PREFACE

TO THE ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

The Bible

"This Book [is] the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God." With these words the Moderator of the Church of Scotland hands a Bible to the new monarch in Britain's coronation service. These words echo the King James Bible translators, who wrote in 1611, "God's sacred Word . . . is that inestimable treasure that excelleth all the riches of the earth." This assessment of the Bible is the motivating force behind the publication of the English Standard Version.

Translation Legacy

The English Standard Version (ESV) stands in the classic mainstream of English Bible translations over the past half-millennium. The fountainhead of that stream was William Tyndale's New Testament of 1526; marking its course were the King James Version of 1611 (KJV), the English Revised Version of 1885 (RV), the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV), and the Revised Standard Version of 1952 and 1971 (RSV). In that stream, faithfulness to the text and vigorous pursuit of precision were combined with simplicity, beauty, and dignity of expression. Our goal has been to carry forward this legacy for this generation and generations to come.

To this end each word and phrase in the ESV has been carefully weighed against the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, to ensure the fullest accuracy and clarity and to avoid under-translating or overlooking any nuance of the original text. The words and phrases themselves grow out of the Tyndale–King James legacy, and most recently out of the RSV, with the 1971 RSV text providing the starting point for our work. Archaic language has been brought into line with current usage and significant corrections have been made in the translation of key texts. But throughout, our goal has been to retain the depth of meaning and enduring quality of language that have made their indelible mark on the English-speaking world and have defined the life and doctrine of its church over the last five centuries.

Translation Philosophy

The ESV is an "essentially literal" translation that seeks as far as possible to reproduce the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on "word-for-word" correspondence, at the same time taking full account of differences in grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and exact force of the original.

In contrast to the ESV, some Bible versions have followed a "thought-for-thought" rather than "word-for-word" translation philosophy, emphasizing "dynamic equivalence" rather than the "essentially literal" meaning of the original. A "thought-for-thought" translation is of necessity more inclined to reflect the interpretive views of the translator and the influences of contemporary culture.

Every translation is at many points a trade-off between literal precision and readability, between "formal equivalence" in expression and "functional equivalence" in communication, and the ESV is no exception. Within this framework we have sought to be "as literal as possible" while maintaining clarity of expression and literary excellence. Therefore, to the extent that plain English permits and the meaning in each case allows, we have sought to use the same English word for important recurring words in the original; and, as far as grammar

and syntax allow, we have rendered Old Testament passages cited in the New in ways that show their correspondence. Thus in each of these areas, as well as throughout the Bible as a whole, we have sought to capture all the echoes and overtones of meaning that are so abundantly present in the original texts.

As an essentially literal translation, taking into account grammar and syntax, the ESV thus seeks to carry over every possible nuance of meaning in the original words of Scripture into our own language. As such, the ESV is ideally suited for in-depth study of the Bible. Indeed, with its commitment to literary excellence, the ESV is equally well suited for public reading and preaching, for private reading and reflection, for both academic and devotional study, and for Scripture memorization.

Translation Principles and Style

The ESV also carries forward classic translation principles in its literary style. Accordingly it retains theological terminology—words such as grace, faith, justification, sanctification, redemption, regeneration, reconciliation, propitiation—because of their central importance for Christian doctrine and also because the underlying Greek words were already becoming key words and technical terms among Christians in New Testament times.

The ESV lets the stylistic variety of the biblical writers fully express itself—from the exalted prose that opens Genesis, to the flowing narratives of the historical books, to the rich metaphors and dramatic imagery of the poetic books, to the ringing rhetoric in the prophetic books, to the smooth elegance of Luke, to the profound simplicities of John, and the closely reasoned logic of Paul.

In punctuating, paragraphing, dividing long sentences, and rendering connectives, the ESV follows the path that seems to make the ongoing flow of thought clearest in English. The biblical languages regularly connect sentences by frequent repetition of words such as "and," "but," and "for," in a way that goes beyond the conventions of current literary English. Effective translation, however, requires that these links in the original be reproduced so that the flow of the argument will be transparent to the reader. We have therefore normally translated these connectives, though occasionally we have varied the rendering by using alternatives (such as "also," "however," "now," "so," "then," or "thus") when they better express the linkage in specific instances.

In the area of gender language, the goal of the ESV is to render literally what is in the original. For example, "anyone" replaces "any man" where there is no word corresponding to "man" in the original languages, and "people" rather than "men" is regularly used where the original languages refer to both men and women. But the words "man" and "men" are retained where a male meaning component is part of the original Greek or Hebrew. Likewise, the word "man" has been retained where the original text intends to convey a clear contrast between "God" on the one hand and "man" on the other hand, with "man" being used in the collective sense of the whole human race (see Luke 2:52). Similarly, the English word "brothers" (translating the Greek word *adelphoi*) is retained as an important familial form of address between fellow-Jews and fellow-Christians in the first century. A recurring note is included to indicate that the term "brothers" (*adelphoi*) was often used in Greek to refer to both men and women, and to indicate the specific instances in the text where this is the case. In addition, the English word "sons" (translating the Greek word *huioi*) is retained in specific instances because the underlying Greek term usually includes a male meaning component and it was used as a legal term in the adoption and inheritance laws of first-century Rome. As used by the apostle Paul, this term refers to the status of all Christians, both men and women, who, having been adopted into God's family, now enjoy all the privileges, obligations, and inheritance rights of God's children.

The inclusive use of the generic "he" has also regularly been retained, because this is consistent with similar usage in the original languages and because an essentially literal translation would be impossible without it.

In each case the objective has been transparency to the original text, allowing the reader to understand the original on its own terms rather than in the terms of our present-day Western culture.

The Translation of Specialized Terms

In the translation of biblical terms referring to God, the ESV takes great care to convey the specific nuances of meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek words. First, concerning terms that refer to God in the Old Testament: God, the Maker of heaven and earth, introduced himself to the people

of Israel with a special personal name, the consonants for which are YHWH (see Exodus 3:14–15). Scholars call this the "Tetragrammaton," a Greek term referring to the four Hebrew letters YHWH. The exact pronunciation of YHWH is uncertain, because the Jewish people considered the personal name of God to be so holy that it should never be spoken aloud. Instead of reading the word YHWH, therefore, they would normally read the Hebrew word *'adonay* ("Lord"), and the ancient translations into Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic also followed this practice. When the vowels of the word *'adonay* are placed with the consonants of YHWH, this results in the familiar word *Jehovah* that was used in some earlier English Bible translations. As is common among English translations today, the ESV usually renders the personal name of God (YHWH) by the word LORD (printed in small capitals). An exception to this is when the Hebrew word *'adonay* appears together with YHWH, in which case the two words are rendered together as "the Lord [in lowercase] GOD [in small capitals]." In contrast to the personal name for God (YHWH), the more general name for God in Old Testament Hebrew is *'elohim* and its related forms of *'el* or *'eloah*, all of which are normally translated "God" (in lowercase letters). The use of these different ways to translate the Hebrew words for God is especially beneficial to English readers, enabling them to see and understand the different ways that the *personal* name and the *general* name for God are both used to refer to the *One True God* of the Old Testament.

Second, in the New Testament, the Greek word *Christos* has been translated consistently as "Christ." Although the term originally meant simply "anointed," among Jews in New Testament times it had specifically come to designate the Messiah, the great Savior that God had promised to raise up. In other New Testament contexts, however, especially among Gentiles, *Christos* ("Christ") was on its way to becoming a proper name. It is important, therefore, to keep the context in mind in understanding the various ways that *Christos* ("Christ") is used in the New Testament. At the same time, in accord with its "essentially literal" translation philosophy, the ESV has retained consistency and concordance in the translation of *Christos* ("Christ") throughout the New Testament.

Third, a particular difficulty is presented when words in biblical Hebrew and Greek refer to ancient practices and institutions that do not correspond directly to those in the modern world. Such is the case in the translation of *'ebed* (Hebrew) and *doulos* (Greek), terms which are often rendered "slave." These terms, however, actually cover a range of relationships that requires a range of renderings—"slave," "bondservant," or "servant"—depending on the context. Further, the word "slave" currently carries associations with the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery particularly in nineteenth-century America. For this reason, the ESV translation of the words *'ebed* and *doulos* has been undertaken with particular attention to their meaning in each specific context. Thus in Old Testament times, one might enter slavery either voluntarily (e.g., to escape poverty or to pay off a debt) or involuntarily (e.g., by birth, by being captured in battle, or by judicial sentence). Protection for all in servitude in ancient Israel was provided by the Mosaic Law, including specific provisions for release from slavery. In New Testament times, a *doulos* is often best described as a "bondservant"—that is, someone in the Roman Empire officially bound under contract to serve his master for seven years (except for those in Caesar's household in Rome who were contracted for fourteen years). When the contract expired, the person was freed, given his wage that had been saved by the master, and officially declared a freedman. The ESV usage thus seeks to express the most fitting nuance of meaning in each context. Where absolute ownership by a master is envisaged (as in Romans 6), "slave" is used; where a more limited form of servitude is in view, "bondservant" is used (as in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24); where the context indicates a wide range of freedom (as in John 4:51), "servant" is preferred. Footnotes are generally provided to identify the Hebrew or Greek and the range of meaning that these terms may carry in each case. The issues involved in translating the Greek word *doulos* apply also to the Greek word *sundoulos*, translated in the text as "fellow servant."

Fourth, it is sometimes suggested that Bible translations should capitalize pronouns referring to deity. It has seemed best not to capitalize deity pronouns in the ESV, however, for the following reasons: first, there is nothing in the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that corresponds to such capitalization; second, the practice of capitalizing deity pronouns in English Bible translations is a recent innovation, which began only in the mid-twentieth century; and, third, such capitalization is absent from the KJV Bible and the whole stream of Bible translations that the ESV carries forward.

A fifth specialized term, the word "behold," usually has been retained as the most common translation for the Hebrew word *hinneh* and the Greek word *idou*. Both of these words mean something like "Pay careful attention to what follows! This is important!" Other than the word "behold," there is no single word in English that fits well in most contexts. Although "Look!" and "See!" and "Listen!" would be workable in some contexts, in many others these words lack sufficient weight and dignity. Given the principles of "essentially literal" translation, it is important not to leave *hinneh* and *idou* completely untranslated and so to lose the intended emphasis in the original languages. The older and more formal word "behold" has usually been retained, therefore, as the best available option for conveying the original weight of meaning.

Textual Basis and Resources

The ESV is based on the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible as found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (5th ed., 1997), and on the Greek text in the 2014 editions of the *Greek New Testament* (5th corrected ed.), published by the United Bible Societies (UBS), and *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed., 2012), edited by Nestle and Aland. The currently renewed respect among Old Testament scholars for the Masoretic text is reflected in the ESV's attempt, wherever possible, to translate difficult Hebrew passages as they stand in the Masoretic text rather than resorting to emendations or to finding an alternative reading in the ancient versions. In exceptional, difficult cases, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and other sources were consulted to shed possible light on the text, or, if necessary, to support a divergence from the Masoretic text. Similarly, in a few difficult cases in the New Testament, the ESV has followed a Greek text different from the text given preference in the UBS/Nestle-Aland 28th edition. Throughout, the translation team has benefited greatly from the massive textual resources that have become readily available recently, from new insights into biblical laws and culture, and from current advances in Hebrew and Greek lexicography and grammatical understanding.

Textual Footnotes

The footnotes that are included in most editions of the ESV are therefore an integral part of the ESV translation, informing the reader of textual variations and difficulties and showing how these have been resolved by the ESV translation team. In addition to this, the footnotes indicate significant alternative readings and occasionally provide an explanation for technical terms or for a difficult reading in the text.

Publishing Team

The ESV publishing team has included more than a hundred people. The fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee benefited from the work of more than fifty biblical experts serving as Translation Review Scholars and from the comments of the more than fifty members of the Advisory Council, all of which was carried out under the auspices of the Crossway Board of Directors. This hundred-plus-member team shares a common commitment to the truth of God's Word and to historic Christian orthodoxy and is international in scope, including leaders in many denominations.

To God's Honor and Praise

We know that no Bible translation is perfect; but we also know that God uses imperfect and inadequate things to his honor and praise. So to our triune God and to his people we offer what we have done, with our prayers that it may prove useful, with gratitude for much help given, and with ongoing wonder that our God should ever have entrusted to us so momentous a task.

Soli Deo Gloria!—To God alone be the glory!

The Translation Oversight Committee

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE: A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

How does the Bible as a whole fit together? The events recorded in the Bible took place over a span of thousands of years and in several different cultural settings. What is their unifying thread?

One unifying thread in the Bible is its divine authorship. *Every book of the Bible is God's word*. The events recorded in the Bible are there because God wanted them recorded, and he had them recorded with his people and their instruction in mind: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

God's Plan for History

The Bible also makes it clear that *God has a unified plan for all of history*. His ultimate purpose, "a plan for the fullness of time," is "to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10), "to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12). God had this plan even from the beginning: "remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Isa. 46:9–10). "When the fullness of time had come," when the moment was appropriate in God's plan, "God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4–5).

The work of Christ on earth, and especially his crucifixion and resurrection, is the climax of history; it is the great turning point at which God actually accomplished the salvation toward which history had been moving throughout the OT. The present era looks back on Christ's completed work but also looks forward to the consummation of his work when Christ will come again and when there will appear "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13; see Rev. 21:1–22:5).

The unity of God's plan makes it appropriate for him to include *promises and predictions* at earlier points in time, and then for the *fulfillments* of these to come at later points. Sometimes the promises take *explicit* form, as when God promises the coming of the Messiah, the great Savior whom Israel expected (Isa. 9:6–7). Sometimes the promises take *symbolic* form, as when God commanded animal sacrifices to be offered as a symbol for the forgiveness of sins (Leviticus 4). In themselves, the animal sacrifices were not able to remove sins permanently and to atone for them permanently (Heb. 10:1–18). They pointed forward to Christ, who is the final and complete sacrifice for sins.

Christ in the Old Testament

Since God's plan focuses on Christ and his glory (Eph. 1:10), it is natural that the promises of God and the symbols in the OT all point forward to him. "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]" (2 Cor. 1:20). When Christ appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, his teaching focused on showing them how the OT pointed to him: "And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25–27). One could also look at Luke 24:44–48: "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'"

When the Bible says that "he opened their minds to understand *the Scriptures*" (Luke 24:45), it cannot mean just a few scattered predictions about the Messiah. It means the OT as a whole, encompassing all three of the major divisions of the OT that the Jews traditionally recognized. "The Law of Moses" includes Genesis to Deuteronomy. "The Prophets" include both the "former prophets" (the historical books Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings) and the "latter prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor Prophets, Hosea–Malachi). "The Psalms" is representative of the third grouping by the Jews, called the "Writings." (The book of Daniel was placed in this group.) At the heart of understanding all these OT books is the truth that they point forward to the suffering of Christ, his resurrection, and the subsequent spread of the gospel to "all nations" (Luke 24:47). The OT as a whole, through its promises, its symbols, and its pictures of salvation, looks forward to the actual accomplishment of salvation that took place once for all in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Promises of God

In what ways does the OT look forward to Christ? First, it directly points forward through *promises of salvation and promises concerning God's commitment to his people*. God gave some specific promises in the OT relating to the coming of Christ as the Messiah, the Savior in the line of David. Through the prophet Micah, God promises that

the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Mic. 5:2), a prophecy strikingly fulfilled in the NT (Matt. 2:1–12). But God often gives more general promises concerning a future great day of salvation, without spelling out all the details of how he will accomplish it (e.g., Isa. 25:6–9; 60:1–7). Sometimes he promises simply to be their God (see Gen. 17:7).

One common refrain is that, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (cf. Jer. 31:33; Hos. 2:23; Zech. 8:8; 13:9; Heb. 8:10). Variations on this broad theme may sometimes focus more on the people and what they will be, while at other times they focus on God and what he will do. God's promise to "be their God" is really his comprehensive commitment to be with his people, to care for them, to discipline them, to protect them, to supply their needs, and to have a personal relationship with them. If that commitment continues, it promises to result ultimately in the final salvation that God works out in Christ.

