard to know where to put some animals (e.g., the domestic cat). See further Introduction: Genesis and Science.

**1:26 Let us make man in our image.** The text does not specify the identity of the “us” mentioned here. Some have suggested that God may be addressing the members of his court, whom the OT elsewhere calls “sons of God” (e.g., Job 1:6) and the NT calls “angels,” but a significant objection is that

man is not made in the image of angels, nor is there any indication that angels participated in the creation of human beings. Many Christians and some Jews have taken “us” to be God speaking to himself, since God alone does the making in Gen. 1:27 (cf. 5:1); this would be the first hint of the Trinity in the Bible (cf. 1:2).

**1:27** There has been debate about the expression **image of God**. Many scholars point out the idea, commonly used in the ancient Near East, of the king who was the visible representative of the deity; thus the king ruled on behalf of the god. Since v. 26 links the image of God with the exercise of dominion over all the other creatures of the seas, heavens, and earth, one can see that humanity is endowed here with authority to rule the earth as God’s representatives or vice-regents (see note on v. 28). Other scholars, seeing the pattern of **male and female**, have concluded that humanity expresses God’s image in relationship, particularly in well-functioning human community, both in marriage and in wider society. Traditionally, the image has been seen as the capacities that set man apart from the other animals—ways in which humans resemble God, such as in the characteristics of reason, morality, language, a capacity for relationships governed by love and commitment, and creativity in all forms of art. All these insights can be put together by observing that the **resemblances** (man is like God in a series of ways) allow mankind to **represent** God in ruling, and to establish worthy **relationships** with God, with one another, and with the rest of the creation. This “image” and this dignity apply to **both** “male and female” human beings. (This view is unique in the context of the ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, e.g., the gods created humans merely to carry out work for them.) The Hebrew term *‘adam*, translated as **man**, is often a generic term that denotes both male and female, while sometimes it refers to man in distinction from woman (2:22, 23, 25; 3:8, 9, 12, 20): it becomes the proper name “Adam” (2:20; 3:17, 21; 4:1; 5:1). At this stage, humanity as a species is set apart from all other creatures and crowned with glory and honor as ruler of the earth (cf. Ps. 8:5–8). The events recorded in Genesis 3, however, will have an important bearing on the creation status of humanity.

**1:28** As God had blessed the sea and sky creatures (v. 22), so too he blesses humanity. **Be fruitful and multiply.** This motif recurs throughout Genesis in association with divine blessing (see 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) and serves as the basis of the biblical view that raising faithful children is a part of God’s creation plan for mankind. God’s creation plan is that the whole earth

earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”<sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.<sup>4</sup> You shall have them for food.<sup>30</sup> And “to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

*The Seventh Day, God Rests*

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

*The Creation of Man and Woman*

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

<sup>5</sup> When no <sup>z</sup>bush of the field<sup>1</sup> was yet in the land<sup>2</sup> and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was

<sup>1</sup>Or open country <sup>2</sup>Or earth; also verse 6

should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his vice-regents or representatives. **subdue it, and have dominion.** The term “subdue” (Hb. *kabash*) elsewhere means to bring a people or a land into subjection so that it will yield service to the one subduing it (Num. 32:22, 29). Here the idea is that the man and woman are to make the earth’s resources beneficial for themselves, which implies that they would investigate and develop the earth’s resources to make them useful for human beings generally. This command provides a foundation for wise scientific and technological development; the evil uses to which people have put their dominion come as a result of Genesis 3. **over every living thing.** As God’s representatives, human beings are to rule over every living thing on the earth. These commands are not, however, a mandate to exploit the earth and its creatures to satisfy human greed, for the fact that Adam and Eve were “in the image of God” (1:27) implies God’s expectation that human beings will use the earth wisely and govern it with the same sense of responsibility and care that God has toward the whole of his creation.

**1:31** Having previously affirmed on six occasions that particular aspects of creation are “good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), God now states, after the creation of the man and the woman, that **everything** he has made is **very good**; the additional **behold** invites the reader to imagine seeing creation from God’s vantage point. While many things do not appear to be good about the present-day world, this was not so at the beginning. Genesis goes on to explain why things have changed, indicating that no blame should be attributed to God. Everything he created was very good: it answers to God’s purposes and expresses his own overflowing goodness. Despite the invasion of sin (ch. 3), the material creation retains its goodness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4).

**2:1–3** These verses bring to a conclusion the opening section of Genesis by emphasizing that God has completed the process of ordering creation. The repeated comment that God **rested** does not imply that he was weary from labor. The effortless ease with which everything is done in ch. 1 suggests otherwise. Rather, the motif of God’s resting hints at the purpose of creation. As reflected in various ancient Near Eastern accounts, divine rest is associated with temple building. God’s purpose for the earth is that it should become his dwelling place; it is not simply made to house his creatures. God’s “activities” on this day (he **finished**, “rested,” “blessed,” “made it holy”) all fit this delightful pattern. The concept of the earth as a divine sanctuary, which is developed further in 2:4–25, runs throughout the whole Bible, coming to a climax in the future reality that the apostle John sees in his vision of a “new heaven and a new earth” in Rev. 21:1–22:5. **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy** (Gen. 2:3). These words provide the basis for the obligation that God placed on the Israelites to rest from their normal labor on the Sabbath day

(see Ex. 20:8–11). There is no evening-followed-by-morning refrain for this day, prompting many to conclude that the seventh day still continues (which seems to underlie John 5:17; Heb. 4:3–11).

**2:4–4:26 Earth’s First People.** Centered initially on the garden of Eden, the episodes that make up this part of Genesis recount how God’s ordered creation is thrown into chaos by the human couple’s disobedience. The subsequent story of Cain and Abel and then Lamech (ch. 4) shows the world spiraling downward into violence, which precipitated the flood (6:11, 13). These events are very significant for understanding not only the whole of Genesis but all of the Bible.

**2:4–25 The Man and Woman in the Sanctuary of Eden.** The panoramic view of creation in ch. 1 is immediately followed by a complementary account of the sixth day that zooms in on the creation of the human couple, who are placed in the garden of Eden. In style and content this section differs significantly from the previous one; it does not contradict anything in ch. 1, but as a literary flashback it supplies more detail about what was recorded in 1:27. The picture of a sovereign, transcendent deity is complemented by that of a God who is both immanent and personal. The two portrayals of God balance each other, together providing a truer and richer description of his nature than either does on its own. In a similar way, whereas ch. 1 emphasizes the regal character of human beings, ch. 2 highlights their priestly status.

**2:4 These are the generations of.** This is the first of 11 such headings that give structure to the book of Genesis (cf. 5:1, which varies slightly; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2; see Introduction: Arrangement of the Book). Each heading concentrates on what comes forth from the object or person named. The earliest translators of Genesis into Greek (in the Septuagint) used the word *genesis* to render the Hebrew word for “generations” (Hb. *toledot*); from this is derived the title “Genesis.” The rest of the verse is artfully arranged in a mirror (or chiasmic) form, the parts of the two poetic lines corresponding to each other in reverse order: **heavens (A), earth (B), when they were created (C), in the day that the Lord God made (C), earth (B’), heavens (A’)**. This form unifies the two parts of the chiasmus, hereby inviting the reader to harmonize 2:5–25 with 1:1–2:3. **LORD God.** Throughout 1:1–2:3 the generic word “God” was used to denote the deity as the transcendent Creator. The reader is now introduced to God’s personal name, “Yahweh” (translated as “LORD” because of the ancient Jewish tradition of substituting in Hb. the term that means “Lord” [*Adonay*] for “Yahweh” when reading the biblical text). The use of “Yahweh” throughout this passage underlines the personal and relational nature of God. The precedent for translating this as “LORD” and not “Yahweh” in English is found in the Septuagint’s customary translation (Gk. *Kyrios*, “Lord”). That translation was then quoted many times by the NT

<sup>29</sup>ch. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15; 145:15, 16  
<sup>30</sup>Ps. 147:9  
<sup>31</sup>Eccles. 7:29; 1 Tim. 4:4  
**Chapter 2**  
<sup>1</sup>Deut. 4:19; Ps. 33:6  
<sup>2</sup>Ex. 20:8–11; 31:17; Deut. 5:12–14; Heb. 4:4  
<sup>4</sup>ch. 1:1  
<sup>5</sup>[ch. 1:11, 12]

5<sup>a</sup>ch. 3:23  
 7<sup>b</sup>ch. 3:19, 23; 18:27; Ps. 103:14; Eccles. 12:7;  
 1 Cor. 15:47 <sup>c</sup>ch. 7:22;  
 Job 33:4; Isa. 2:22 <sup>d</sup>Job 27:3 <sup>e</sup>Cited 1 Cor. 15:45  
 8<sup>e</sup>ver. 15; ch. 13:10; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8;  
 Joel 2:3  
 9<sup>e</sup>ch. 3:22; Rev. 2:7; 22:2,  
 14 <sup>f</sup>ver. 17  
 11<sup>f</sup>ch. 10:7, 29; 25:18;  
 1 Sam. 15:7  
 14<sup>f</sup>Dan. 10:4  
 15<sup>f</sup>ver. 8

no man <sup>a</sup>to work the ground, <sup>b</sup>and a mist<sup>c</sup> was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— <sup>d</sup>then the LORD God formed the man of <sup>e</sup>dust from the ground and <sup>f</sup>breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and <sup>g</sup>the man became a living creature. <sup>h</sup>And the LORD God planted a <sup>i</sup>garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>j</sup>And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. <sup>k</sup>The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, <sup>l</sup>and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man <sup>k</sup>and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep

<sup>1</sup>Or *spring*

authors, who also used the Greek term *Kyrios*, “Lord,” rather than “Yahweh” for God’s name. (For more on the name “Yahweh,” see notes on Ex. 3:14; 3:15.)

**2:5–7** These verses concentrate on God’s creation of a human male, amplifying 1:26–31 in particular. The main action here is God’s “forming” of the man (2:7); vv. 5–6 describe the conditions as the action took place. The term **land** (Hb. *erets*) can refer to the whole earth (cf. *ESV* footnote), to dry land (cf. 1:10), or to a specific region (cf. 2:11–13). To show the continuity with ch. 1 (see note on 2:4), and in view of the mention of **rain**, the *ESV* rendering (“land”) is best. The location of this land is some unnamed place, just as the rainy season was about to begin, and thus when the ground was still dry, and without any **bush of the field**. These conditions prevailed before the creation of man, suggesting that the lack of growth was related to the absence of a man to irrigate the land (which would be the normal way in dry conditions to bring about growth). **then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground** (v. 7). The verb “formed” (Hb. *yatsar*) conveys the picture of a potter’s fashioning clay into a particular shape. The close relationship between the man and the ground is reflected in the Hebrew words used to denote them, *’adam* and *’adamah*, respectively. **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life** (v. 7). Here God breathes life—physical, mental, and spiritual—into the one created to bear his image. **living creature**. The same term in Hebrew is used in 1:20, 24 to denote sea and land creatures. While human beings have much in common with other living beings, God gives humans alone a royal and priestly status and makes them alone “in his own image” (1:27). (See Paul’s quotation of this passage in 1 Cor. 15:45.)

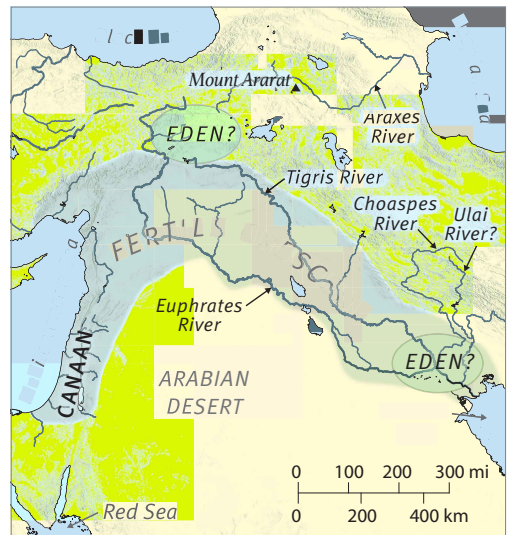
**2:8–9** God provides a suitable environment for the man by planting a **garden in Eden, in the east**. The name “Eden,” which would have conveyed the sense of “luxury, pleasure,” probably denotes a region much greater than the garden itself. God formed the man in the “land” (see vv. 5–7), and then **put him in the garden** (cf. v. 15). The earliest translation into Greek (the Septuagint) used the word *paradeisos* (from which comes the English term “paradise”; cf. note on Luke 23:39–43) to translate the Hebrew term for “garden,” on the understanding that it resembled a royal park. The abundance of the garden is conveyed by the observation that it contained **every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food** (Gen. 2:9), which is an ironic foreshadowing of 3:6 (see note there). Two trees, however, are picked out for special mention: **the tree of life** and **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (2:9). Since relatively little is said about these trees, any understanding of them must be derived from the role that they play within the account of Genesis 2–3, especially ch. 3. On “tree of life,” see note on 3:22–24; on “tree of knowledge,” see note on 2:17.