The principle extends to all the promises in the OT. "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]" (2 Cor. 1:20). Sometimes God gives immediate, temporal blessings. These blessings are only a foretaste of the rich, eternal blessings that come through Christ: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3).

Warnings and Curses

God's relation to people includes not only blessings but also warnings, threatenings, and cursings. These are appropriate because of God's righteous reaction to sin. They anticipate and point forward to Christ in two distinct ways. First, *Christ is the Lamb of God, the sin-bearer* (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:24). He was innocent of sin, but became sin for us and bore the curse of God on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). Every instance of the wrath of God against sin, and his punishments of sin, looks forward to the wrath that was poured out on Christ on the cross.

Second, *Christ at his second coming wars against sin and exterminates it*. The second coming and the consummation are the time when the final judgment against sin is executed. All earlier judgments against sin anticipate the final judgment. Christ during his earthly life anticipated this final judgment when he cast out demons and when he denounced the sins of the religious leaders.

Covenants

The promises of God in the OT come in the context not only of God's commitment to his people but also of instruction about the people's commitment and obligations to God. Noah, Abraham, and others whom God meets and addresses are called on to respond not only with trust in God's promises but with lives that begin to bear fruit from their fellowship with God. The relation of God to his people is summed up in various *covenants* that God makes with people. A covenant between two human beings is a binding commitment obliging them to deal faithfully with one another (as with Jacob and Laban in Gen. 31:44). When God makes a covenant with man, God is the sovereign, so he specifies the obligations on both sides. "I will be their God" is the fundamental obligation on God's side, while "they shall be my people" is the fundamental obligation on the human side. But then there are variations in the details.

For example, when God first calls Abram he says, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). This commandment specifies an obligation on the part of Abram, an obligation on the human side. God also indicates what he will do on his part: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2). God's commitment takes the form of promises, blessings, and curses. The *promises and blessings* point forward to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promises and the source of final blessings. The *curses* point forward to Christ both in his bearing the curse and in his execution of judgment and curse against sin, especially at the second coming.

The obligations on the human side of the covenants are also related to Christ. Christ is fully man as well as fully God. As a man, he stands with his people on the human side. He fulfilled the obligations of God's covenants through his perfect obedience (Heb. 5:8). He received the reward of obedience in his resurrection and ascension (see Phil. 2:9–10). The OT covenants on their human side thus point forward to his achievement.

By dealing with the wrath of God against sin, Christ changed a situation of alienation from God to a situation of peace. He reconciled believers to God (2 Cor. 5:18–21; Rom. 5:6–11). He brought personal intimacy with God, and the privilege of being children of God (Rom. 8:14–17). This intimacy is what all the OT covenants anticipated. In Isaiah, God even declares that his servant, the Messiah, will *be* the covenant for the people (see Isa. 42:6; 49:8).

Offspring

It is worthwhile to focus on one specific element in OT covenants, namely, the promise concerning offspring. In making a covenant with Abram, God calls on him to "walk before me, and be blameless" (Gen. 17:1). That is a human obligation in the covenant. On the divine side, God promises that he will make Abram "the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen. 17:4), and he renames him Abraham (Gen. 17:5). The covenant with Abraham in fact extends beyond Abraham to his posterity: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and *your offspring after you* throughout their generations for an *everlasting* covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7–8).

The promises made to Abraham are exceedingly important within the OT because they are the foundation for the nation of Israel. The history after Abraham shows that Abraham had a son, Isaac, in fulfillment of God's promise to Sarah. Isaac was the immediate result of God's promise of offspring who will inherit the land. Isaac in turn had a son, Jacob, and Jacob was the father of 12 sons who in turn multiplied into the 12 tribes of Israel. The nation of Israel became the next stage in the offspring that God promised.

But how does this relate to Christ? Christ is the descendant of David and of Abraham, as the genealogy in Matthew indicates (Matt. 1:1). Christ is the offspring of Abraham. In fact, he is the offspring in a uniquely emphatic sense: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to

his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' *who is Christ*" (Gal. 3:16; see notes on Gen. 22:15–18).

Abraham was told to "walk before me, and be blameless" (Gen. 17:1). Abraham was basically a man of faith who trusted God (Gal. 3:9; Heb. 11:8–12, 17–19). But Abraham also had his failures and sins. Who will walk before God and be blameless in an ultimate way? Not Abraham. Not anyone else on earth either, except Christ himself (Heb. 4:15). All the other candidates for being "offspring" of Abraham ultimately fail to be blameless. Thus the covenant with Abraham has an unbreakable tie to Christ. Christ is the ultimate offspring to whom the other offspring all point. One may go down the list of offspring: Isaac, Jacob, then the sons of Jacob. Among these sons, Judah is their leader who will have kingship (Gen. 49:10). David is the descendant of Abraham and Judah; Solomon is the descendant of David; and then comes Rehoboam and the others who descend from David and Solomon (Matt. 1:1–16).

Christ is not only the descendant of all of them by legal right; he is also superior to all of them as the uniquely blameless offspring. Through Christ believers are united to him and thereby themselves become "Abraham's offspring" (Gal. 3:29). Believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, become heirs to the promises of God made to Abraham and his offspring: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:28–29).

Christ as the Last Adam

Christ is not only the offspring of Abraham, but—reaching back farther in time to an earlier promise of God—the offspring of the woman: "I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her *offspring*; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The conquest over the serpent, and therefore the conquest of evil and the reversal of its effects, is to take place through the offspring of the woman. One can trace this offspring down from Eve through Seth and his godly descendants, through Noah, and down to Abraham, where God's promise takes the specific form of offspring for Abraham (see Luke 3:23–38, which traces Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam). Thus Christ is not only the offspring of Abraham but the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45–49). Like Adam, he represents all who belong to him. And he reverses the effects of Adam's fall.

Shadows, Prefigures, and "Types"

The NT constantly talks about Christ and the salvation that he has brought. That is obvious. What is not so obvious is that the same is true of the OT, though it does this by way of *anticipation*. It gives us "shadows" and "types" of the things that were to come (see 1 Cor. 10:6, 11; Heb. 8:5).

For example, 1 Corinthians 10:6 indicates that the events the Israelites experienced in the wilderness were "examples for us." And 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." In 1 Corinthians 10:6 and 11, the Greek word for "example" is *typos*, from which derives the English word "type" (cf. Rom. 5:14).

A "type," in the language of theology, is *a special example, symbol, or picture that God designed beforehand, and that he placed in history at an earlier point in time in order to point forward to a later, larger fulfillment*. Animal sacrifices in the OT prefigure the final sacrifice of Christ. So these animal sacrifices were "types" of Christ. The temple, as a dwelling place for God, prefigured Christ, who is the final "dwelling place" of God, and through whom God comes to be with his people (Matt. 1:23; John 2:21). The OT priests were types of Christ, who is the final high priest (Heb. 7:11–8:7).

Fulfillment takes place preeminently in Christ (Eph. 1:10; 2 Cor. 1:20). But in the NT those people who are "in Christ," who place their trust in him and experience fellowship with his person and his blessings, receive the benefits of what he has accomplished, and therefore one can also find anticipations or "types" in the OT that point forward to the NT church, the people in the NT who belong to Christ. For example, the OT temple not only prefigured Christ, whose body is the temple (John 2:21), but prefigured the church, which is also called a temple (1 Cor. 3:16–17), because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Some OT symbols also may point forward especially to the consummation of salvation that takes place in the new heaven and the new earth yet to come (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–22:5). Old Testament Jerusalem prefigured the new Jerusalem that will come "down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:2).

Christ the Mediator

The Bible makes it clear that ever since the fall of Adam into sin, sin and its consequences have been the pervasive problem of the human race. It is a constant theme running through the Bible. Sin is rebellion against God, and it deserves death: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). God is holy, and no sinful human being, not even a great man like Moses, can stand in the presence of God without dying: "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Ex. 33:20). Sinful man needs a *mediator* who will approach God on his behalf. Christ, who is both God and man, and who is innocent of sin, is the only one who can serve: "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5–6).

Though there is only one mediator in an ultimate sense, in a subordinate way various people in the OT serve in some kind of mediatorial capacity. Moses is one of them. He went up to Mount Sinai to meet God while all the people waited at the bottom of the mountain (Exodus 19). When the people of Israel were terrified at hearing God's audible voice from the mountain, they asked for Moses to bring them God's words from then on (Ex. 20:18–21). God approved of the arrangement involving Moses bringing his words to the people (Deut. 5:28–33).

But if there is only one mediator, as 1 Timothy 2:5 says, how could Moses possibly serve in that way? Moses was not the ultimate mediator, but he *prefigured* Christ's mediation. Because Moses was sinful, he could not possibly have survived the presence of God without forgiveness, that is, without having a sinless mediator on his own behalf. God welcomed Moses into his presence only because, according to the plan of God, Christ was to come and make

atonement for Moses. The benefits of Christ's work were reckoned beforehand for Moses' benefit. And so it must have been for all the OT saints. How could they have been saved otherwise? God is perfectly holy, and they all needed perfection. Perfection was graciously reckoned to them because of Christ, who was to come.

That means that *there is only one way of salvation*, throughout the OT as well as in the NT. Only Christ can save us. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The instances of salvation in the OT all depend on Christ. And in the OT, salvation frequently comes through a *mediator*, a person or institution that stands between God and man. All the small instances of mediation in the OT prefigure Christ. How else could it be, since there is only one mediator and one way of salvation?

So understanding of the unity of the Bible increases when one pays attention to *instances where God brings salvation*, and *instances where a mediator stands between God and man*. These instances include not only cases where God brings *spiritual* salvation in the form of personal fellowship, spiritual intimacy, and the promise of eternal life with God. They also include instances of *temporal*, external deliverance—"salvation" in a physical sense, which prefigures salvation in a spiritual sense. And indeed, salvation is not *merely* spiritual. Christians look forward to the resurrection of the body and to "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). Personal salvation starts with renewal of the heart, but in the end it will be comprehensive and cosmic in scope. The OT, when it pays attention to physical land and physical prosperity and physical health, anticipates the physicality of the believer's prosperity in the new heavens and the new earth.

Instances of mediators in the OT include prophets, kings, and priests. *Prophets* bring the word of God from God to the people. *Kings*, when they submit to God, bring God's rule to bear on the people. *Priests* represent the people in coming before God's presence. Christ is the final prophet, king, and priest who fulfills all three functions in a final way (Heb. 1:1–3). One can also look at *wise men*, who bring God's wisdom to others; *warriors*, who bring God's deliverance from enemies; and *singers*, who bring praise to God on behalf of the people and speak of the character of God to the people.

Mediation occurs not only through human figures, but through institutions. *Covenants* play a mediatorial role in bringing God's word to the people. The *temple* brings God's presence to the people. The *animal sacrifices* bring God's forgiveness to the people. In reading the Bible one should look for ways in which God brings his word and his presence to people through *means* that he establishes. All these means perform a kind of mediatorial role, and because there is only one mediator, it is clear that they all point to Christ. ◂

The

OLD TESTAMENT

THE THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

When it comes to describing "the theology of the Old Testament," not everyone is convinced that there is a single theology represented in these diverse books. Many scholars have, however, tried to find a point of unity for all the books, often by proposing a single unifying theme, such as *covenant*, or *the kingdom of God*, or *the Messiah*, or *God himself*. These proposals do provide genuine insights, but they are often too oversimplified to do justice to the variety of materials in the OT.

It will be more fruitful to understand the OT as a whole in terms of an unfolding story, with a number of basic components: *monotheism*, *creation and fall*, *election and covenant*, *covenant membership*, and *eschatology*. This article will first explain these components, so that we can summarize the overarching story. Then we will consider briefly how the various parts of the OT relate to this unfolding story, and consider how this provides a link to the NT authors' stance toward the OT. The goal is to articulate some of the beliefs that will enable the careful reader to profit more fully from reading the OT books themselves.

The Components of the Story

1. *Monotheism.* There is only one true God, who made heaven and earth and all mankind. He made a material world that he is happy with, and he made it a fit place for human beings to live, and love, and serve. Every human being needs to know and love this God, whose spotless moral purity, magnificent power and wisdom, steadfast faithfulness, and unceasing love are breathtakingly beautiful. This one God rules over all things, and he will vindicate his own goodness and justice (in his own time). In ruling, God has not limited himself to working within the natural properties of what he has made, for he can go (and has gone) beyond these properties to do mighty deeds both in creation and in caring for his people.

The OT invites Israel, not simply to acknowledge the existence of this one true God, but to commit themselves to him in exclusive loyalty and love, centering their lives on the inestimable privilege of knowing him (Deut. 6:4–9). The fundamental character of this God is explained in Exodus 34:6–7, which focuses on his steadfast love and mercy (a passage frequently echoed in the rest of the OT). The OT also affirms that God is "righteous," i.e., morally pure and perfect. Although this righteousness certainly results in God's work of punishing evildoers and vindicating his own moral character, the term commonly emphasizes God's reliability in keeping his promises (e.g., Ps. 71:2; 116:5).

The OT does not explicitly describe God as a trinity. Rather, with its references to God's Spirit (e.g., Gen. 1:2), its use of "us/our" for God (e.g., Gen. 1:26), and its indications or hints of a divine Messiah (e.g., Ps. 110:5; Isa. 9:6; cf. Ezek. 34:15, 23), it lays the groundwork for the fuller declaration of divine triunity that is found in the NT (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14).

2. *Creation and fall.* The one Creator God made the first human beings, Adam and Eve, with dignity and purpose; their calling was to live faithfully to God and to spread the blessings of Eden throughout the earth. Because Adam and Eve betrayed God's purpose, all people since the fall are beset with sins and weaknesses that only God's grace can redeem and heal.

3. *Election and covenant.* The one true God chose a people for himself and bound himself to them by his covenant (Ex. 19:4–6; Deut. 7:6–11). This covenant expressed God's intention to save the people, and through them to bring light to the rest of the world, in order to restore all things to their proper functioning in the world God made. The land of Israel was to be a kind of reconstituted Eden, which would flourish as the people's faithfulness flourished (or languish if the people were unfaithful). God's covenants generally involve one person who represents the whole people (e.g., Adam, Noah, Abraham, David): the rest of the people experience the covenant by virtue of their inclusion in the community represented. The representative is required to embody the ideal of covenant faithfulness as a model for those on whose behalf he has acted.

4. *Covenant membership.* In his covenant, God offers his grace to his people: the forgiveness of their sins, the shaping of their lives in this world to reflect his own glory, and a part to play in bringing light to the Gentiles. Each member of God's people is responsible to lay hold of this grace from the heart: to believe the promises (see Paul's use of Abraham and David as examples of faith in Rom. 4:1–25; cf. also Heb. 11:1–40), and then to grow in obeying the commands, and to keep on doing so all their lives long. Those who lay hold in this way are the faithful. These people, as distinct from the unfaithful among them, enjoy the full benefits of God's love. Each Israelite is a member of a people, a corporate entity; the members have a mutual participation in the life of the people as a whole. Thus the spiritual and moral well-being of the whole affects the well-being of each of the members, and each member contributes to the others by his own spiritual and moral life. Thus each one shares the joys and sorrows of the others, and of the whole. Historical judgments upon the whole people often come because too many of the members are unfaithful; these judgments do not, however, bring the story of God's people to an end but serve rather to purify and chasten that people (often by removing unbelieving members).

It is important for Christian readers to sharpen their grasp of how the OT uses words such as "salvation" and "judgment." When the OT speaks of God "redeeming" his people (e.g., Ex. 15:13) or "saving" them (e.g., Ex. 14:30), it refers to God's gracious dealings for the sake of this corporate

entity, the people: he calls it, he protects it, he purifies it, in order to foster the conditions under which the life of its members may flourish. The OT can also speak of God giving "salvation" or "redemption" to particular persons (e.g., Ps. 3:2, 7; 19:14). Generally in the OT, however, such expressions refer to members of the people experiencing the benefits of covenant membership, whether that be forgiveness of sins, or deliverance from some trouble or persecution, or something else—tracing everything back to the grace of God that led him to make the covenant originally and now to keep it in effect. When Christians speak of personal salvation, they usually are thinking of individuals in isolation, and so have a much narrower meaning in mind; they should consider whether the NT usage is closer to the OT usage than they might have realized hitherto, including both every aspect of their lives and their connections to other believers, and thus extending to a wider range of experience than simply their souls.