**2:10–14** The general description of the **river that flowed out of Eden** dividing into **four rivers** (v. 10) implies that Eden had a central location. In spite of the very specific details provided, however, Eden’s location remains a mystery. While the names **Tigris** and **Euphrates** (v. 14) are associated with the two rivers that surround Mesopotamia, the rivers **Pishon** and **Gihon**, as well as the regions of **Havilah** and **Cush** (vv. 11, 13), have not been satisfactorily identified (see map to the right). The reference to **gold** and **onyx** (vv. 11, 12) suggests that the land is rich in resources; these materials are later associated with the making of the tabernacle and temple.

**2:15–16** The overall picture of Eden presented in the preceding verses suggests that the park-like garden is part of a divine sanctuary. **The man is put in the garden to work it and keep it**. The term “work” (Hb. *’abad*; cf. v. 5; 3:23; 4:2, 12; Prov. 12:11; 28:19) denotes preparing and tending, and “keep” (Hb. *shamar*) adds to that idea. Since this command comes before Adam sinned, work did not come as a result of sin, nor is it something to be avoided. Productive work is part of God’s good purpose for man in creation. Later, the same two verbs are used together of the work undertaken by the priests and Levites in the tabernacle (“minister” or “serve” [Hb. *’abad*] and “guard” [Hb. *shamar*]; e.g., Num. 3:7–8; 18:7). The man’s role is to be not only a gardener but also a guardian. As a priest, he is to maintain the sanctity of the garden as part of a temple complex. **And the LORD God commanded the man**. The fact that the command was given to Adam implies that God gave “the man” a leadership role, including the responsibility to guard and care for (“keep”) all of creation (Gen. 2:15)—a role that is also related to the leadership responsibility of Adam for Eve as his wife (cf. v. 18, “a helper fit for him”). (On the NT understanding of the relationship between husband and wife, see Eph. 5:22–33.)

### The Garden of Eden

Genesis describes the location of Eden in relation to the convergence of four rivers. While two of the rivers are unknown (the Pishon and the Gihon), the nearly universal identification of the other two rivers as the Tigris and the Euphrates suggests a possible location for Eden at either their northern or southern extremes.



it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil <sup>18</sup>you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat <sup>19</sup>of it you <sup>20</sup>shall surely die.”

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; <sup>19</sup>I will make him a helper fit for <sup>20</sup>him.” <sup>19</sup>Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed <sup>20</sup>every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and <sup>21</sup>brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

<sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam <sup>21</sup>there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>22</sup>So the LORD God caused a <sup>23</sup>deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>24</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made <sup>25</sup>into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>26</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is <sup>27</sup>bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was <sup>28</sup>taken out of Man.”<sup>26</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> Or when you eat <sup>2</sup> Or corresponding to; also verse 20 <sup>3</sup> Or And out of the ground the LORD God formed <sup>4</sup> Or the man <sup>5</sup> Hebrew built <sup>6</sup> The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

<sup>17</sup>/ch. 3:1-3, 11, 17  
<sup>18</sup>Rom. 6:23; James 1:15  
<sup>18</sup><sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 11:9; 1 Tim. 2:13  
<sup>19</sup>ch. 1:20, 24 <sup>20</sup>Ps. 8:6  
<sup>21</sup>ch. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12  
<sup>23</sup>ch. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13; [Eph. 5:28-30] <sup>24</sup> 1 Cor. 11:8  
<sup>24</sup><sup>t</sup>Cited Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31; [Ps. 45:10; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11]

**2:17** While God generously permitted the man to eat from every tree of the garden, God prohibited him from eating from **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (v. 17). The fruit of this tree has been variously understood as giving (1) sexual awareness, (2) moral discrimination, (3) moral responsibility, and (4) moral experience. Of these possibilities, the last is the most likely: by their obedience or disobedience the human couple will come to know good and evil by experience. Experience gained by “fearing the LORD” (Prov. 1:7) is wisdom, while that gained by disobeying God is slavery. **In the day** implies fixed certainty rather than absolute immediacy (e.g., 1 Kings 2:42). See note on Gen. 3:4–5. **you shall surely die** (2:17). What kind of “death” does this threaten: physical, spiritual, or some combination? The Hebrew word can be used for any of these ideas, and the only way to find out is by reading to see what happens as the story unfolds. (See note on 3:4–5.)

Theologians have discussed whether the instructions in 2:16–17, together with the instructions in 1:28–30, should be called God’s “covenant” with Adam. Some have denied it, observing that the Hebrew word for “covenant” (*berit*) is not used until 6:18; others have added to this the insistence that covenants have to do with redemption. In reply, it can be pointed out that the thing itself can be present, even if the ordinary word identifying it is not: 2 Sam. 7:4–17 says nothing about a covenant, but Ps. 89:3, 28, 34, 39 all use the term to describe God’s promise to David. The same happens with Hos. 6:7, which refers to a covenant with Adam (see note there). Also, Gen. 9:1–17 describes Noah in terms that clearly echo 1:28–30, explicitly using the word “covenant”: Noah is a kind of new Adam, i.e., a covenant representative. Finally, there is no evidence that biblical covenants are limited to the sphere of redemption: the term simply describes the formal binding together of two parties in a relationship, on the basis of mutual personal commitment, with consequences for keeping or breaking the commitment. The man (Adam) receives this covenant on behalf of the rest of mankind: **you** is singular in 2:16–17, which provides the basis for Paul’s use of Adam as a representative head of the human race, parallel to Christ, in 1 Cor. 15:22; cf. Rom. 5:12–19. The word “you” is plural in Gen. 3:1–5, where the woman’s statement shows that she has appropriated the command for herself. Also, by virtue of Adam’s disobedience, his offspring receive the penalty: they cannot return to the garden any more than he can, and they descend into sin and misery (ch. 4).

**2:18–25** These verses describe how God provides a suitable companion for the man.

**2:18 Not good** is a jarring contrast to 1:31; clearly, the situation here has not yet arrived to “very good.” **I will make him** can also be translated “I will make *for* him,” which explains Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 11:9. In order

to find the man a **helper fit for him**, God brings to him all the livestock, birds, and beasts of the field. None of these, however, proves to be “fit for” the man. “Helper” (Hb. *‘ezer*) is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in “the helped.” The term does not imply that the helper is either stronger or weaker than the one helped. “Fit for him” or “matching him” (cf. ESV footnote) is not the same as “like him”: a wife is not her husband’s clone but complements him.

**2:20 The man gave names.** By naming the animals, the man demonstrates his authority over all the other creatures. **Adam.** See note on 5:1–2.

**2:23–24** When no suitable companion is found among all the living beings, God fashions a woman from the man’s own flesh. The text highlights the sense of oneness that exists between the man and the woman. Adam joyfully proclaims, **“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”** This terminology is used elsewhere of blood relatives (29:14). This sentence and the story of Eve’s creation both make the point that marriage creates the closest of all human relationships. It is also important to observe that God creates only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves or another Adam. This points to heterosexual monogamy as the divine pattern for marriage that God established at creation. Moreover, the kinship between husband and wife creates obligations that override even duty to one’s parents (**therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife**, 2:24). In ancient Israel, sons did not move away when they married, but lived near their parents and inherited their father’s land. They “left” their parents in the sense of putting their wife’s welfare before that of their parents. The term “hold fast” is used elsewhere for practicing covenant faithfulness (e.g., Deut. 10:20; see how Paul brings these texts together in 1 Cor. 6:16–17); thus, other Bible texts can call marriage a “covenant” (e.g., Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). Paul’s teaching on marriage in Eph. 5:25–32 is founded on this text. The sense of being made for each other is further reflected in a wordplay involving the terms “man” and “woman”; in Hebrew these are, respectively, *‘ish* and *‘ishshah*. As a result of this special affiliation, Gen. 2:24 observes that when a man leaves his parents and takes a wife, **they shall become one flesh**, i.e., one unit (a union of man and woman, consummated in sexual intercourse). Jesus appeals to this verse and 1:27 in setting out his view of marriage (Matt. 19:4–5).

**2:25 naked and . . . not ashamed.** This final description in vv. 18–25 offers a picture of innocent delight and anticipates further developments in the story. The subject of the couple’s nakedness is picked up in 3:7–11, and a play on the similar sounds of the words “naked” (Hb. *‘arummin*) and “crafty” (3:1, Hb. *‘arum*) links the end of this episode with the start of the next.

## Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 11:3;  
Rev. 12:9; 20:2  
<sup>3</sup>ch. 2:17  
<sup>4</sup>ver. 13; John 8:44;  
[2 Cor. 11:3]  
<sup>6</sup><sup>1</sup> Tim. 2:14 <sup>ver.</sup> 12, 17;  
Hos. 6:7  
<sup>7</sup>ver. 5 <sup>ch.</sup> 2:25  
<sup>8</sup>[Ps. 139:1-12; Jer.  
23:23, 24]  
<sup>10</sup>ver. 7; ch. 2:25

## The Fall

**3** Now <sup>u</sup>the serpent was more <sup>v</sup>crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You<sup>1</sup> shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup>“But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, <sup>7</sup>she took of its fruit <sup>x</sup>and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, <sup>y</sup>and he ate. <sup>7</sup><sup>z</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, <sup>8</sup>and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool<sup>3</sup> of the day, and the man and his wife <sup>b</sup>hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, <sup>c</sup>because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you

<sup>1</sup>In Hebrew you is plural in verses 1–5 <sup>2</sup>Or to give insight <sup>3</sup>Hebrew wind <sup>4</sup>In Hebrew you is singular in verses 9 and 11

**3:1–24 The Couple Rebels against God.** The sudden and unexplained arrival of a cunning serpent presents a challenge of immense importance to the human couple. Their choice is to disregard God’s instructions, an act of willful rebellion that has terrible consequences for the whole of creation. As a result, God’s creation is thrown into disorder, with chaotic effects that result from the disruption of all the harmonious relationships that God had previously established.

**3:1** The speaking **serpent** is suddenly introduced into the story with minimum detail. Nothing is mentioned about its origin, other than that it is one of the beasts **of the field**. Although the serpent is eventually portrayed as God’s enemy, the initial introduction is full of ambiguity regarding its true nature. While the brief comment that it is the craftiest of the beasts possibly indicates potential danger, the Hebrew term *‘arum* does not carry the negative moral connotations of the English words “crafty” and “cunning.” Similarly, the serpent’s initial question may have sounded quite innocent, although it deliberately misquotes God as saying that the couple must **not eat of any tree in the garden**. Did the serpent merely misunderstand what God had said? In these ways the subtlety of the serpent’s approach to the woman is captured by the narrator. It is noteworthy that the serpent also deliberately avoids using God’s personal name “Yahweh” (“LORD”) when he addresses the woman. Here is another hint that his presence in the garden presents a threat. Although his initial words appear deceptively innocent, his subsequent contradiction of God leaves no doubt about the serpent’s motive and purpose. The text does not indicate when or how the serpent became evil. As the narrative proceeds, it becomes clear that more than a simple snake is at work here; an evil power is using the snake (see note on v. 15). As indicated by God’s declaration that “everything he had made . . . was very good” (1:31), clearly evil entered the created world at some unknown point after God’s work of creation was completed. Likewise, nothing in the Bible suggests the eternal existence of evil (see notes on Isa. 14:12–15; Ezek. 28:11–19).

**3:2–3** The woman’s response largely echoes the divine instruction given in 2:16–17 regarding the tree of knowledge (for more on the meaning of the covenant, see note on 2:17), although she fails to identify the tree clearly as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and adds the comment **neither shall you touch it**. These minor variations are possibly meant to convey, even at this stage, that the woman views God’s instructions as open to human modification.

**3:4–5** The serpent not only directly contradicts what God has said but goes on to present the fruit of the tree as something worth obtaining: by eating it, the couple will be **like God, knowing good and evil**. The irony of the serpent’s remarks should not be overlooked. The couple, unlike the serpent, has been made in the image of God (1:26–27). In this way they are already

like God. Moreover, being in the image of God, they are expected to exercise authority over all the beasts of the field, which includes the serpent. By obeying the serpent, however, they betray the trust placed in them by God. This is not merely an act of disobedience; it is an act of treachery. Those who were meant to govern the earth on God’s behalf instead rebel against their divine King and obey one of his creatures. **You will not surely die**. It is sometimes claimed that the serpent is correct when he says these things to the couple, for they do not “die”; Adam lives to be 930 years old (5:5). Further, their eyes are opened (3:7) and God acknowledges in v. 22 that “the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.” Yet the serpent speaks half-truths, promising much but delivering little. Their eyes are indeed opened, and they come to know something, but it is only that they are naked. They know good and evil by experience, but their sense of guilt makes them afraid to meet God; they have become slaves to evil. And while they do not cease to exist physically, they are expelled from the garden-sanctuary and God’s presence. Cut off from the source of life and the tree of life, they are in the realm of the dead. What they experience outside of Eden is not life as God intended, but spiritual death.