The "law," given through Moses, plays a vital role in the OT. It is uniformly presented as an object of delight and admiration (e.g., Psalm 119) because it is a gift from a loving and gracious God. The law is never presented in the OT as a list of rules that one must obey in order to be right with God; rather, it is God's fatherly instruction, given to shape the people he has loved and saved into a community of faith, holiness, and love, bound together by mutual support and care. The various laws, with their penalties for infractions and provisions for repayment, were designed to protect that community from the failures of its members; and the moral guidelines gave specific form to what the restored image of God would look like in the agrarian culture of ancient Israel. Right at the heart of this system is worship at the sanctuary, with its provisions for atonement and forgiveness for those who have gone astray. Sadly, only in a very few instances in the OT do we see anything that even remotely matches this ideal, whether on a large scale (Josh. 22:1–34 is an excellent example, distinctive for its rarity) or on a small one (e.g., Boaz in the book of Ruth, who embodies the Lord's own kindness to a foreign-born "proselyte"). The prophets anticipated an era, after Judah's return from exile in Babylon, in which God's people would really take the law into their own hearts (e.g., Ezek. 36:25–27); the covenant renewal that the postexilic community experienced was, however, only a brief foretaste of that expectation. (Interpreters debate the way in which this relates to the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles—is it focused primarily on *Israel* laying hold of the covenant properly, or does it describe the new arrangement that Jesus' resurrection brought in?—but that is outside the scope of this article.)

5. *Eschatology.* The story of God's people is headed toward a glorious future in which all kinds of people will come to know the Lord and join his people. This was the purpose for which God called Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3), and for which he appointed Israel (Ex. 19:4–6). It is part of the dignity of God's people that, in God's mysterious wisdom, their personal faithfulness contributes to the story getting to its goal (cf. Deut. 4:6–8).

The OT develops its idea of a Messiah (eventually clarified as the ultimate heir of David) in the light of these components. The earliest strands of the messianic idea speak of an offspring who will undo the work of the Evil One and bless the Gentiles by bringing them into his kingdom (Gen. 3:15; 22:17–18; 24:60); the idea that kings will descend from Abraham (Gen. 17:6, 16) and Jacob (Gen. 35:11) becomes focused on the tribe of Judah, to which the obedience of the peoples will be brought (Gen. 49:10). The kings in David's line carry this idea forward. They are to embody the people: just as the people as a whole is God's son (Ex. 4:22–23), so also the Davidic king is God's son (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:26–27). The promise of a lasting dynasty for David (2 Sam. 7:16) becomes the expectation that a final heir of his line will one day arise, take his Davidic throne (in "the last days"), and lead his people in the great task of bringing light to the Gentiles (e.g., Ps. 2:8; 72:8–11, 17 [using Gen. 22:18]; Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–10; see note on Isa. 42:1–9 concerning the servant of the Lord).

The Parts of the OT in Relation to the Story

The OT is thus the story of the one true Creator God, who called the family of Abraham to be his remedy for the defilement that came into the world through the sin of Adam and Eve. God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt in fulfillment of this plan, and established them as a theocracy for the sake of displaying his existence and character to the rest of the world. God sent his blessings and curses upon Israel in order to pursue that purpose. God never desisted from that purpose, even in the face of the most grievous unfaithfulness in Israel.

This overarching story serves as a grand narrative or worldview story for Israel: each member of the people was to see himself or herself as an *heir* of this story, with all its glory and shame; as a *steward* of the story, responsible to pass it on to the next generation; and as a *participant*, whose faithfulness could play a role, by God's mysterious wisdom, in the story's progress.

Some who have seen this category of Israel's story as a key to OT theology have argued for reading the entire OT *as a story*. This does not help the reader, for the very obvious reason that not everything in the OT is narrative or "story." For example, there are *laws* (in the Pentateuch), whose purpose was to protect equity and civility in the theocracy by guiding judges in what penalties to impose and by specifying the minimum standard of behavior necessary to preserve the theocracy (many of the specific laws do not intend to spell out the moral ideal for the members of Israel, which comes from likeness to God in the creation account and from the goal of community holiness; the "perfection" of the laws consisted in the way they serve the social fabric of God's people); there is *wisdom* (in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, as well as in the Psalms), which helps the members to live well daily; there are *songs* (esp. the Psalms) that the people of God should sing in corporate worship; there are *poems* (esp. the Song of Solomon; cf. Prov. 5:15–20) celebrating such wonders as romantic love; and lots more. Therefore it is better to speak of reading the parts of the OT *in relation to* its overarching story. That is, we can see the parts in relation to the Big Story that unifies the whole. The Proverbs help people to live their little stories in such a way as to contribute to the Big Story. The Psalms—many of which explicitly recount parts of the Big Story—help people live as faithful members of the worshiping corporate entity, the people of God. The Prophets keep recalling the Big Story, the direction in which Israel's story is headed, calling their audiences to live faithfully in its light. The Big Story tells us that God's purpose is to restore our humanity to its proper function, and thus it reminds each person of the human nature he

shares with every other human being, and of the duty and benefit of seeking the good of others. For example, enjoying the love of a faithful spouse is a way of experiencing renewed humanity—a way that displays God's goodness to the rest of the world (as in the Song of Solomon).

All of these factors explain why it is possible for the NT authors both to say that the Sinai covenant is done away with (see below), because it was focused on the theocracy, which had an end in mind from the beginning (when the Gentiles would receive the light in large measure)—and at the same time to affirm that this covenant has embedded in it principles that cannot pass away, because they are part of the larger story of which the Sinai covenant is one chapter.

The OT as Christian Scripture

The OT presents itself, then, as a story that is headed somewhere. The OT closes with both anxiety and hope under Persian rule (see Malachi). The books of the Second Temple period (between the Old and New Testaments) continue this notion of Israel as God's people chosen for a purpose, but not all strands of this material make clear what that purpose is. Some of these Second Temple books offer endings for the story (e.g., in the Qumran community as the elect); but the faithful were looking for more. (For more information on the Second Temple period, see The Time between the Testaments, pp. 1783–1785.) The NT authors, most of whom were *Jewish* Christians, saw themselves as heirs of the OT story, and as authorized to describe its proper completion in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the messianic era that this ushered in. These authors appropriated the OT as Christian Scripture, and they urged their audiences (many of whom were *Gentile* Christians) to do the same. There is debate over just how the NT authors used the OT as Scripture (see How the New Testament Quotes and Interprets the Old Testament, pp. 2605–2607), but the simplest summary of the NT authors' stance would be to say that they saw the OT as constituting the earlier chapters of the story in which Christians are now participating.

This construct, of earlier and later chapters in the story of God's work for his people, allows us to understand how the OT era and the Christian era will have elements both of continuity and of discontinuity. The OT had looked forward to an internationalized people of God, without explaining exactly how that would connect to the theocracy of Israel (see note on Ps. 87:4–6). The theocracy defined the people of God as predominantly coming from a particular ethnic group in a particular land; Gentile converts ("sojourners") were protected (Ex. 12:49; 20:10; 22:21; Lev. 19:10) but could not be full-status members of the theocratic community (cf. Deut. 14:21; 15:3; Num. 34:14–15, which shows that land was allocated to Israelites alone). The NT abolishes the distinction (Eph. 2:19), because the theocracy as such is no longer in existence and many of its provisions are done away with (cf. Acts 10:34–35; Heb. 9:11–14). At the same time, the character of the one Creator God, and his interest in restoring the image of God in human beings, transcends the specific arrangements of the theocracy: hence the moral commands of God apply to Christians as they did to the faithful in Israel (cf. Rom. 13:8–10).

Old Testament Timeline: An Overview*

The following dates (all B.C.) are close approximations based on correlating dates between the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources (largely from Assyrian accession lists, Babylonian king-lists, or Egyptian historical sources). Often dates can be confirmed between the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires by narratives recording contacts between these two countries.

Patriarchs to Judges (c. 2166–1030)

	1446 Date for Exodus**	1260 Date for Exodus**
Abraham	2166–1991	2000–1825
Isaac	2066–1886	1900–1720
Jacob	2006–1859	1840–1693
Joseph	1915–1805	1749–1639
Moses' birth	1526	1340
Exodus	1446	1260
Desert wanderings	1446–1406	1260–1220
Entrance into Canaan	1406	1220
Period of the judges	1375 to 1050–1030	1210 to 1050–1030

United Monarchy (c. 1050–931)

	Dates	Notes
Saul's reign	1050–1030 to 1010	Numerals relating to Saul's age and length of reign may be missing in the Hebrew text (see 1 Sam. 13:1)***
David's reign	1010–971	
Solomon's reign	971–931	

Divided Monarchy to Exile (931–586)

Kingdom divided	931	See The Divided Kingdom, pp. 622–623
Syro-Ephraimite war	740–732	Pekah (Israel) and Rezin (Syria) pressure Jotham and Ahaz (Judah) to join their opposition to Tiglath-pileser III (Assyria)
Fall of Samaria (Israel)	722	Shalmaneser V (727–722) and Sargon II (722–705) of Assyria
Josiah's reforms	628	
Battle of Carchemish	605	Daniel and three friends exiled to Babylon
Jerusalem attacked	597	Nebuchadnezzar II takes exiles to Babylon including Jehoiachin and Ezekiel
Fall of Jerusalem (Judah)	586	Nebuchadnezzar II takes more exiles to Babylon

Return from Exile (539–445)

Fall of Babylon	539	Cyrus of Persia (539–530)
1st return of exiles to Jerusalem	538	
Temple building begins	536	
Temple completed	516	Darius I (522–486)
Esther in palace of Xerxes	478	Xerxes I/Ahasuerus (485–464)
2nd return of exiles to Jerusalem under Ezra	458	Artaxerxes I (464–423)
3rd return of exiles to Jerusalem under Nehemiah	445	

**See also Historical Books Timeline, p. 385; and The Divided Kingdom, pp. 622–623.*

***See The Date of the Exodus, p. 33.*

****Possible dates for the beginning of Saul's reign are calculated based on other data in the OT: e.g., David's age at accession and length of reign (2 Sam. 5:4–5); Ish-bosheth's age when he became king (2 Sam. 2:10); and Jonathan's probable age in relation to both Ish-bosheth and David, presuming that Jonathan was Saul's firstborn son (1 Sam. 14:49; 31:2) and was at least 20 when referred to as a commander of troops early in Saul's reign (1 Sam. 13:2).*

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

The following material summarizes some of the arguments for an early date (1446 B.C.) and a later date (c. 1260) of the exodus. The archaeological claims of each side have all been challenged by the other side, but the details of such responses are not included here.

Arguments for an Early Date of the Exodus

These arguments are used to support an "early date" (about 1446 B.C.) for the exodus:

1. First Kings 6:1 says, "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel . . . he began to build the house of the LORD." The currently accepted date for the fourth year of Solomon's reign is 967/966 B.C., and 480 years before that would be 1446. This is supported by 1 Chronicles 6:33–37, which names 18 generations from Korah (in the time of Moses) to Heman (in the time of David), which then requires 19 generations from Moses to Solomon. Nineteen generations in 480 years works out to an average of 25.3 years per generation, a reasonable number that gives confirmation to an actual 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1.

2. In Judges 11:26, Jephthah's message to the king of the Ammonites says that Israel had already lived in Canaan for "300 years." This message is dated to around 1100 B.C., which would yield a date of around 1400 for entrance into the land of Canaan, which is consistent with a 1446 exodus.

3. Archaeological data from Jericho, Ai, and Hazor have been claimed to show evidence of destruction in the late fifteenth century B.C., which is consistent with a 1446 exodus and 1406 conquest of Canaan. But there is no evidence of occupation of Jericho in the thirteenth century (as would be required by a later date for the exodus).

4. The Amarna Letters show that Canaanite kings in the late fifteenth century B.C. wrote letters to Pharaoh pleading for help against the *'apiru* who were "taking over" the lands of Canaan. This is consistent with dating the beginning of the conquest by Israel at 1406.

5. Exodus 1:11, which mentions the building of "Raamses," should not be dated to c. 1270 B.C. (as a "late date" view would hold), because the remarkable multiplication of Israel (Ex. 1:12–22) and the birth of Moses (Ex. 2:2) both occur after Exodus 1:11. But if Moses was "eighty years old" (Ex. 7:7) when he led the people out of Egypt, this would put the exodus at least 80 years after the building of Raamses, or 1190 B.C., which is far too late on either scheme. In fact, the Merneptah Stele (an inscribed tombstone-like stone slab) describes a military triumph over Israel in Canaan in 1211–1209 B.C.

6. With an early date for the exodus, the time of the Judges takes about 350 years. This is generally consistent with the book of Judges itself, where a simple addition of the length of the reigns of the individual judges gives just over 400 years, and this can be reduced to 350 if there was overlapping of some reigns, but it cannot reasonably be reduced to as little as 170 years, as would be required by the proposed later date for the exodus.

Arguments for a Later Date of the Exodus

In favor of a "later date" (c. 1260 B.C.) are the following arguments:

1. Exodus 1:11 says the Israelites "built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses." But the city of Raamses (also spelled Rameses; the Egyptian Pi-Rameses) was built by Raamses II, who reigned 1279–1213 B.C. This city is not mentioned in any earlier archaeological records from Egypt. Therefore the Israelites were still in Egypt around 1270 B.C. when Raamses was built. In addition, the other geographical terms in Exodus—e.g., Pithom, Migdol, *Yam Sup* (the "Red Sea"), etc.—are all attested in thirteenth-century Egyptian texts, whereas they are not attested in the period of the early date.

2. First Kings 6:1 probably uses the expression "480 years" as a representative number to stand for 12 idealized generations of 40 years each. But in reality the period covered 12 generations of only 25 years each, or 300 years. Subtracting 300 years from 966 B.C. gives an exodus about 1266.

3. Egypt had imperial control over Canaan from about 1400–1250 B.C. But there is no Egyptian record of any military conflicts with Israel over that land until the Merneptah Stele, which refers to a victory over Israel around 1211–1209 B.C.

4. The Bible contains almost no mention of conflict with Egypt in Joshua or Judges, which would be strange if the Israelites entered Canaan in 1406 B.C., when the Egyptian Empire had control over Canaan. This makes a late date for the exodus more likely, since Egyptian influence over Canaan was minimal after about 1200 B.C.

5. The covenant forms used at the time of Moses in the biblical narratives show significant parallels to ancient Near Eastern covenants in the thirteenth century but not in the fifteenth century B.C.

6. Archaeological discoveries in Canaan show the complete destruction of some cities (such as Hazor) in the later thirteenth century B.C., which would fit with a date of c. 1260 for the exodus. Further, site surveys seem to show that there was a huge migration into the hill country areas of Canaan in the thirteenth century B.C. There also appear to have been technological innovations in this later period, such as terracing of the land, newer pottery styles, and plaster-lined silos, that favor the later date for Israel's occupation.

Conclusion

Both the early date and the late date are supported by established evangelical scholars today. In this Study Bible, both the early date (1446 B.C.) and the later date (c. 1260) are included.

The Hebrew Calendar Compared to the Gregorian (Modern) Calendar

The Hebrew calendar was composed of 12 lunar months, each of which began when the thin crescent moon was first visible at sunset. They were composed of approximately 29/30 days and were built around the agricultural seasons. Apparently some of the names of the months were accommodated from Babylon following the time that the Israelites were exiled there.