**3:6 when the woman saw.** Like all the other trees in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “pleasant to the sight and good for food” (2:9). The irony is that somehow the serpent has made the woman discontent with the permitted trees, focusing her desire on this one. Its deadly appeal to her, apparently, is its ability **to make one wise** (see note on 2:17)—wise, however, not according to the “fear of the LORD” (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). **she also gave some to her husband who was with her.** The fact that Adam was “with her” and that he knowingly **ate** what God had forbidden indicates that Adam’s sin was both an act of conscious rebellion against God and a failure to carry out his divinely ordained responsibility to guard or “keep” (Gen. 2:15) both the garden and the woman that God had created as “a helper fit for him” (2:18, 20). The disastrous consequences of Adam’s sin cannot be overemphasized, resulting in the fall of mankind, the beginning of every kind of sin, suffering, and pain, as well as physical and spiritual death for the human race.

**3:7–13** Eating the fruit transforms the couple, but not for the better. Now ashamed of their nakedness (cf. 2:25), they attempt to clothe themselves. Conscious of the Lord God’s presence, they hide. When confronted by God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the man blames the woman, who in turn blames the serpent.

**3:9 the LORD God called to the man . . . , “Where are you?”** Both “man” and “you” are singular in Hebrew. God thus confronts Adam first, holding him primarily responsible for what happened, as the one who is the representative (or “head”) of the husband-and-wife relationship, established before the fall (see note on 2:15–16).

eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”<sup>12</sup> The man said, <sup>d</sup>“The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, <sup>e</sup>“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,  
 cursed are you above all livestock  
 and above all beasts of the field;  
 on your belly you shall go,  
 and <sup>f</sup>dust you shall eat  
 all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
 and between your offspring<sup>1</sup> and <sup>g</sup>her offspring;  
<sup>h</sup>he shall bruise your head,  
 and you shall bruise his heel.”

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

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
<sup>i</sup>in pain you shall bring forth children.  
<sup>j</sup>Your desire shall be contrary to<sup>2</sup> your husband,  
 but he shall <sup>k</sup>rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
 and have eaten of the tree

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis <sup>2</sup> Or *shall be toward* (see 4:7)

<sup>12</sup> <sup>d</sup>ch. 2:18; Job 31:33  
<sup>13</sup> <sup>e</sup>ver. 4; 2 Cor. 11:3;  
 1 Tim. 2:14  
<sup>14</sup> <sup>f</sup>Isa. 65:25; Mic. 7:17  
<sup>15</sup> <sup>g</sup>Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:3;  
 Matt. 1:23, 25; Luke  
 1:34, 35; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim.  
 2:15 <sup>h</sup>Rom. 16:20; Heb.  
 2:14; Rev. 20:1-3, 10  
<sup>16</sup> <sup>i</sup>[John 16:21] <sup>j</sup>ch. 4:7;  
 Song 7:10 <sup>k</sup>1 Cor. 11:3;  
 14:34; Eph. 5:22-24; Col.  
 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12;  
 Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5, 6

**3:14–15** God addresses the serpent first. Verse 1 declared the serpent “more crafty” (Hb. *arum*); now God declares it more **cursed** (Hb. *arur*). Indicted for its part in tempting the woman, the serpent will be viewed with contempt from now on. This is conveyed both literally and figuratively by the serpent’s going on its **belly** and eating **dust**. Having deceived the woman, the serpent will have ongoing hostility with the woman, which will be perpetuated by their respective **offspring**.

**3:15** While many modern commentators interpret this part of the curse as merely describing the natural hostility that exists between men and snakes, it has traditionally been understood as pointing forward to the defeat of the serpent by a future descendant of the woman, and this interpretation fits well with the words and the context. This defeat is implied by the serpent’s being bruised in the head, which is more serious than the offspring of Eve being bruised in the heel. For this reason, v. 15 has been labeled the “Protoevangelium,” the first announcement of the gospel. This interpretation requires that the serpent be viewed as more than a mere snake, something which the narrative itself implies, given the serpent’s ability to speak and the vile things he says. While the present chapter does not explicitly identify the serpent with Satan, such an identification is a legitimate inference and is clearly what the apostle John has in view in Rev. 12:9 and 20:2. The motif of the **offspring** of the woman is picked up in Gen. 4:25 with the birth of Seth; subsequently, the rest of Genesis traces a single line of Seth’s descendants, observing that it will eventually produce a king through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (see Introduction: History of Salvation Summary). **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.** Some interpreters have suggested that by saying “he” and “his,” the intended meaning is that one particular offspring is in view. Within the larger biblical framework, this hope comes to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who is clearly presented in the NT as overcoming Satan (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; cf. Matt. 12:29; Mark 1:24; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 16:11; 1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 2:15), while at the same time being bruised.

**3:16** By way of punishing the woman for her sin of disobedience, God pronounces that she will suffer **pain** (Hb. *itsabon*) in the bearing of children. This strikes at the very heart of the woman’s distinctiveness, for she is the “mother of all living” (v. 20). **Your desire shall be contrary to your**

**husband, but he shall rule over you.** These words from the Lord indicate that there will be an ongoing struggle between the woman and the man for leadership in the marriage relationship. The leadership role of the husband and the complementary relationship between husband and wife that were ordained by God before the fall have now been deeply damaged and distorted by sin. This especially takes the form of conflicting desire (on the part of the wife) and domineering rule (on the part of the husband). The Hebrew term here translated “desire” (*teshuqah*) is rarely found in the OT. But it appears again in 4:7, in a statement that closely parallels 3:16—that is, where the Lord says to Cain, just before Cain’s murder of his brother, that sin’s “desire is contrary to you” (i.e., to master Cain), and that Cain must “rule over it” (which he immediately fails to do, by murdering his brother, as seen in 4:8). Similarly, the ongoing result of Adam and Eve’s original sin of rebellion against God will have disastrous consequences for their relationship: (1) Eve will have the sinful “desire” to oppose Adam and to assert leadership over him, reversing God’s plan for Adam’s leadership in marriage. But (2) Adam will also abandon his God-given, pre-fall role of leading, guarding, and caring for his wife, replacing this with his own sinful, distorted desire to “rule” over Eve. Thus one of the most tragic results of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God is an ongoing, damaging conflict between husband and wife in marriage, driven by the sinful behavior of both in rebellion against their respective God-given roles and responsibilities in marriage. (See notes on Eph. 5:21–32 for the NT pattern for marriage founded on the redemptive work of Christ.)