Hebrew Month	*Gregorian (Modern) Month*	*Biblical References*
First Month: Abib (Preexile) Nisan (Postexile)	March–April	Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1; Neh. 2:1; Est. 3:7 (cf. Gen. 8:13; Ex. 12:2, 18; 40:2, 17; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:1; 20:1; 28:16; 33:3; Josh. 4:19; 1 Chron. 12:15; 27:2, 3; 2 Chron. 29:3, 17; 35:1; Ezra 6:19; 7:9; 8:31; 10:17; Est. 3:7, 12; Ezek. 29:17; 30:20; 45:18, 21; Dan. 10:4)
Festivals: 14th/15th: Passover (Ex. 12:18; Lev. 23:5) 15th–21st: Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:14–20; Lev. 23:6) 16th: First Fruits (Lev. 23:9–11)		
Second Month: Ziv (Preexile) Iyyar (Postexile)	April–May	1 Kings 6:1, 37 (cf. Gen. 7:11; 8:14; Ex. 16:1; Num. 1:1, 18; 9:11; 10:11; 1 Chron. 27:4; 2 Chron. 3:2; 30:2, 13, 15; Ezra 3:8)
Festival: 14th: Later Passover (Num. 9:10–11)		
Third Month: Sivan	May–June	Est. 8:9 (cf. Ex. 19:1; 1 Chron. 27:5; 2 Chron. 15:10; 31:7; Ezek. 31:1)
Festivals: 4th: Pentecost [Feast of Weeks] (Lev. 23:15–16)		
Fourth Month: Tammuz	June–July	Ezek. 8:14 (cf. 2 Kings 25:3; 1 Chron. 27:7; Jer. 39:2; 52:6; Ezek. 1:1; Zech. 8:19)
Fifth Month: Ab	July–August	Not mentioned by name in the Bible (cf. Num. 33:38; 2 Kings 25:8; 1 Chron. 27:8; Ezra 7:8, 9; Jer. 1:3; 28:1; 52:12; Ezek. 20:1; Zech. 7:3, 5; 8:19)
Sixth Month: Elul	August–September	Neh. 6:15 (cf. 1 Chron. 27:9; Ezek. 8:1; Hag. 1:1, 15)
Seventh Month: Ethanim (Preexile) Tishri (Postexile)	September–October	1 Kings 8:2 (cf. Gen. 8:4; Lev. 16:29; 23:24, 27, 34, 39, 41; 25:9; Num. 29:1, 7, 12; 2 Kings 25:25; 1 Chron. 27:10; 2 Chron. 5:3; 7:10; 31:7; Ezra 3:1, 6; Neh. 7:73; 8:2, 14; Jer. 28:17; 41:1; Ezek. 45:25; Hag. 2:1; Zech. 7:5; 8:19)
Festivals: 1st: Trumpets (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1) 10th: Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29–34; 23:27–32) 15th–21st: Booths (Lev. 23:34–40) 22nd: Solemn assembly (Lev. 23:36)		
Eighth Month: Bul (Preexile) Marchesvan (Postexile)	October–November	1 Kings 6:38 (cf. 1 Kings 12:32, 33; 1 Chron. 27:11; Zech. 1:1)
Ninth Month: Chislev (Kislev)	November–December	Neh. 1:1; Zech. 7:1 (cf. 1 Chron. 27:12; Ezra 10:9; Jer. 36:9, 22; Hag. 2:10, 18)
Festival: 25th: Dedication (John 10:22)		
Tenth Month: Tebeth	December–January	Est. 2:16 (cf. Gen. 8:5; 2 Kings 25:1; 1 Chron. 27:13; Ezra 10:16; Jer. 39:1; 52:4; Ezek. 24:1; 29:1; 33:21; Zech. 8:19)
Eleventh Month: Shebat	January–February	Zech. 1:7 (cf. Deut. 1:3; 1 Chron. 27:14)
Twelfth Month: Adar*	February–March	Ezra 6:15; Est. 3:7, 13; 8:12; 9:1, 15, 17, 19, 21 (cf. 2 Kings 25:27; 1 Chron. 27:15; Jer. 52:31; Ezek. 32:1; 32:17)

**Periodically, a 13th month was added so that the lunar calendar would account for the entire solar year.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

The Name of the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch (Gk. "five-volumed") consists of the first five books of the Bible, i.e., Genesis through Deuteronomy. The Hebrew term for it is *torah* ("law" or "instruction"), so this is how the NT refers to it (Gk. *nomos*, "law"). In the Hebrew Bible, the law is the first of the three major sections, and sometimes *nomos* may refer to the whole OT (e.g., John 10:34). Although the Pentateuch contains many laws, it is essentially narrative with episodes of law-giving, but in the broader sense of *torah* all the Pentateuch can be seen as instruction, for it teaches as much through the history it records as by the law it gives. Another name for the Pentateuch found in some translations is "the five books of Moses." This is also an apt description in that the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy provide a biography of Moses, and traditionally he has been seen as their main author.

The Pentateuch as Foundational to the Whole Bible

The Pentateuch is not simply the beginning of the Bible; it is also the foundation of the Bible. It serves to orient the reader for reading the rest of the biblical story line. It introduces the key promises that show God's purposes in history and that lay the groundwork for the coming of Christ. Its theological ideas and ethical principles inform the rest of the Bible so that the subsequent books assume its authority and appeal to it as they evaluate people's deeds and character. These points are illustrated briefly here:

1. *Orientation.* The beginning of a book sets its tone and gives clues to the author's perspective. Genesis did this for the ancient world of polytheism by explaining that the world is created and controlled by only one God, not by a crowd of competing gods and goddesses. Similarly it speaks to today's readers, who often are essentially atheists (whether consciously or unconsciously): it shows them what it means to believe that behind all the phenomena of nature and the laws of science there is an all-powerful, loving God who controls all that happens.

2. *Divine purposes.* The Pentateuch shows God's intentions for his creation by describing what the world was like when he first created man and woman in the garden of Eden. Their sin sets back the divine program but does not defeat it, for God later calls Abraham and promises him descendants, land, and most important of all, blessing through his descendants to all the nations. These promises are more fully developed in the later books of the Pentateuch.

3. *Theology and ethics.* The Pentateuch gives insight into God's character and his ethical standards. It illustrates both his benevolence and his righteousness. He cares for mankind, creating man in his own image, providing him with food, and protecting human life from violent assault. Yet at the same time he demands moral behavior, from keeping the Sabbath to refusing adultery or theft. Tales of punishment, from the flood (Genesis 6–9) to the golden calf (Exodus 32), demonstrate the danger of disregarding divine standards.

Content

A review of the contents of the Pentateuch shows that its center of gravity is *the law-giving at Sinai*. All of Exodus 19 to Numbers 10 is devoted to the events that occurred in the vicinity of Sinai: the declaration of the Ten Commandments, the building of the tabernacle, the laws governing sacrifice, entry to the tabernacle, and the celebration of the festivals. Closer examination of this central section suggests that its climax is *God's glory filling the newly built tabernacle* (Ex. 40:34–38) as a visible demonstration of his choice of and intimacy with Israel—a restoration of the situation in the garden of Eden, where God walked with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8).

But the outer frame of the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy is constituted by *the life of Moses*. Exodus 2 tells of his birth and providential upbringing in the Egyptian court, while Deuteronomy 34 describes his death. Exodus 3–15 describes his call to lead his people and the establishment of his authority over Pharaoh in the eyes of the Israelites (Ex. 14:31). Moses' approaching death colors all the final chapters of the Pentateuch. He is told to prepare for his death in Numbers 27, and the whole of Deuteronomy consists of his last appeals to the nation to serve the Lord faithfully. To this end he preaches three sermons and recites two poems (Deuteronomy 32; 33) before he is granted a vision of the Promised Land and dies (Deuteronomy 34).

The book of Genesis serves as an introduction to the rest of the Pentateuch. It explains the context for Moses' life and ministry. It gives the origin of the nation of Israel and its tribes, and explains how they came to be living in Egypt though their ancestors had been promised the land of Canaan. The people of Israel are to bring blessing to the nations, and the opening chapters of Genesis show the desperate need of the nations for blessing. The first avalanche of sin led to the universal judgment of the flood. The new start with Noah and his sons was again derailed, first by the sin of Ham (Gen. 9:20–29) and then by the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). In this general way Genesis explains the situation that Moses confronted, and various episodes in the lives of the patriarchs also show parallels to Moses' experience, e.g., Abraham's exodus from Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20).

Time Span

It is striking that the earliest events in the Bible are dated more precisely than the later ones. For example, the different stages of the flood are dated to the exact day of the year (Gen. 7:11; 8:4, 5; see chart, p. 63). The ages of the

pre-flood heroes at the fathering of their firstborn and at their death are carefully noted in Genesis 5. Taking these figures at face value, Archbishop Usher (1581–1656) calculated that the creation of the world occurred in 4004 B.C. Using similar principles, Orthodox Jews hold that the year 2000 was the year 5760 (i.e., 5,760 years since creation).

Such a venerable interpretative approach cannot be glibly dismissed, but most conservative interpreters today believe that it does not account well enough for the literary conventions of Moses' day. For example, the genealogies do not claim to include every generation, and may skip any number of them (see note on Gen. 5:1–32; also Introduction to Genesis: Genesis and Science). With respect to the long lives of the antediluvians (those who lived before the flood), some scholars think these numbers should be understood as their actual ages in years, while others think their ages expressed in multiple centuries may have a symbolic significance, in line with the practices of other ancient peoples (see note on Gen. 5:1–32). It is best to admit one's ignorance here; yet at least it can be said that Moses used these numbers to make a point about the antiquity and reality of his audience's forbears.

However, the dating of the Israelite patriarchs by the internal numbering system of the OT is not so problematic. Conservative biblical scholars think it is likely that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in the late third and early second millennium B.C., and that the Israelites entered Egypt either in the early nineteenth century B.C. (consistent with an early date for the exodus; see Ex. 12:40) or else in the seventeenth or sixteenth century B.C., during the Egyptian second Intermediate Period (1640–1532 B.C.). The Hyksos Dynasty that ruled during this time came from outside Egypt and therefore could have welcomed Hebrews like Joseph and his family to play a prominent part in Egyptian life.

The date of the exodus from Egypt is likewise controversial. Combining the biblical and extrabiblical evidence points to Solomon's temple being built in 967 or 966 B.C. According to 1 Kings 6:1, Solomon began to build the temple 480 years after the exodus. If the author intended "480 years" as a literal designation, then working backward suggests the exodus would have been in 1447 or 1446 B.C., which is the date preferred by many conservative OT scholars today. However, on the basis of the description of the events surrounding the exodus (such as building the cities of Pithom and Raamses), most Egyptologists prefer a date in the 1200s—preferably after 1279 B.C. but certainly before 1209, when an Egyptian monument mentions that Israel was established as a people in the land of Canaan. If there is symbolism in the designation "480 years," then it is possible that the exodus took place in the early 1200s B.C. rather than in the mid-1400s. (For arguments on both sides of this debate, see The Date of the Exodus, p. 33.)

Composition

For more than 2,000 years, readers of the Pentateuch assumed that Moses was its author (cf. Mark 7:10). This was a natural conclusion to draw from its contents, for most of the laws are said to have been given to Moses by God (e.g., Lev. 1:1), and indeed some passages are explicitly said to have been written down by Moses (see Deut. 31:9, 24). The account of his death could have been recorded by someone else, though some held it was a prophetic account by Moses himself (Deuteronomy 34).

But in the late eighteenth century, critical scholars began challenging the assumption of Mosaic authorship. They argued that several authors were responsible for writing the Pentateuch. These authors supposedly wrote many centuries after Moses, and were separated from each other in time and location. Complicated theories were developed to explain how the Pentateuch grew as different authors' accounts were spliced and adjusted by a series of editors. According to these critical scholars, it was likely that the Pentateuch reached its final form in the fifth century B.C., nearly a millennium after Moses.

In the late twentieth century this type of critical theory was strongly attacked, not just by conservative scholars but also by those brought up on such theories. They argue that the theories are too complicated, self-contradictory, and ultimately unprovable. It is much more rewarding and less speculative to focus interpretative effort on the final form of the text. So there is a strong move to abandon the compositional theories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for simpler hypotheses. Thus some critical scholars would see the Pentateuch being an essentially fifth-century B.C. creation. Others suggest earlier dates. But none of these suggestions can really be proven.

The Pentateuch does undoubtedly claim to be divine in origin, mediated through Moses. Thus Moses should be looked to as the original human author. Indeed, as stated above, the Pentateuch looks like a life of Moses, with an introduction. But this need not mean that he wrote every word of the present Pentateuch. It seems likely that the spelling and the grammar of the Pentateuch were revised to keep it intelligible for later readers. Also, a number of features in the text look like clarifications for a later age. But this is quite different from supposing that the Pentateuch was essentially composed in a later age. Rather, it should be seen as originating in Moses' time but undergoing some slight revision in later eras so later readers could understand its message and apply it to their own situations.

Theme

The theme of the Pentateuch is announced in Genesis 12:1–3, the call of Abraham: "Go from your country . . . to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Here God promises Abraham four things: (1) a land to live in; (2) numerous descendants ("a great nation"); (3) blessing (divinely granted success) for himself; and (4) blessing through him for all the nations of the world. God's benefit for the nations is the climax or goal of the promises: the preceding promises of land, descendants, and personal blessing are steps on the way to the final goal of universal blessing.

Each time God appears to the patriarchs, the promises are elaborated and made more specific. For example, the promise of an unidentified "land" in Genesis 12:1 becomes "this land" in Genesis 12:7 and "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" in Genesis 17:8.

The fulfillment of these promises to Abraham constitutes the story line of the Pentateuch. It is a story of gradual and often difficult fulfillment. The birth of children to produce a great nation is no easy matter: the patriarchs' wives—Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel—all have great trouble conceiving (Gen. 17:17; 25:21; 30:1). But by the time they enter Egypt, Jacob's family numbers 70 (Gen. 46:27; Ex. 1:5). Af-

ter many years in Egypt they have become so numerous that the Egyptians perceive them as a threat (Ex. 1:7–10), and when the first census is taken, they total 603,550 fighting men (Num. 1:46).

Similarly the promise of land is very slow in being fulfilled. Abraham acquires a well at Beersheba, and a burial plot for Sarah at Hebron (Gen. 21:30–31; 23:1–20). Jacob bought some land near Shechem (Gen. 33:19), but then late in life he and the rest of the family emigrated to Egypt (Genesis 46–50). The book of Exodus begins with the hope of a quick return to Canaan, but the stubbornness of Pharaoh delays Israel's departure. Their journey through the Sinai wilderness is eventful, and after about a year they reach Kadesh on the very borders of Canaan. There, scared by the report of some of the spies, the people rebel against Moses and the God-given promises, so they are condemned to wander in the wilderness for 40 years (Numbers 13–14). And of course the Pentateuch ends with Moses dying outside the Promised Land and the people hoping to enter it.

For these reasons the theme of the Pentateuch has been described as "the *partial* fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs." Such a description certainly fits the climactic promise that through Abraham and his descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed. The closest fulfillment of this in the Pentateuch is Joseph saving Egypt and the surrounding lands from starvation in the seven-year famine. But later on, Israel is seen as a threat by other peoples in the region such as the Moabites, Midianites, and Amorites. It is not apparent how or when all the peoples of the world will be blessed. At the end of the Pentateuch that, like the promise of land, still awaits fulfillment.

But the promise of blessing to the patriarchs and their descendants is abundantly fulfilled within the Pentateuch—despite their frequent lack of faith and their willful rebellion. For example, after Abraham has lied about his wife and allowed her to be taken by a foreign king, the pair escape, greatly enriched (Genesis 12; 20). Jacob, forced to flee from home after cheating his father, eventually returns with great flocks and herds to meet a forgiving brother (Genesis 27–33). The nation of Israel breaks the first two commandments by making the golden calf, yet enjoys the privilege of God dwelling among them in the tabernacle (Exodus 32–40). The Pentateuch is thus *a story of divine mercy to a wayward people*.

However, alongside this account of God's grace must be set *the importance of the law and right behavior*. The opening chapters of Genesis set out the pattern of life that everyone should follow: monogamy, Sabbath observance, rejection of personal vengeance and violence—principles that even foreigners living in ancient Israel were expected to observe. But Israel was chosen to mediate between God and the nations and to demonstrate in finer detail what God expected of human society, so that other peoples would exclaim, "What great nation has a god so near to it . . . ? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law . . . ?" (Deut. 4:7–8).

To encourage Israel's compliance with all the law revealed at Sinai, it was embedded in a covenant. This involved Israel giving its assent to the Ten Commandments and the other laws on worship, personal behavior, crime, and so on. Obedience to these laws guaranteed Israel's future blessing and prosperity, whereas disobedience would be punished by crop failure, infertility, loss of God's presence, defeat by enemies, and eventually exile to a foreign land (see Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

These covenantal principles—that *God will bless Israel when she keeps the law and punish her when she does not*—pervade the rest of the OT. The book of Joshua demonstrates that fidelity to the law led to the successful conquest of the land, while the books of Judges and Kings show that Israel's apostasy to other gods led to defeat by her enemies. The argument of the prophets is essentially that Israel's failure to keep the law puts her at risk of experiencing the divine punishments set out in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

From NT times, Christians have seen the promises in the Pentateuch as finding their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is the offspring of the woman who bruises the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). He is the one through whom "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). He is the star and scepter who shall rise out of Israel (Num. 24:17). More than this, many heroes of the OT have been seen as types of Christ. Jesus is the second Adam. He is the true Israel (Jacob), whose life sums up the experience of the nation.

But preeminently Jesus is seen as the new and greater Moses. As Moses declared God's law for Israel, so Jesus declares and embodies God's word to the nations. As Moses suffered and died outside the land so that his people could enter it, so the Son of God died on earth so that his people might enter heaven. It was observed that the filling of the tabernacle with the glory of God was the climax of the Pentateuch (Ex. 40:34–38). So too "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory" (John 1:14). The goal of the entire Bible is that humans everywhere should glorify the God whose glory has confronted them. Lost sight of in Eden, this goal reappears through Moses, on its way to final fulfillment through Christ. ◂

INTRODUCTION TO

GENESIS

Author, Title, and Date

The English title "Genesis" comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch and means "origin," a very apt title because Genesis is all about origins—of the world, of the human race, of sin, and of the Jewish people. The Hebrew title is translated "In the Beginning," using the first phrase in the book.

Traditionally Genesis, like the rest of the Pentateuch, has been ascribed to Moses. The other books of the Pentateuch relate Moses' life and his role in bringing Israel to the borders of Canaan, and parts of these books are expressly said to have been written by Moses (e.g., Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:24). Genesis is clearly an introduction to the books that follow, so it is natural to suppose that if Moses was responsible for their composition, he must also have been the author of Genesis (cf. John 5:46). This understanding of the Pentateuch's origin was the view of Jews and Christians from pre-Christian times until the nineteenth century.

But as explained in the Introduction to the Pentateuch, pp. 35–37, this traditional view came to be rejected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by most critical scholars, who believed that Genesis and the other books had been composed over a long period of time and reached their final form in the fifth century B.C. In recent decades, however, scholars have become increasingly uncertain about these ideas. It has been recognized that the arguments for the late composition of the Pentateuch out of a variety of sources are flimsy and far from being cast-iron proofs. This is not to deny that the book of Genesis contains post-Mosaic elements, such as the place names "Dan" and "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Gen. 14:14; 15:7), or that the Hebrew of Genesis has been modernized somewhat, but this is to be expected in a sacred text preserved for the instruction of later generations. If they were to understand the text, place names and archaic language would have had to be revised.

Throughout the OT period, the stories of Genesis would have been a great encouragement to faith. Readers must envisage these stories being read to the people at the great festivals in Jerusalem, or recited by visiting Levites in the villages throughout the land. Hearing them, the people of David's time could rejoice that the promises to Abraham about inheriting the land from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River (15:18) had more or less been fulfilled in their day. On the other hand, in exile in Babylon, the Jews could have drawn comfort from the fact that the land of Canaan was promised to them forever (17:8). And when the exiles started to return, they felt that those promises were being fulfilled (Nehemiah 9). So it is possible that the stories were slightly updated as they were retold, but there is no evidence of substantial changes being made.

In fact, Genesis seems to reflect very well its origin in the second millennium B.C. (Moses lived in the 1500s or 1300s). For example, the flood story finds its best parallels in the Atrahasis and Gilgamesh epics and in the Sumerian flood story, which were composed c. 1600 B.C., while the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 find a parallel in the Sumerian King List, dated about 1900 B.C. As far as the patriarchal stories are concerned, many features show that they are at home in the early second millennium. Their names are typical of that period, and many family customs correspond to what is known from that era. The rise of Joseph to be vizier (chief adviser) of Egypt, though not mentioned in Egyptian texts, is quite feasible in the era of the Hyksos (Semitic rulers of Egypt, c. 1600 B.C.). Whatever date is preferred for Moses and the composition of the Pentateuch, several centuries must have separated him from the patriarchs, during which the stories about them were presumably

passed on by word of mouth, or perhaps by some kind of early written record that is now lost. In any case, these parallels confirm that the history recorded in Genesis is quite reliable.

Place in the Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are called by the Jews "the Law," and by Christians "the Pentateuch" or "the Five Books of Moses." The overall theme of the Pentateuch is God's covenant with Israel through Moses, which established Israel as a theocracy (a nation where God's directives rule the civil, social, and religious spheres) for the sake of the whole world. In view of the authorship discussion above, it is reasonable to consider the first audience of the Pentateuch to be Israel in the wilderness (either the generation that left Egypt or their children). Genesis, as the first volume of this first section of the Bible, orients the reader to the rest of the Pentateuch, and thus to the rest of the Bible. It explains in story form the nature and character of God, and the place of man in God's creation. It offers an analysis of sin and its consequences, and describes God's reaction to it (and thus shows why the true religion must be redemptive). It records the call of Abraham, through whom all the nations of the world will be blessed, and traces the birth and careers of the forefathers of the nation of Israel, leading to Israel in Egypt. The fact that Yahweh is the universal Creator shows why Israel can have a message for all mankind. At the same time Genesis sets out models of behavior, both in its opening chapters and in the examples of the patriarchs' faithful obedience.

Genesis is therefore a book of instruction, and this is why Jews include it in the Law, for the Hebrew word *torah*, usually translated "law," has the broader sense of "instruction." It can rightly be considered the "First Book of Moses" because of its role as the prelude to the following four books, Exodus to Deuteronomy, which are structured around the life of Moses. As explained in the Introduction to the Pentateuch, pp. 35–37, the first five books of the Bible are foundational to the rest, and Genesis is the foundation of the Pentateuch.

Arrangement of the Book

Genesis divides into two major sections: (1) the primeval history of the world before Abraham (chs. 1–11); (2) the history of the patriarchs (chs. 12–50). The proportions of the two sections are significant: essentially chapters 1–11 are setting the stage for the main drama, namely, God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons—the subject of chapters 12–50.

Genesis is about beginnings and generations. Starting with the divine ordering of creation, it follows for many generations a family line that takes the reader from Adam to Jacob and his sons (see diagram, p. 41). This family line forms the backbone of Genesis, links its disparate elements into a cohesive whole, and explains the distinctive literary features that set it apart from other OT narrative books.

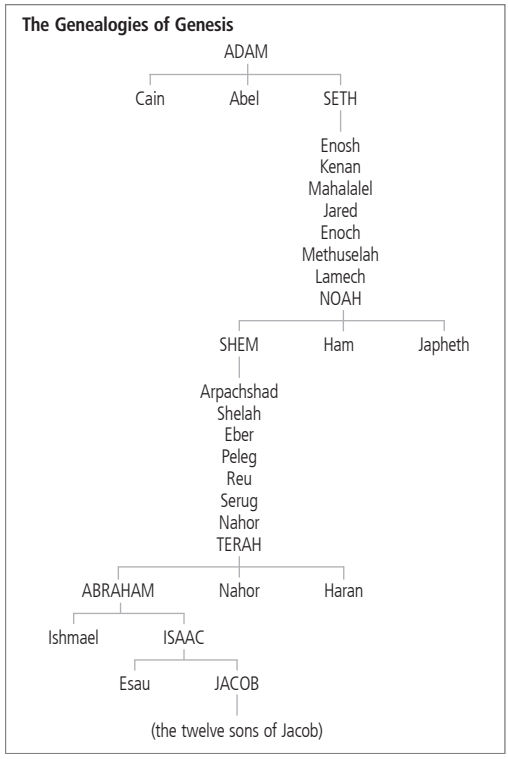
One of the hallmarks of Genesis is the heading or title "These are the generations of . . ." (2:4; 5:1 with slight variant; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2; see chart below). Each heading functions like a zoom lens by focusing attention

The Generations of Genesis

Primeval History (1:1–11:26)			
Introduction	**General heading**	**Specific heading**	**Section introduced**
2:4	These are the generations of	the heavens and the earth	2:4–4:26
5:1	These are the generations of	Adam	5:1–6:8
6:9	These are the generations of	Noah	6:9–9:29
10:1	These are the generations of	the sons of Noah	10:1–11:9
11:10	These are the generations of	Shem	11:10–26
Patriarchal History (11:27–50:26)			
11:27	These are the generations of	Terah	11:27–25:11
25:12	These are the generations of	Ishmael	25:12–18
25:19	These are the generations of	Isaac	25:19–35:29
36:1, 9	These are the generations of	Esau	36:1–37:1
37:2	These are the generations of	Jacob	37:2–50:26

on a smaller part of the total picture that has been shown in the preceding section, and the heading thus serves as an introduction to the following section. As Genesis describes how the earth's population increases over many generations, the reader's attention is constantly being directed toward one particular person in each generation and his descendants.

Another important feature of Genesis is its particular interest in genealogies. Although these can be off-putting for modern readers, lacking the dramatic tension of the narrative episodes, they contribute in a special way to the structure of Genesis (as well as to its sense of history; see Genesis and History). Different types of genealogy are used: linear and segmented. Genesis has two *linear genealogies* that cover 10 generations, naming only one ancestor in each generation. These play an important role in linking major narrative sections. The period of Adam and Eve is linked to Noah by the genealogy in chapter 5. A similar genealogy in 11:10–26 connects Noah's son Shem with Abraham. While the linear genealogies are integral to the central family line, Genesis has a number of *segmented genealogies* that perform a subsidiary function within the book. Giving limited information about characters of secondary interest, the segmented genealogies provide branched family trees that usually cover only a few generations (see 10:1–32; 25:12–18; 36:1–8; 36:9–43). Whereas the linear genealogies take readers swiftly from "A" to "B" as part of a longer journey, the segmented genealogies are cul-de-sacs (see diagram above).



Theme

The theme of Genesis is creation, sin, and recreation. It tells how God created the world as very good, but that it was destroyed in the flood as a result of man's disobedience. The new world after the flood was also spoiled by human sin (ch. 11). The call of Abraham, through whom all the nations would be blessed, gives hope that God's purpose will eventually be realized through Abraham's descendants (ch. 49).

Key Themes

1. The Lord God, being both transcendent and immanent, having created the earth to be his dwelling place, commissions human beings as his priestly vice-regents or representatives so that they might fill the earth and caringly govern the other creatures (1:1–2:25).

2. Abandoning their priestly and royal duties, the human couple rebel against God and betray him by acting on the serpent's suggestions; their willful disobedience radically affects human nature and the harmonious order of creation (3:1–24; 6:5–6).

3. God graciously announces that the woman's offspring will redeem humanity from the serpent's tyranny. Genesis then traces a unique family line, highlighting how its members enjoy a special relationship with God and are a source of blessing to a world that lies under the curse of God (3:15; 4:25; 5:2; 6:8–9; 11:10–26; 12:1–3; 17:4–6; 22:16–18; 26:3–4, 24; 27:27–29; 28:14; 30:27–30; 39:5; 49:22–26).

4. As a result of the man's disobedience, his unique relationship with the ground degenerates, resulting in hard toil and even famine. While Genesis graphically illustrates the effects of this broken relationship, it also portrays the special family line as bringing relief from such hardship (3:17–19; 5:29; 9:20; 26:12–33; 41:1–57; 47:13–26; 50:19–21).

5. While the woman's punishment centers on pain in bearing children (3:16), women play an essential role in continuing the unique family line; with God's help even barrenness is overcome (11:30; 21:1–7; 25:21; 29:31–30:24; 38:1–30).

6. The corruption of human nature causes families

to be torn apart as brotherly affection is replaced by resentment and hatred (4:1–16; 13:5–8; 25:22–23, 29–34; 27:41–45; 37:2–35). Although Genesis highlights the reality of family strife, the members of the family line have the potential to be agents of reconciliation (13:8–11; 33:1–11; 45:1–28; 50:15–21).

7. Whereas exile from Eden and dispersion throughout the earth are used by God to punish the wicked (3:22–24; 4:12–16; 11:9), the promise of land is a sign of divine favor (12:1–2, 7; 13:14–17; 15:7–21; 26:2–3; 28:13–14; 50:24).

8. Although God is prepared to destroy almost the whole of humanity because of its corruption (6:7, 11–12; 18:17–33), he still desires that the earth should be populated by persons who are righteous (1:28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 15:1–5; 17:2; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4).

History of Salvation Summary

Modern readers are likely to be familiar with selected parts of Genesis. Most, however, struggle to comprehend how the disparate elements of the book combine to form a unified account. Consequently, individual episodes are often read in isolation, with an inadequate appreciation of how the larger literary context shapes the passage in question. Grasping the big picture of Genesis is very important.

Central to this picture is the family line that forms the backbone of the entire book. The importance of this lineage cannot be overstated, for beginning in 3:15 the offspring of the woman becomes the source of hope for the defeat of the serpent and the restoration of the earth and everything in it. In due course the woman's offspring is traced through Seth to Noah, a "righteous man" (6:9) who found favor with God, so that God saved him and his family from being destroyed in the flood. From Noah the family line moves to Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed (12:1–3). When God establishes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, the divine promise of blessing is linked to a future royal descendant traced through Abraham's son Isaac.

As Genesis proceeds, the promise of blessing becomes intimately connected with the firstborn son. Yet this coincides with an unusual motif within the book. The status of firstborn does not always go to the son born first. When twins are born to Isaac, a long struggle takes place between Esau and his younger brother Jacob. After Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew (25:29–34), Jacob deceptively gets from Isaac the firstborn blessing (27:27–29). Expressed in terms that echo God's promise to Abraham, this blessing affirms Jacob as the one through whom the royal line will continue.

Joseph's promotion over Reuben to the status of firstborn, along with his dreams, initially indicates that the potential royal line will continue through him. Although he is sold into slavery by his brothers, his subsequent governorship of Egypt confirms that God is with him. Later, when the family is reunited and Jacob pronounces the blessing of the firstborn on Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, the future royal line is linked to the descendants of Ephraim (48:13–19). Genesis, however, contains an interesting twist. In spite of Joseph's importance, his older brother Judah undergoes a remarkable transformation, and kingship is also associated with his descendants (49:8–12).

Beyond Genesis, the line of Ephraim assumes leadership of Israel when Joshua leads the people into the land of Canaan. In the time of Samuel, however, the Ephraimites are rejected when God chooses David to establish the first dynasty in Israel (see Ps. 78:67–72). Eventually, the divine promises linked to the family line in Genesis come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God who becomes by adoption "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1; see Acts 3:25–26; Gal. 3:16). By looking forward to a special King who will mediate God's blessing to humanity, Genesis provides the foundation on which the rest of the Bible stands.

In saying that Genesis points forward to Jesus Christ, one must be careful because Genesis does not provide a full-grown Christology. What begins in Genesis as a divine promise of salvation linked to the woman's offspring is expanded throughout the rest of the OT. Nevertheless, the ideas that are introduced in Genesis are fully consistent with the final reality.

While the concept of *the nations' being blessed through a future King* is at the heart of Genesis, other related themes are also developed. One of the most important of these is the divine promise to Abraham that he will become a *great nation* (Gen. 12:2). Central to this are the twin concepts of *land* and *descendants*, both being essential components of nationhood.

This emphasis on a nation has to be understood in the light of God's purpose for the earth. It is to be his dwelling place, where he will live surrounded by a human population of royal priests. When Adam and Eve betray God, however, they forfeit their special status. Later, when God comes to dwell among the Israelites, they as a nation are given the opportunity to be a royal priesthood (Ex. 19:6). Unfortunately, they never fully realize all that God wants them to be. Yet even through failure, they

provide an indication of how the earth should be under God's rule.