**3:17–19** God’s punishment of the man involves his relationship with the very ground from which he was formed (see note on 2:5–7). Because he has eaten that which was prohibited to him, he will have to struggle to eat in the future. Given the abundance of food that God provided in the garden, this judgment reflects God’s disfavor. Adam will no longer enjoy the garden’s abundance but will have to work the ground from which he was taken (3:23; see note on 2:8–9). The punishment is not work itself (cf. 2:15), but rather the hardship and frustration (i.e., “pain,” *itsabon*; cf. 3:16) that will accompany the man’s labor. To say that the **ground is cursed** (Hb. *arar*, v. 17) and will bring forth **thorns and thistles** (v. 18) indicates that the abundant productivity that was seen in Eden will no longer be the case. Underlying this judgment is a disruption of the harmonious relationship that originally existed between humans and nature.

17/ch. 2:17 <sup>m</sup>ch. 5:29;  
[Rom. 8:20-22] <sup>n</sup>Eccles.  
2:22, 23  
19<sup>o</sup>ch. 2:7; Ps. 103:14 <sup>p</sup>Job  
34:15; Ps. 104:29; Eccles.  
3:20, 12:7; Rom. 5:12  
22<sup>q</sup>ver. 5 <sup>r</sup>ch. 2:9  
23<sup>s</sup>ch. 2:5  
24<sup>t</sup>Ps. 18:10; 104:4; Heb.  
1:7; [Ex. 25:18-22; Ezek.  
28:11-16]  
**Chapter 4**  
3<sup>u</sup>Lev. 2:12; Num. 18:12  
4<sup>v</sup>Ex. 13:12; Num. 18:17;  
Prov. 3:9 <sup>w</sup>Heb. 11:4

<sup>l</sup>of which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
<sup>m</sup>cursed is the ground because of you;  
<sup>n</sup>in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
19 By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
<sup>o</sup>for you are dust,  
and <sup>p</sup>to dust you shall return.”

<sup>20</sup>The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.<sup>1</sup> <sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

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

#### *Cain and Abel*

**4** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten<sup>2</sup> a man with the help of the LORD.”<sup>2</sup> And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of <sup>u</sup>the fruit of the ground,<sup>4</sup> and Abel also brought of <sup>v</sup>the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD <sup>w</sup>had regard for Abel and his

<sup>1</sup> Eve sounds like the Hebrew for *life-giver* and resembles the word for *living*. <sup>2</sup> Cain sounds like the Hebrew for *gotten*

**3:19** Further, the man’s body will **return to the ground** (v. 19), i.e., it will die (which was not true of the original created order; cf. Rom. 5:12). For this reason, the Bible looks forward to a time when nature will be set free from the consequences of human sin; i.e., nature will no longer be the arena of punishment, and it will finally have glorified human beings to manage it and bring out its full potential (Rom. 8:19–22).

**3:20–21** God’s words of judgment on the serpent, woman, and man are immediately followed by two observations that possibly convey a sense of hope. First, the man names his wife **Eve** (v. 20), which means “life-giver” (see ESV footnote). Second, God clothes the couple (v. 21). While this final action recognizes that the human couple is now ashamed of their nakedness in God’s presence, as a gesture it suggests that God still cares for these, his creatures. Because God provides **garments** to clothe Adam and Eve, thus requiring the death of an animal to cover their nakedness, many see a parallel here related to (1) the system of animal sacrifices to atone for sin later instituted by God through the leadership of Moses in Israel, and (2) the eventual sacrificial death of Christ as an atonement for sin.

**3:22–24** The couple is expelled from **the garden**. God begins a sentence in v. 22 and breaks off without finishing it—for the man to **live forever** (in his sinful condition) is an unbearable thought, and God must waste no time in preventing it (“therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden”). The **tree of life**, then, probably served in some way to confirm a person in his or her moral condition (cf. Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). According to Gen. 2:15, the man was put in the garden to work it and keep or guard it. Outside the garden the man will have to work the ground, but the task of keeping or guarding the garden is given to the **cherubim** (3:24). By allowing themselves to be manipulated by the serpent, the couple failed to fulfill their priestly duty of guarding the garden. Consequently, their priestly status is removed from them as they are put out of the sanctuary. The placing of cherubim to the **east of the garden** is reflected in the tabernacle and temple, where cherubim were an important component in the structure and furnishings (see The Ark of the Covenant, p. 184).

**4:1–26 Adam and Eve’s Sons.** This chapter shows mankind plunging further into sin, with Cain murdering his brother and his descendant Lamech taking indiscriminate revenge. Although they have been expelled from the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are enabled by God to have two sons. With them rests the hope of an offspring who will overcome the serpent. When Cain callously murders his righteous brother Abel, however, evil seems to triumph. Any hope that Cain’s descendants will reverse this trend appears remote when Lamech boasts of killing a man simply for striking him. Against this background the brief announcement of Seth’s birth to replace Abel offers fresh hope.

**4:1** Eve’s reference to the Lord’s **help** when **Cain** is born conveys a sense of optimism. The serpent may yet be overthrown by the offspring of the woman.

**4:2–5** Although Cain and Abel have contrasting occupations and present different types of offerings to God, the present episode is not designed to elevate herdsmen over farmers, or animal offerings over plant offerings. One way to explain why God **had regard for Abel and his offering**, but not for Cain, is to posit that Abel’s offering, being of the **firstborn of his flock**, is a more costly offering, expressing greater devotion. Another way to explain the difference is first to observe that both offerings are recognizable parts of the later Levitical system: for Cain’s offering of **the fruit of the ground** (v. 3), cf. Deut. 26:2 (an offering expressing consecration), and for Abel’s offering of the firstborn of his flock, cf. Deut. 15:19–23 (a kind of peace offering, a meal in God’s presence). But at no point does the Bible suggest that offerings work automatically, as if the worshiper’s faith and contrition did not matter; and Cain’s fundamentally bad heart can be seen in his resentment toward his brother and in his uncooperative answers to God in the rest of the passage. Several NT texts derive legitimate inferences from this narrative, namely, that Cain demonstrated an evil heart by his evil deeds, while Abel demonstrated a pious heart by his righteous deeds (1 John 3:12); and that Abel offered his sacrifice by faith and was commended as righteous for that reason (Heb. 11:4).