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the national theocracy of Israel is replaced by an international royal priesthood that includes Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (1 Pet. 2:9). Although the church becomes the dwelling place of God on earth, evil still remains. Only after the return of Christ and the final judgment will all things be restored and a new earth be created. At that time the new Jerusalem will mark the completion of the divine project that began in Genesis. John's vision of the new earth in Revelation 21–22 has close affinities with Genesis 1–2.

(For an explanation of the "History of Salvation," see the Overview of the Bible, pp. 23–26. See also History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ, pp. 2635–2661.)

Genesis and History

Clearly all the events in Genesis long predate the time of Moses—this is so with the patriarchs (chs. 12–50) and much more so with the primeval period (chs. 1–11). Further, there are important parallels between chapters 1–11 and stories of ancient times from Mesopotamia (e.g., creation and flood). Since these stories are generally called "myths," some suggest that this is the right category for the stories in chapters 1–11. Some even argue that the stories of the patriarchs are legends, with only a loose connection to actual people and events. In order to sort through these issues, the first question is whether Genesis claims to record "history."

In order to address this issue, it is crucial to have a good, clear, and precise definition of "history." In ordinary language, the word simply refers to an account of events that the author believes to have happened; in and of itself, the label "history" makes no comment about whether the account is complete, unbiased, free from divine activity, in strict chronological sequence, or with or without figurative and imaginative (sometimes called mythological) elements.

With this definition, it is easy to see that Genesis aims to record actual events rather than mythical events. The book explains to its Jewish audience how their ancestors came to be in Egypt; the genealogies connect Jacob and his children with the ancient generations, going back to Adam and Eve, the original pair of humans. Further, the book is *narrative prose*, whose main function in the Bible is to recount history. The creation account, 1:1–2:3, is stylistically different from the rest of the book; it is *exalted prose*, and its historicity is assumed elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Ps. 136:4–9). (See Genesis and Science.)

The similarities of Genesis 1–11 to the Mesopotamian stories actually support the conclusion that these chapters intend to record history. The Mesopotamian stories clearly aim to celebrate actual historical events, but they do so in "mythological" terms. The Genesis stories are fundamentally different, however, in that they recount the activities of the one true God. Genesis, like the Mesopotamian stories, provides the opening act of a grand narrative that conveys a particular worldview. In order to provide the necessary grounding for this worldview, the author needed to use real events (albeit theologically interpreted). In this way Genesis aims to provide a true record of these events, in harmony with the biblical worldview. That worldview includes the notions that Yahweh, the deity of Israel, is the universal Creator of heaven and earth, who made mankind to know and love him; that all mankind fell through the disobedience of Adam and Eve; and that God chose Israel to be the vehicle by which all mankind would receive the blessing of knowing the true God. Clearly, that worldview requires the events of Genesis to be historical.

At the same time, it is not possible to answer all questions arising from Genesis. For example, faithful interpreters of the book disagree on just how long Adam lived before Abraham, or even how long the creation period lasted (see Genesis and Science). There is not enough material here for a complete life of Abraham. Even the name of the pharaoh that Joseph served is not mentioned. It is possible through archaeological research to locate some of the Genesis events in ancient Near Eastern history, at least in order to offer a plausible scenario for them. But it remains true that Moses has not sought to provide a comprehensive retelling of ancient days; his purpose lay elsewhere.

Genesis and Science

The relation of Genesis to science is primarily a question of how one reads the accounts of creation and fall (chs. 1–3) and of the flood (chs. 6–9). What kind of "days" does Genesis 1 describe? How long ago is this supposed to have happened? Were all species created as they are now? Were Adam and Eve real people? Are all people descended from them? How much of the earth did Noah's flood cover? How much impact did it have on geological formations?

Faithful interpreters have offered arguments for taking the creation week of Genesis 1 as a regular week with ordinary days (the "calendar day" reading); or as a sequence of geological ages (the "day-age" reading); or as God's "workdays," analogous to a human workweek (the "analogical days" view); or as a literary device to portray the creation week *as if* it were a workweek, but without concern for temporal sequence (the "literary framework" view). Some have suggested that Genesis 1:2, "the earth was without form and void," describes a condition that resulted from Satan's primeval rebellion, which preceded the creation week (the "gap theory"). There have been other readings as well, but these five are the most common.

None of these views requires denying that Genesis 1 is historical, so long as the discussion in the section on Genesis and History is kept in mind. Each of these readings can be squared with other biblical passages that reflect on creation. The most important of these is Exodus 20:11, "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day": since this passage echoes Genesis 1:1–2:3, the word "day" here need mean only what it means in Genesis 1. Therefore, it does not *require* an ordinary-day interpretation, nor does it *preclude* an ordinary-day interpretation. The arguments for and against these different views involve detailed treatment of the Hebrew (going far beyond the question of the meaning of "day"), and assessing these arguments would go beyond the goal of this discussion.

A further question involves the genealogies: do they describe direct father-to-son descent, or do they allow for gaps? The Hebrew term "father" can be used of a distant ancestor, and "son" can refer to a distant descendant. Likewise, "to father" can mean "to become the ancestor of." In other words, the conventions for Hebrew genealogies allow for gaps; genealogies are not given to indicate a length of time.

These issues become less pressing when it is recalled that no biblical passage ever actually purports to count up the length of the creation week (outside of Ex. 20:11) and that no biblical author adds up the life spans in the genealogies to compute absolute time.

Should Genesis 1 be called a "scientific account"? Again, it is crucial to have a careful definition. Does Genesis 1 record a true account of the origin of the material universe? To that question, the answer must be yes. On the other hand, does Genesis 1 provide information in a way that corresponds to the purposes of modern science? To this question the answer is no. Consider some of the challenges. For example, the term "kind" does not correspond to the notion of "species"; it simply means "category," and could refer to a species, or a family, or an even more general taxonomic group. Indeed, the plants are put into two general categories, small seed-bearing plants and larger woody plants. The land animals are classified as domesticable stock animals ("livestock"); small things such as mice, lizards, and spiders ("creeping things"); and larger game and predatory animals ("beasts of the earth"). Indeed, no species, other than man, gets its proper Hebrew name. Not even the sun and moon get their ordinary Hebrew names (1:16). The text says nothing about the process by which "the earth brought forth vegetation" (1:12), or by which the various kinds of animals appeared—although the fact that it was in response to God's command indicates that it was not due to any natural powers inherent in the material universe itself.

This account is well cast for its main purpose, which was to enable a community of nomadic shepherds in the Sinai desert to celebrate the boundless creative goodness of the Creator; it does not say why, e.g., a spider is different from a snake, nor does it comment on what genetic relationship there might be between various creatures. At the same time, when the passage is received according to its purpose, it shapes a worldview in which science is at home (probably the only worldview that really makes science possible). This is a concept of a world that a good and wise God made, perfectly suited for humans to enjoy and to rule. The things in the world have natures that people can know, at least in part. Human senses and intelligence are the right tools for discerning and saying true things about the world. (The effects of sin, of course, can interfere with this process.)

It is clear that Adam and Eve are presented as real people. Their role in the story, as the channel by which sin came into the world, implies that they are seen as the headwaters of the human race. The image of God distinguishes them from all the animals, and is a special bestowal of God (i.e., not a purely "natural" development). It is no wonder that all human beings share capacities for language, moral judgment, rationality, and appreciation for beauty, unlike and beyond the powers observed in the animals; any science that ignores this fact does not faithfully describe reality. The biblical worldview leads one to expect as well that all humans now share a need for God and a bent toward sin, as well as a possibility for faith in the true God.

One must take similar care in reading the flood story. The notes will discuss the extent to which Moses intended to describe the flood's coverage of the globe. Certainly the description of the flood

implies that it was widespread and catastrophic, but there are difficulties in making confident claims that the account is geared to answering the question of just how widespread. Thus, it would be incautious to attribute to the flood all the geological formations observed today—the strata, the fossils, the deformations, and so on. Geologists agree that catastrophic events, such as volcanic eruptions and large-scale floods, have had great impact on the landscape; it is questionable, though, whether these events can in fact achieve all that might be claimed for them. Again, such matters do not come within the author's own scope, which is to stress the interest that God has in all mankind.

Thus, even though it is wrong to use Genesis as if it were directly furnishing information in modern scientific form, it is nonetheless crucial to affirm its historical account and its God-centered worldview in order to provide a proper foundation for doing good science.

Reading Genesis in the Twenty-first Century

The book of Genesis originated thousands of years ago—a fact easily forgotten when it is read in a modern English translation. It was composed in an age and culture far removed from the experiences of most modern readers. Due allowance must be made for this distance between text and reader. While modern English translations attempt to bridge this gap, it is not always possible to replicate the nuances and wordplays of the Hebrew original. Moreover, Genesis employs literary techniques not commonly used today. Woven into stories set in an ancient Near Eastern culture, these features present obstacles that can be overcome only through patient study of the text.

Interpreting Genesis is further complicated by the fact that it is also the inspired Word of God. This leads some readers to suppose that this infallible text will be omniscient, like its divine author. They then look for answers to questions that Genesis is not trying to answer. Yet like any other part of the Bible, Genesis is limited and selective in the information that it conveys; it does not tell readers everything that they could possibly want to know. Frequently, readers may ask questions, legitimate in themselves, that are not answered by the text. Genesis does not tell, for instance, how the serpent came to be God's enemy or where Cain found a wife. Such questions could be multiplied many times. Consequently, one's natural curiosity must be correctly channeled, for the inspired author of Genesis intentionally communicates only certain things. Yet the text does not cease to be the Word of God simply because it is limited in what it tells the reader; it need not be exhaustive in order to be true.

These observations regarding the limitations of Genesis as a literary text are especially important when one turns to its opening chapters. The sections on Genesis and History and Genesis and Science show why it is right to say that these chapters are meant to convey history, and that they present a worldview that gives science its proper home. At the same time, this is not the same as saying that they offer their message in a form that modern readers are accustomed to reading. To read Genesis well, it is helpful to have some understanding of ancient literary forms. Thus, it would be hasty to conclude that Genesis conflicts with a proper understanding of either science or historiography (whose standard conclusions at any given time are also liable to revision). Put simply, the author of Genesis writes to celebrate the fact that God made the world, not to explain the details of how he made it.

This difference in approach means that Genesis 1 does not address the mechanics of creation. Rather, it simply says that God brought the heavens and the earth into being by means of his spoken word ("And God said"); and it explains that God ordered the earth in terms of time and space, revealing that people were originally created by God and appointed by God to be his representatives on earth, to rule it for his glory and the benefit of all creation. To the extent that scientists deny that God is the Creator of all things, a fundamental conflict will exist between the foundation and conclusions of such scientific work and the Bible. At the same time, to the extent that the focus of science is on understanding and describing the world that God created, no conflict between the Bible and scientific work needs to exist. Understood in terms of what the author of Genesis seeks to communicate, science as well as the Bible have a valuable and legitimate place. But as divine revelation, Genesis provides knowledge that cannot be discovered by human investigation. Were it otherwise, there would be no need for Genesis to be a part of the Bible.

The modern reader receives Genesis best, then, when he or she cooperates with Moses' own purpose in writing the book. It is the front end of the grand narrative of creation, fall, and redemption—a narrative that has reached a glorious point in the resurrection of Jesus, the down payment of its even more glorious consummation. The story is of a good world made by a good God and man's role in that world, the story of how the stain of sin affects everything, the story of how God intends to reverse those effects. Thus, the life that one lives in the body, one's connection to all mankind, one's connection to and

The Near East at the Time of Genesis
c. 2000 B.C.
The book of Genesis describes events in the ancient Near East from the beginnings of civilization to the relocation of Jacob's (Israel's) family in Egypt. The stories of Genesis are set among some of the oldest nations in the world, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Elam.

responsibility for the created world, one's dependence on God's grace—all are founded on the story that begins in Genesis. The Christian economy, like the covenant made at Sinai, involves a need for moral purity, lived in the body; physical ordinances by which God communicates his grace; a community to which the faithful are bound—all affirming God's original creation intent. Further, Genesis offers a paradigm for God's dealings with his creation, namely, the representative: Adam represented mankind and the world, and the consequences of his fall pass to all those whom he represented. This provides the framework for the Christian understanding of how Jesus does his representative work, which will have consequences both for the people he represents and for the rest of creation.

Literary Features

As already mentioned, Genesis is a history book, with its history packaged in literary forms.

Genesis is an anthology of diverse forms. It is more highly unified than most anthologies, however, because all of the material falls into the overall genre of historical narrative. But in turn, the history is not packaged as it is in the history books with which modern readers are familiar. Instead, the book of Genesis is primarily a collection of what may be called hero stories—episodic tales focused on a central character with whom the reader is to sympathize—with interspersed genealogies. The first three chapters belong to a genre known as the story of origins. Genesis also has affinities with the epic genre because the story is one of universal history (chs. 1–11) and the origins of the nation of Israel (chs. 12–50).

A literary approach to the book of Genesis requires that the reader think correctly about the currently recognized concept of a literary "hero." This approach has three crucial principles: (1) real life provides the materials for a hero, but the image of the hero is always achieved by a selection and distillation of items drawn from a larger body of information about a person; (2) cultures celebrate heroes as a way of codifying their own ideals, values, and virtues; and (3) literary heroes are representative of the culture producing them and, in some ways, of people universally. The heroes in these stories are not always "heroic": they are simply the human center of attention in the story; their actions are brave or cowardly or noble or base, or (more often) a complex mixture of all these characteristics. As the narrative proceeds, the reader should be struck with the *contingencies*—that is, the episodes could have turned out differently, perhaps even should have turned out differently. God's providential care for his people uses their imperfections to achieve his purposes for them. The original audience would then see their own situations as permeated with God's purpose, and would thus learn to embrace their lives as a gift from God, to be lived as he directs. An example is the servant's finding Rebekah to be Isaac's wife (ch. 24). Any of these

events could have turned out differently, and then Isaac and Rebekah would never have married—perhaps, in view of 24:3–8, Isaac would not have married at all, and then where would the promises to Abraham be? But God kept his promise (one is not obligated to think that everything the servant did was right), and the first readers could learn to see themselves under God's care as the result of reflection on what took place. The modern Christian reader is likewise the heir and beneficiary of this story.

Unifying literary motifs include: (1) The characterization of God and the story of his dealings with people. (2) The sinfulness of the human race and individuals within it. (3) The story of the unfolding plan of God to redeem a people for himself despite human waywardness. (4) The " hero story" as the nearly constant genre. (5) Characters, characters, characters: as one reads Genesis, one is continually drawn into encounters with unforgettable characters and their stories, and lessons about wisdom and folly that can be learned from them.

Outline

I. Primeval History (1:1–11:26)
   A. God's creation and ordering of heaven and earth (1:1–2:3)
   B. Earth's first people (2:4–4:26)
      1. The man and woman in the sanctuary of Eden (2:4–25)
      2. The couple rebels against God (3:1–24)
      3. Adam and Eve's sons (4:1–26)
   C. Adam's descendants (5:1–6:8)
      1. The family line from Adam to Noah (5:1–32)
      2. The wickedness of humanity (6:1–8)
   D. Noah's descendants (6:9–9:29)
      1. Noah and the flood (6:9–9:19)
      2. The cursing of Canaan (9:20–29)
   E. The descendants of Noah's sons (10:1–11:9)
      1. The clans, languages, lands, and nations (10:1–32)
      2. The Tower of Babel (11:1–9)
   F. Shem's descendants (11:10–26)

II. Patriarchal History (11:27–50:26)
   A. Terah's descendants (11:27–25:18)
      1. A brief introduction to Terah's family (11:27–32)
      2. Abram's migration to Canaan (12:1–9)
      3. Abram in Egypt (12:10–20)
      4. Abram and Lot separate (13:1–18)
      5. Abram's rescue of Lot (14:1–24)
      6. God's covenant with Abram (15:1–21)
      7. The birth of Ishmael (16:1–16)
      8. The covenant of circumcision (17:1–27)
      9. The destruction of Sodom (18:1–19:29)
      10. Lot's relationship with his daughters (19:30–38)
      11. Abimelech takes Sarah into his harem (20:1–18)
      12. The birth of Isaac (21:1–21)
      13. Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham (21:22–34)
      14. The testing of Abraham (22:1–19)
      15. Nahor's children (22:20–24)
      16. The death and burial of Sarah (23:1–20)
      17. A wife for Isaac (24:1–67)
      18. The death of Abraham (25:1–11)
      19. The genealogy of Ishmael (25:12–18)
   B. Isaac's descendants (25:19–37:1)
      1. The birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19–26)
      2. Esau sells his birthright (25:27–34)
      3. Isaac in Gerar (26:1–35)

4. Isaac blesses Jacob (27:1–45)
5. Jacob is sent to find a wife (27:46–28:9)
6. Jacob at Bethel (28:10–22)
7. Jacob meets Rachel and Laban (29:1–14)
8. Jacob marries Leah and Rachel (29:15–30)
9. Jacob's children (29:31–30:24)
10. Jacob prepares to return to Canaan (30:25–31:18)
11. Laban accuses Jacob in Gilead (31:19–55)
12. Jacob prepares to meet Esau again (32:1–21)
13. Jacob encounters God at Peniel (32:22–32)
14. Jacob is reconciled with Esau (33:1–20)
15. The rape of Dinah (34:1–31)
16. Jacob's onward journey to Hebron (35:1–29)
17. Esau's descendants in Edom (36:1–37:1)

C. Jacob's descendants (37:2–50:26)
1. Joseph is sold into slavery (37:2–36)
2. Judah and Tamar (38:1–30)
3. Joseph in Egypt (39:1–23)
4. Joseph and the king's prisoners (40:1–23)
5. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams (41:1–57)
6. The brothers' first journey to Egypt (42:1–38)
7. Joseph's brothers return to Egypt (43:1–34)
8. Benjamin is accused of stealing (44:1–34)
9. Joseph discloses his identity (45:1–28)
10. Jacob's family relocates to Egypt (46:1–27)
11. Jacob's family settles in Egypt (46:28–47:12)
12. Joseph oversees the famine response in Egypt (47:13–26)
13. Jacob requests to be buried in Canaan (47:27–31)
14. Jacob's blessing of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh (48:1–22)
15. Jacob blesses his 12 sons (49:1–28)
16. The death and burial of Jacob (49:29–50:14)
17. Joseph reassures his brothers (50:15–21)
18. The death of Joseph (50:22–26)

GENESIS

Chapter 1

1[a] 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
2[b] Jer. 4:23

The Creation of the World

1 In the [a]beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was [b]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

3 And God said, [c]"Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was
good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the
darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
6 And God said, [d]"Let there be an expanse[1] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate
the waters from the waters." 7 And God made[2] the expanse and [e]separated the waters that
were under the expanse from the waters that were [f]above the expanse. And it was so.
8 And God called the expanse Heaven.[3] And there was evening and there was morning,
the second day.
9 And God said, [g]"Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place,
and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth,[4] and the waters
that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
11 And God said, [h]"Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants[5] yielding seed, and fruit trees
bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.
12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds,
and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that
it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.
14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day
from the night. And let them be for [i]signs and for [j]seasons,[6] and for days and years, 15 and
let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was
so. 16 And God [k]made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser

3 [c] 2 Cor. 4:6
6 [d] Job 37:18; Ps. 136:5; Jer. 10:12; 51:15
7 [e] Prov. 8:27-29 [f] Ps. 148:4
9 [g] Job 38:8-11; Ps. 33:7; 136:6; Jer. 5:22; 2 Pet. 3:5
11 [h] Ps. 104:14
14 [i] Jer. 10:2; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:30, 31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25 [j] Ps. 104:19
16 [k] Deut. 4:19; Ps. 136:7-9

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

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. *'asah*, 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 [l]Jer. 31:35
21 [m]Ps. 104:25, 26
22 [n]ch. 8:17; 9:1
26 [o]ch. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8 [p]ch. 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; James 3:9 [q]ch. 9:2; Ps. 8:6-8; James 3:7
27 [r]ch. 2:18, 21-23; 5:2; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6
28 [s]ch. 9:1, 7

light to rule the night—and the stars. **17** And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, **18** to [l]rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds[1] fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." **21** So [m]God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **22** And God blessed them, saying, [n]"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." **23** And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. **25** And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

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

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

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, [s]"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the

[1] Or *flying things*; see Leviticus 11:19–20 [2] 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." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. [t]You shall have them for food. 30 And [u]to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 [v]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 [w]all the host of them. 2 And [x]on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

The Creation of Man and Woman

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

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

[1] Or *open country* [2] Or *earth*; also verse 6

29 [t] ch. 9:3; Ps. 104:14, 15; 145:15, 16
30 [u] Ps. 147:9
31 [v] Eccles. 7:29; 1 Tim. 4:4

Chapter 2

1 [w] Deut. 4:19; Ps. 33:6
2 [x] Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17; Deut. 5:12-14; Heb. 4:4
4 [y] ch. 1:1
5 [z] [ch. 1:11, 12]

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 chiastic) 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

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

no man [a]to work the ground, **6** and a mist[1] was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— **7** then the LORD God formed the man of [b]dust from the ground and [c]breathed into his [d]nostrils the breath of life, and [e]the man became a living creature. **8** And the LORD God planted a [f]garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. **9** And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. [g]The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, [h]and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

15 The LORD God took the man [k]and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep

[1] 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. **16** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of
the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [l]you shall not eat, for in
the day that you eat[1] of it you [m]shall surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; [n]I will make
him a helper fit for[2] him." **19** [o]Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed[3] every
beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and [p]brought them to the man to see what
he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.
20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of
the field. But for Adam[4] there was not found a helper fit for him. **21** So the LORD God caused
a [q]deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up
its place with flesh. **22** And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made[5]
into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man said,

"This at last is [r]bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was [s]taken out of Man."[6]

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

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

17 [l] ch. 3:1-3, 11, 17 [m] Rom. 6:23; James 1:15
18 [n] 1 Cor. 11:9; 1 Tim. 2:13
19 [o] ch. 1:20, 24 [p] Ps. 8:6
21 [q] ch. 15:12; 1 Sam. 26:12
23 [r] ch. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13; [Eph. 5:28-30] [s] 1 Cor. 11:8
24 [t] 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. *'arummim*) and "crafty" (3:1, Hb. *'arum*) links the end of this episode with the start of the next.

Chapter 3
1 [u]Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2
3 [v]ch. 2:17
4 [w]ver. 13; John 8:44; [2 Cor. 11:3]
6 [x]1 Tim. 2:14 [y]ver. 12, 17; Hos. 6:7
7 [z]ver. 5 [a]ch. 2:25
8 [b][Ps. 139:1-12; Jer. 23:23, 24]
10 [c]ver. 7; ch. 2:25

The Fall

3 Now [u]the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

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

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool[3] of the day, and the man and his wife [b]hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"[4] **10** And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, [c]because I was naked, and I hid myself." **11** He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you

[1] In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1–5 [2] Or *to give insight* [3] Hebrew *wind* [4] In Hebrew *you* is singular in verses 9 and 11

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?" 12 The man said, [d]"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, [e]"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and [f]dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring[1] and [g]her offspring;
[h]he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
[i]in pain you shall bring forth children.
[j]Your desire shall be contrary to[2] your husband,
but he shall [k]rule over you."

17 And to Adam he said,

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

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

[1] Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis [2] Or *shall be toward* (see 4:7)

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. *'itstsabon*) 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," *itstsabon*; 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 [l]of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
[m]cursed is the ground because of you;
[n]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;
[o]for you are dust,
and [p]to dust you shall return."

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

22 Then the LORD God said, [q]"Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand [r]and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden [s]to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the [t]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[2] a man with the help of the LORD." 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of [u]the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of [v]the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD [w]had regard for Abel and his

[1] *Eve* sounds like the Hebrew for *life-giver* and resembles the word for *living* [2] *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *gotten*

17 [l]ch. 2:17 [m]ch. 5:29; [Rom. 8:20-22] [n]Eccles. 2:22, 23
19 [o]ch. 2:7; Ps. 103:14 [p]Job 34:15; Ps. 104:29; Eccles. 3:20; 12:7; Rom. 5:12
22 [q]ver. 5 [r]ch. 2:9
23 [s]ch. 2:5
24 [t]Ps. 18:10; 104:4; Heb. 1:7; [Ex. 25:18-22; Ezek. 28:11-16]

Chapter 4

3 [u]Lev. 2:12; Num. 18:12
4 [v]Ex. 13:12; Num. 18:17; Prov. 3:9 [w]Heb. 11:4

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

8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother.[3] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and [a]killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, [b]"I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood [c]is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now [d]you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My [e]punishment is greater than I can bear.[4] 14 Behold, [f]you have driven me today away from the ground, and [g]from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, [h]and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him [i]sevenfold." And the LORD [j]put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod,[5] east of Eden.

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

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

5 [x]{Prov. 21:27}
7 [y]{Eccles. 8:12, 13; Isa. 3:10, 11; Rom. 2:6-11} [z]{ch. 3:16}
8 [a]{Matt. 23:35; Heb. 12:24; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11}
9 [b]{John 8:44}
10 [c]{Heb. 12:24; [Rev. 6:10]}
11 [d]{Deut. 27:24; [Num. 35:33]}
13 [e]{ch. 19:15}
14 [f]{Job 15:20-24} [g]{2 Kgs. 24:20; Ps. 51:11; 143:7; Jer. 52:3} [h]{ch. 9:6; Num. 35:19}
15 [i]{Ps. 79:12} [j]{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 [k] ver. 15
26 [l] 1 Chr. 1:1; Luke 3:38 [m] ch. 5:6 [n] Ps. 116:17; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9

Chapter 5

1 [o] See ch. 1:26, 27
3 [p] ch. 4:25
4 [q] For ver. 4-32, see 1 Chr. 1:1-4; Luke 3:36-38
5 [r] 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 [k] 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[1] for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."
26 To [l] Seth also a son was born, and he called his name [m] Enosh. At that time people began [n] 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, [o] he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man[2] when they were created. 3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and [p] named him Seth. 4 [q] The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. 5 Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, [r] and he died.

[1] *Seth* sounds like the Hebrew for *he appointed* [2] 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.

6 [s]When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. 7 Seth lived after he fathered Enosh
807 years and had other sons and daughters. 8 Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years,
and he died.
9 When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. 10 Enosh lived after he fathered
Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. 11 Thus all the days of Enosh were
905 years, and he died.
12 When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. 13 Kenan lived after he fathered
Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. 14 Thus all the days of Kenan were
910 years, and he died.
15 When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. 16 Mahalalel lived after he fathered
Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. 17 Thus all the days of Mahalalel were
895 years, and he died.
18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered [t]Enoch. 19 Jared lived after he fathered
Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 20 Thus all the days of Jared were 962
years, and he died.
21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. 22 Enoch [u]walked with God[1]
after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days
of Enoch were 365 years. 24 Enoch [u]walked with God, and he was not,[2] [v]for God took him.
25 When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. 26 Methuselah lived after
he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. 27 Thus all the days of
Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.

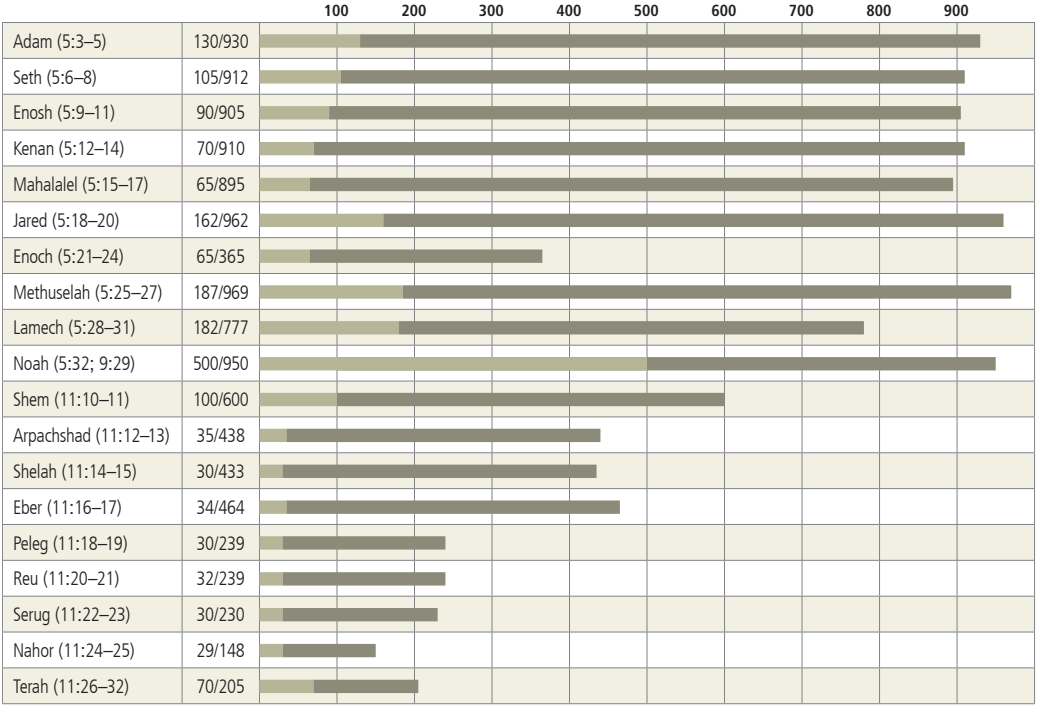
[1] Septuagint *pleased God*; also verse 24 [2] Septuagint *was not found*

6 [s] ch. 4:26
18 [t] Jude 14
22 [u] ver. 24; ch. 6:9; [Mic. 6:8; Mal. 2:6]
24 [u] [See ver. 22 above]
[v] Heb. 11:5; [2 Kgs. 2:11]

5:22–24 The usual pattern of the genealogy (see note on vv. 1–32) is altered with the substitution of the expression **Enoch walked with God**. This is then developed further in v. 24 when the expected phrase "and he died" is replaced by the comment **and he was not, for God took him**. In this passage, and in certain other contexts in Genesis (e.g., 3:8; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15), the Hebrew verb for "walked" is a distinctive form that conveys the sense of an ongoing intimacy with God. Remarkably, because of this special relationship, Enoch does not die (cf. Elijah, 2 Kings 2:1–12). The narrator's desire to highlight this fact may explain why the present genealogy, unlike the one in Gen. 11:10–26, regularly mentions that "X died."

5:27 According to the dates given, it is possible to conclude that **Methuselah** died in the year of the flood.

Genealogies: Showing Age at Fatherhood and Age at Death



29 [w]ch. 3:17
32 [x]ch. 6:10 [y]ch. 10:21

Chapter 6

3 [z]1 Pet. 3:19, 20; [Neh. 9:30; Gal. 5:16, 17] [a]Ps. 78:39
5 [b]Ps. 14:2, 3 [c]ch. 8:21; Job 14:4; 15:14; Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19; Rom. 3:23
6 [d]1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Sam. 24:16; Joel 2:13; [Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29] [e]Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30
8 [f]ch. 19:19; Ex. 33:12, 13, 16, 17

28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son **29** and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground [w]that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief[1] from our work and from the painful toil of our hands." **30** Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. **31** Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died.

32 After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered [x]Shem, Ham, and [y]Japheth.

Increasing Corruption on Earth

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

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

[1] *Noah* sounds like the Hebrew for *rest* [2] Or *My Spirit shall not contend with* [3] Or *giants*

5:28–31 The genealogical pattern is disrupted by the inclusion of Lamech's explanation for the name **Noah**. Lamech's comment on the name "Noah" (Hb. *noakh*), which strictly speaking means "rest" (Hb. *nuakh*), introduces the related concept of "comfort" (Hb. *nakham*). Lamech expects that Noah will bring both rest and comfort from the **painful toil** of working the soil (see 3:17–19). Lamech's **777 years** provides an interesting point of contact with his namesake in 4:18–24 and seventy-sevenfold vengeance.