**4:6–7** The Lord’s words challenge Cain to do better. He still has the possibility of turning, evidently with God’s help, to please God. To succeed in doing this,

offering, <sup>5</sup>but <sup>x</sup>for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?” <sup>7y</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted? <sup>1</sup>And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. <sup>z</sup>Its desire is contrary to <sup>2</sup>you, but you must rule over it.”

<sup>8</sup>Cain spoke to Abel his brother. <sup>3</sup>And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and <sup>a</sup>killed him. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, <sup>b</sup>“I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” <sup>10</sup>And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood <sup>c</sup>is crying to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup>And now <sup>d</sup>you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup>When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” <sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, “My <sup>e</sup>punishment is greater than I can bear.” <sup>14</sup>Behold, <sup>f</sup>you have driven me today away from the ground, and <sup>g</sup>from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, <sup>h</sup>and whoever finds me will kill me.” <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him <sup>i</sup>sevenfold.” And the LORD <sup>j</sup>put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. <sup>16</sup>Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, <sup>5</sup>east of Eden.

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

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew will there not be a lifting up [of your face]? <sup>2</sup> Or is toward <sup>3</sup> Hebrew; Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate add Let us go out to the field <sup>4</sup> Or My guilt is too great to bear <sup>5</sup> Nod means wandering

<sup>5</sup>[Prov. 21:27]  
<sup>7</sup>Eccles. 8:12, 13; Isa. 3:10, 11; Rom. 2:6-11  
<sup>z</sup>ch. 3:16  
<sup>8</sup>Matt. 23:35; Heb. 12:24; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11  
<sup>9</sup>John 8:44  
<sup>10</sup>Heb. 12:24; [Rev. 6:10]  
<sup>11</sup>Deut. 27:24; [Num. 35:33]  
<sup>13</sup>ch. 19:15  
<sup>14</sup>Job 15:20-24 <sup>2</sup>Kgs. 24:20; Ps. 51:11; 143:7; Jer. 52:3 <sup>2</sup>ch. 9:6; Num. 35:19  
<sup>15</sup>Ps. 79:12 [Ezek. 9:4, 6; Rev. 14:9, 11]

however, he must overcome the domination of **sin**, presented here as a wild beast seeking to devour Cain (cf. note on 3:16).

**4:8** The brevity of the report of Abel’s murder underlines the coldness of Cain’s action. Jealousy, probably coupled with anger at God, causes him to slay his own brother without pity. The heinousness of this spiteful murder reveals that sin has mastered Cain.

**4:9 am I my brother’s keeper?** When the Lord confronts Cain with his crime, his coldhearted nature causes him to deny any knowledge about his brother. Cain shows no sign of remorse.

**4:10–12** Cain’s punishment is linked to his crime. He will no longer be able to cultivate the soil (vv. 11–12) because his brother’s blood cries out to God **from the ground** (v. 10). Cain’s sentence adds to the alienation between man and the ground that has already been introduced in 3:17–18. Underlying these punishments is a principle that recurs throughout Scripture: human sin has a bearing on the fertility of the earth. Whereas God intended humanity to enjoy the earth’s bounty, sin distances people not only from God himself but also from nature (see note on 3:17–19). Genesis 4:10 is the likely background for the NT’s use of the phrase “the blood of Abel” as the paradigm for an innocent victim crying for justice (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb. 12:24).

**4:13–16** Cain is immediately conscious of the severity of his punishment. He is to be alienated from both the ground and God. While this may seem like a very lenient sentence, it meant that Cain would become a **fugitive and a wanderer on the earth** (v. 14). Alienated from the rest of human society, Cain fears that others will have such a dread of him that anyone finding him **will kill him** (v. 14). The reader is not told who those others might be. By way of reassuring Cain, the Lord states that **sevenfold** vengeance will come on anyone who kills him (v. 15). **the LORD put a mark on Cain**. In spite of much scholarly speculation, the precise nature of the mark is uncertain. It must have been something visible, but that is all that can be said. Like his parents, who were sent out of the garden, Cain is forced to move away **from the presence of the LORD** (and Moses seems to be implying that this is true of Cain’s offspring as well, since vv. 17–24 lack any mention of God). Presumably Cain moves farther to the **east of Eden** (v. 16). Cain settles in

a region that is appropriately known as **Nod** (location unknown), which in Hebrew means “wandering.”

**4:17–24** These verses provide selective information about Cain’s descendants, concluding with a description of Lamech (v. 19), who boasts of having taken revenge “seventy-sevenfold” by killing a man who wounded him. Five generations on from Cain, Lamech resembles his ancestor, but seems to be worse.

**4:17 Cain knew his wife.** No explanation is given as to the origin of Cain’s wife. As is often the case in Genesis, the limited and selective nature of the account leaves the reader with unanswered questions (see Introduction: Reading Genesis in the Twenty-first Century). Presumably, Cain married his sister—a reasonable assumption, since the whole human race descends from Adam and Eve (and the laws later forbidding this practice, such as in Lev. 18:9, would not have been relevant at this stage; cf. Gen. 5:4). **he built a city**. The precise identity of the city-builder is open to debate. While Cain would appear to be the builder (on the basis that it is named after **his son, Enoch**), the Hebrew text could also be taken as indicating that Enoch was the builder. Although the opening two chapters make no specific mention of a “city,” the early readers of Genesis would have automatically assumed that the instruction to fill the earth implies that humanity would establish a city or cities around, and then spreading out from, Eden. While this was part of God’s design for the earth, Genesis observes that some people engage in city building without any reference to God (see esp. 11:1–9).

**4:18–22** Five generations after Cain, **Lamech** is born (v. 18). His immediate descendants are associated with animal breeding, music, and metalwork, all of which are noteworthy cultural and technological developments (vv. 20–22). Whereas Abel is linked to sheep (v. 2), the herds of **Jabal** also include cattle, donkeys, and possibly camels (v. 20). (Pre-flood genealogies are well attested in the ancient Near East, in particular, in Mesopotamian texts. The Sumerian King List records lists of monarchs who ruled the land before the “Great Deluge.” The founding of cities was one of the primary industries of these pre-flood rulers. Such parallels confirm the historicity of the biblical pre-flood account.)

**4:23–24** The new developments of vv. 20–22 are overshadowed by Lamech’s

24<sup>k</sup>ver. 15

26<sup>1</sup>Chr. 1:1; Luke 3:38

<sup>m</sup>ch. 5:6 <sup>n</sup>Ps. 116:17;  
Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9

#### Chapter 5

1<sup>o</sup>See ch. 1:26, 27

3<sup>p</sup>ch. 4:25

4<sup>q</sup>For ver. 4–32, see 1 Chr.

1:1–4; Luke 3:36–38

5<sup>r</sup>ch. 3:19

23 Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;  
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:  
I have killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for striking me.

24 <sup>k</sup>If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold,  
then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.”

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed<sup>1</sup> for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.”

26 To <sup>l</sup>Seth also a son was born, and he called his name <sup>m</sup>Enosh. At that time people began <sup>n</sup>to call upon the name of the LORD.

#### Adam’s Descendants to Noah

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

<sup>1</sup>Seth sounds like the Hebrew for *he appointed* <sup>2</sup>Hebrew *adam*

boast of having **killed a man for wounding or striking** him (v. 23). Lamech’s response is out of proportion to the injury, showing his inordinate vengefulness. This, like his bigamy (v. 19), reveals his depravity. His behavior reveals that the line of Cain is dominated by those who have no regard for the lives of others or respect for the principle of monogamy that 2:23–24 endorses (see note there). Later laws in the Pentateuch insist on proportional punishment: in the case of murder, a maximum of life for life (Ex. 21:23). **sevenfold . . . seventy-sevenfold.** Lamech is boasting that his vengeful passion makes him safer than Cain (Gen. 4:15), who had protection only from God. “Seventy-sevenfold” is a picturesque statement for extravagant excess; cf. Matt. 18:22 (see *esv* footnote).

**4:25–26** The final verses of this section suddenly jump back to Adam and Eve in order to report the birth of their third son, **Seth**. Eve’s remark, **God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel**, is clearly an allusion back to the offspring of the woman in 3:15. The potential of Seth’s birth is immediately underlined by the observation, **At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD**, i.e., to seek him in (public) worship. Details are not given, but the implication may be that this calling on the Lord’s name began in Adam’s own family circle.

**5:1–6:8 Adam’s Descendants.** This section of Genesis falls into two distinctive parts. Whereas 5:1–32 is largely a genealogy that traces a single line of descendants from Adam to Noah, naming only one person in each generation, 6:1–8 provides a worldwide picture of increasing human wickedness. The contrast between these two elements is not simply between the particular and the universal but, more importantly, between righteousness and evil.

**5:1–32 The Family Line from Adam to Noah.** After a brief introduction, which echoes elements of ch. 1, this passage follows a particular line of descendants from Adam to Noah. The chapter’s layout is dominated by a distinctive literary structure that is repeated for each of those specifically mentioned in each generation. The pattern may be set out as follows: *When A had lived X years, he fathered B. A lived Y years after he fathered B and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of A were Z (= X + Y) years, after which he died* (see chart, p. 60). Since the word “fathered” in a genealogy can mean “fathered an ancestor of,” it is possible that this genealogy skips any number of generations; certainly the literary conventions allow for this. That omissions do actually occur appears from comparing, for example, the genealogy of Moses in Ex. 6:16–20 with that of Joshua in 1 Chron. 7:23–27: undoubtedly the genealogy for Moses has been compressed (cf. also Ezra 7:1–5 with 1 Chron. 6:4–14). At three points in Gen. 5:3–31, the pattern is briefly broken to introduce additional information involving Adam–Seth, Enoch, and Lamech–Noah. One of the most striking aspects of the passage is the great age of the first people in Genesis. (Other ancient Near Eastern

texts attribute even longer lives to earlier generations; e.g., the Sumerian King List mentions kings who reign—interestingly, before a flood—for periods of 28,800, 36,000, and 43,200 years.) Given that the life span of people today (and at least since the flood) is much shorter than the life span of those listed from Adam to Noah, the question is often raised as to whether the remarkable longevity of these patriarchs as given in 5:1–32 should be taken at face value or whether their longevity has some other explanation. Some have suggested that the figures should be understood as symbolic (e.g., that they may be related to various astronomical periods); or that the numbers are encoded with some unknown honorary significance; or that the figures were calculated by a different numeric method (e.g., that they should be divided by a factor of 5, plus, in some cases, the addition of the number 7 or 14). No writer, however, has offered a convincing alternative explanation, and none of the proposed alternatives can be substantiated with any certainty. The traditional understanding is that the numbers should be taken at face value, often assuming that something changed in the cosmology of the earth or in the physiology of humans (or in both) after the flood, resulting in a rapid decline in longevity, finally stabilizing at a “normal” life span in the range of 70 years or 80 years (see Ps. 90:10). In any case, one clear implication of these genealogies is that these people actually lived (regardless of how long), and that they actually died.

**5:1–2** The heading that introduces 5:1–6:8 differs from all the others (see note on 2:4) by referring to a **book**. This was probably something like a clay tablet that preserved the contents of 5:1–21 and possibly 11:10–26, although there the pattern is somewhat abbreviated. The book is named after **Adam** (Hb. *’adam*). The same Hebrew word is also translated in 5:1 by **man** and in 5:2 by **Man**. This reflects the fact that Hebrew *’adam* may function as a proper name, a common noun denoting a male individual, and a generic noun denoting male and female human beings (see notes on 1:26; 1:27; 2:15–16). **the likeness of God** (5:1). See note on 1:27.

**5:3–5** The linear list of descendants begins with **Adam** and then proceeds to name his son **Seth**. As 4:25 records, Seth is Adam’s third-born son. This line is clearly presented as offering an alternative to the line of seven generations linked to Cain in 4:17–18. But whereas Cain’s line leads to a killer in the seventh generation, the comparable generation in Seth’s line produces Enoch, who walked with God and did not die (see note on 5:22–24). **fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image.** From the normal pattern of the genealogy, the phrase “fathered Seth” would be expected here. The additional material introduces the idea that Seth resembles Adam. While this implies that Seth is made, like Adam, in the divine image, it also suggests that he images his father as well; Seth’s line, however, is certainly portrayed more positively than that of Cain.