5:32 Although this verse gives the impression of continuing the genealogical pattern used in vv. 3–31, the naming of three sons, **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**, brings the list to an end. A similar ending draws to a conclusion the genealogy of Shem in 11:10–26.

6:1–8:22 A flood story, included in the Epic of Gilgamesh, has been found in the Mesopotamian literature. It has many similarities to the biblical account of the flood. A certain man named Utnapishtim built an ark, loaded it with animals, and survived a torrential rain. The relationship of the two accounts, if any, is uncertain, although the appearance of a flood story in Mesopotamia gives some support and confirmation to the historicity of the biblical event. That is, the existence of such stories elsewhere indicates that the Bible indeed preserves the memory of a momentous event, as does the Mesopotamian account. There are also key differences between the biblical and Mesopotamian stories, particularly in regard to what motivated God or the gods to bring the flood.

6:1–8 *The Wickedness of Humanity.* The very specific list of descendants in ch. 5 is immediately followed by this short passage that explains why God sent a flood to punish the whole of humanity. But this passage concludes by recognizing that, in contrast to everyone else, Noah (introduced in 5:28–32) finds favor in God's eyes.

6:1–2 man began to multiply. The motif of multiplying is first introduced by God in 1:28, where it is presented in a very positive light and viewed as necessary to fulfill God's plans for the earth. The present passage, however, reveals that this God-mandated task leads to increasing wickedness on the earth as the population expands. This problem is exacerbated by the coming together of the **sons of God** and the **daughters of man** (6:2). The identity of both groups is uncertain, and various solutions have been advocated, although none has gained universal support. Various scholars have proposed that the "sons of God" are (1) fallen angels (cf. Job 1:6; some, however, suggest that this contradicts Mark 12:25, though the reference in Mark is to angels in heaven; see also 2 Pet. 2:4–5; Jude 5–6); or (2) tyrannical human judges or kings (in the ungodly line of Lamech, possibly demon-possessed); or (3) followers of God among the male descendants of Seth (i.e., the godly line of Seth, but who married the ungodly daughters of Cain). Though it would be difficult to determine which of these three views may be correct, it is clear that the kind of relationship described here involved some form of grievous sexual perversion, wherein the "sons of God" **saw** and with impunity **took** any women ("daughters of man") that they wanted. The sequence here in Gen. 6:2 ("saw . . . attractive [good] . . . took") parallels the sequence of the fall in 3:6 ("saw . . . good . . . took"). In both cases, something good in God's creation is used in disobedience and sinful rebellion against God, with tragic consequences. Only Noah stands apart from this sin. (See note on 1 Pet. 3:19.)

6:3 God announces that because of the immoral nature of people, their **days shall be 120 years**. There are two possible interpretations of this number of years: either the lives of human beings will no longer exceed 120 years, or the coming of the flood is anticipated in 120 years. While the latter interpretation is simpler, the former interpretation is appealing, and would be true as a generalization even though some of those who live after the flood (e.g., Abraham) enjoy lives in excess of 120 years.

6:4 Nephilim. The meaning of this term is uncertain. It occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Num. 13:33, where it denotes a group living in Canaan. If both passages refer to the same people, then the Israelite spies (Num. 13:33) are expressing their fears of the Canaanites by likening them to the ancient **men of renown**. Although in Hebrew *Nepilim* means "fallen ones," the earliest Greek translators rendered it *gigantes*, "giants." This idea may have been mistakenly deduced from Num. 13:33; one must be cautious about reading it back into the present passage. The Nephilim were **mighty men** or warriors and, as such, may well have contributed to the violence that filled the earth (see Gen. 6:13).

6:5 This verse concisely describes the universal intensity and pervasiveness of human wickedness.

6:6–7 the LORD regretted . . . it grieved him to his heart. The Hebrew verb rendered "regretted" (Hb. *nakham*) is sometimes translated "repent," and sometimes as "feel sorrow, be grieved." God is grieved over his creation, which he at first saw as very good (1:31) but which is now filled with sin (see notes on 1 Sam. 15:11; 15:29; Jonah 3:10). The destruction of **man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens** suggests that this will be a reversal of God's creative work. The resulting flood reflects this, for the dry land is submerged under water, subsequently to reappear, as in Gen. 1:9. **from the face of the land**. On the extent of the flood, see note on 6:17.

6:8 Noah is distinguished from the rest of humanity. Apart from Noah, the only other person in the OT who is described as finding **favor in the eyes of the LORD** is Moses, in Ex. 33:17 (and possibly Abraham; cf. Gen. 18:3). Placed on a par with Moses, Noah is rescued from the looming annihilation.

Noah and the Flood

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

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

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, [p]"Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that [q]you are righteous before me in this generation. **2** Take with you seven pairs of all [r]clean animals,[5] the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not

[1] Hebrew *The end of all flesh has come before me* [2] An unknown kind of tree; transliterated from Hebrew [3] A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters [4] Or *skylight* [5] Or *seven of each kind of clean animal*

9 [g]ch. 7:1; Ezek. 14:14, 20; 2 Pet. 2:5 [h]Job 1:1, 8; Luke 1:6 [i]ch. 5:22, 24; [Heb. 11:7]
12 [j]Ps. 14:2, 3; 53:2, 3 [k]Job 22:15-17
13 [l]Ezek. 7:2, 3, 6
17 [m]ch. 7:4; 2 Pet. 2:5
18 [n]ch. 9:9, 11
22 [o]Heb. 11:7; [Ex. 40:16]

Chapter 7

1 [p]Matt. 24:38, 39; Luke 17:26, 27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5 [q]ch. 6:9
2 [r]ch. 8:20; [Lev. 11]

6:9–9:29 *Noah's Descendants.* Centered on Noah and his descendants, this section of Genesis is dominated by the account of the flood that brings about a renewal of the earth, which has similarities to 1:1–2:3. While the land is cleansed of the defilement caused by human wrongdoing and a new start is made possible by God, the people's nature has not been transformed, as the final short episode in 9:20–28 reveals. The inclination of the human heart is still toward evil.

6:9–9:19 *Noah and the Flood.* This long section recounts how Noah and his immediate family are rescued from the flood. By echoing ch. 1, the whole process is presented as the undoing of creation and then the "re-creation" of the earth as it emerges from the flood. But after the flood not everything returns to a pristine condition. Human nature is not renewed.

6:9 These are the generations of Noah. A new heading introduces this section of Genesis (see note on 2:4). Noah's personal righteousness explains why he is warned about the forthcoming deluge. The Hebrew for **blameless** conveys the sense of being perfect, without evident flaw (although not necessarily sinless). **walked with God**. See note on 5:22–24. Like Noah, Abraham is later required by God to walk before him and be blameless (see 17:1). The positive attributes listed here are rarely ascribed to human beings in the OT.

6:11–12 In contrast to Noah, **the earth was corrupt in God's sight**. These verses confirm what has already been indicated in vv. 1–7. Here, however, particular emphasis is given to the **violence** that fills the earth. The mention of "corruption" here may lie behind Paul's "bondage to corruption" (Rom. 8:21): the creation suffers as mankind corrupts its way, and as God punishes that corruption. Originally delegated to govern the earth on God's behalf, humans have aggressively and viciously asserted their rule over others, including both people and other living creatures. The ancient Near Eastern epics of Gilgamesh and Atrahasis also tell of a flood sent to punish human beings. In those stories, however, it is merely the disruptive noise of humanity that leads to their destruction. Genesis emphasizes that God destroys the people he has created because of their immoral behavior.

6:13–17 In a long speech, God gives Noah directions for the construction of an **ark** (v. 14) that will be sufficiently large to house his family and a wide variety of other living creatures.

6:15 In modern measurements, the ark would have been around 450 feet (140 m) long, 75 feet (23 m) wide, and 45 feet (14 m) high, yielding a displacement of about 43,000 tons (about 39 million kg). The inside capacity would have been 1.4 million cubic feet (39,644 cubic m), with an approximate total deck area of 95,700 square feet (8,891 square m).

6:17 Everything that is on the earth shall die. Although God intends the flood to destroy every person and his remarks have a strong universal emphasis, this in itself does not necessarily mean that the flood had to cover the whole earth. Since the geographical perspective of ancient people was more limited than that of contemporary readers, it is possible that the flood, while universal from their viewpoint, did not cover the entire globe. Indeed, Genesis implies that prior to the Tower of Babel incident (see 11:1–9), people had not yet spread throughout the earth. Many interpreters, therefore, argue that a huge regional flood may have been all that was necessary for God to destroy all human beings. The expression "all the earth" (7:3; cf. 8:9, "the whole earth") does not exclude such a possibility: later, "all the earth" came to Joseph to buy grain (41:57), with "all the earth" clearly referring to the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. In support of the view that the flood covered all the earth, other interpreters point out that the text says that "all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered" (7:19) and that the water was "fifteen cubits" above the tops of the mountains. If "the mountains of Ararat" (8:4) refers to the range that includes present-day Mount Ararat in Turkey (elevation 16,854 feet or 5,137 m), the amount of water necessary to cover it would be at least 16,854 feet above sea level.

6:18–22 God indicates that he will establish a **covenant** with Noah (see notes on 9:9–11; 9:12–17). By taking into the ark two of **every living thing**, including birds, animals, and creeping things, Noah displays the caring oversight that people were expected to have for other living creatures.

7:1–5 Having made the ark according to God's direction, Noah is now told to embark. He is instructed to take on board **seven pairs of all clean animals** and **a pair of the animals that are not clean**. On the distinction between clean and unclean creatures, see Lev. 11:1–47 and Deut. 14:4–20. Since after the flood some clean animals will be offered as sacrifices (see Gen. 8:20) and some will be eaten as food (see 9:3), to ensure their survival it was necessary to have more than one pair of each kind in the ark.

clean, the male and his mate, 3 and seven pairs[1] of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. 4 For in seven days [s]I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, [t]and every living thing[2] that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." 5 [u]And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

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

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the [v]fountains of the great deep burst forth, and [w]the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, 14 they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. 15 They [x]went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in [y]as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

17 The flood [z]continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the

4 [s]ver. 12, 17; [Job 37:11-13] [t]ch. 6:17
5 [u]ch. 6:22
11 [v]ch. 8:2; Prov. 8:28; [Amos 9:6] [w]ch. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 7:19; Isa. 24:18; Mal. 3:10; [Ps. 78:23]
15 [x]ch. 6:20
16 [y]ver. 2, 3
17 [z]ver. 4, 12

[1] Or *seven of each kind* [2] Hebrew *all existence*; also verse 23

7:11–12 A peculiar feature of the flood narrative is the number of detailed chronological notices (cf. 8:4–5, 13–14). By pinpointing the exact date of the flood within Noah's life, the text underlines that it was a real event. **all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened** (7:11). Powerful imagery is used here to capture the intensity of the flood. From below and above, water poured out to cover the land. **Rain fell** continuously for **forty days and forty nights** (v. 12).

7:16 The safety of those in the ark depended on both human and divine action. **the LORD shut him in**. The use of the personal name "Yahweh" ("LORD"; see note on 2:4) underscores God's special relationship with Noah.

7:17–24 The devastating results of the flood are described, fulfilling the judgment that God had previously pronounced. **the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days** (v. 24). The figure of 150 days, which includes the 40 days of rain mentioned in v. 12, is repeated in 8:3. In both places it denotes the five-month period that falls between the detailed chronological notices given in 7:11 (marking the very start of the flood on the 17th day of the second month) and 8:4 (when the ark comes to a place of rest on the 17th day of the seventh month). It will be a further seven months before the land is sufficiently dry for those in the ark to disembark safely (see 8:13–14). On the depth of the flood (**above the mountains**), see note on 6:17.

Chronology of Noah's Time in the Ark

Dates are in the form of month, day, and Noah's year, as given in the text. Hence, 2/10/600 means the tenth day of the second month in Noah's 600th year. Months are calculated at 30 days each. Dates in parentheses are extrapolations from dates explicitly given in the text.

	Reference	Event	Date	Day
	7:4, 10	Announcement of the flood 7 days in advance	(2/10/600)	Sunday
Waters prevail: 150-day period	7:11, 13	Flood begins; Noah and family enter the ark	2/17/600	Sunday
	7:12	Flood lasts 40 days and ends	(3/27/600)	Friday
	8:4	Ark rests on mountains of Ararat after waters prevail and abate for 150 days total	7/17/600	Friday
Waters abate: 150-day period	8:5	Mountaintops eventually become visible	10/1/600	Wednesday
	8:7	Raven sent out (after 40 days of mountaintop visibility)	(11/10/600)	Sunday
	8:8	Dove sent out	(11/17/600)	Sunday
	8:10	Dove's second flight (7 days later); returns with olive leaf	(11/24/600)	Sunday
	8:12	Dove's third flight (7 days later); does not return	(12/1/600)	Sunday
	8:3	Waters fully abated; end of second 150-day period	(12/17/600)	Wednesday
Earth dries: 70-day period	8:13	Noah eventually removes the covering of the ark	1/1/601	Wednesday
	8:14–19	Earth dried out; Noah leaves ark	2/27/601	Wednesday
Total time in ark: 370 days				

ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18 The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. 19 And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. 20 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits[1] deep. 21 And [a]all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. 22 Everything on the dry land [b]in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. 23 He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only [c]Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. 24 And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

The Flood Subsides

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

6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made 7 and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. 9 But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. 10 He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. 11 And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. 12 Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

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

God's Covenant with Noah

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And when the LORD smelled [k]the

21 [a]ver. 4; ch. 6:13, 17; 2 Pet. 3:6
22 [b]ch. 2:7
23 [c]2 Pet. 2:5

Chapter 8

1 [d]ch. 19:29; 30:22; Ex. 2:24; 1 Sam. 1:19 [e]Ex. 14:21
2 [f]ch. 7:11
3 [g]ch. 7:24
4 [h]2 Kgs. 19:37; Isa. 37:38; Jer. 51:27
16 [i]ch. 7:13
17 [j]ch. 1:22, 28; 9:1
21 [k]Ex. 29:18, 25, 41; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; See Ezek. 16:19; 20:41; 2 Cor. 2:15; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18

[1] A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

8:1 God remembered Noah. This marks the turning point in the flood story. When the Bible says that God "remembers" someone or his covenant with someone, it indicates that he is about to take action for that person's welfare (cf. 9:15; 19:29; 30:22; Ex. 2:24; 32:13; Ps. 25:6–7; 74:2). All life on the land having been destroyed, God now proceeds to renew everything, echoing what he did in Genesis 1. **God made a wind blow over the earth.** The Hebrew word for wind, *ruakh*, is also sometimes translated "Spirit" (e.g., 1:2; 6:3). While the context normally enables the reader to distinguish *ruakh* meaning "wind" from *ruakh* meaning "Spirit," the present verse intentionally echoes 1:2.

8:2–4 In v. 2 God puts into reverse the process started in 7:11. The waters both rose and abated during the period of **150 days** (see note on 7:17–24). **Mountains of Ararat** indicates a range of mountains of which Mount Ararat (in modern Turkey) is the highest. The text does not name the specific mountain on which the ark came to rest.

8:5–14 The slow, gradual process by which the **waters** receded and the land **dried out** (v. 14) is captured by the detailed account of Noah's releasing a **raven** (v. 7) and then a **dove** (vv. 8–12). As in ch. 1, the dry land emerges from the waters.

8:15–17 God's instructions to Noah are reminiscent of ch. 1, especially the statement that Noah and his family are to **be fruitful and multiply on the earth** (see 1:28).

8:18–19 In obedience to God, Noah goes out of the ark with his family and all the creatures.

8:20–22 Noah's first recorded act on emerging from the ark is to build an **altar to the LORD** (v. 20). On it he presents whole-burnt offerings, using

pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again [l]curse[1] the ground because of man, for [m]the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. [n]Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. **22** [o]While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, [p]day and night, shall not cease."

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

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

7 And you,[2] be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, **9** "Behold, [z]I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, **10** and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. **11** [a]I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." **12** And God said, [b]"This is the sign of the covenant that I make

[1] Or *dishonor* [2] In Hebrew *you* is plural

21 [l]ch. 3:17; 6:17 [m]ch. 6:5; Ps. 58:3; Rom. 1:21; [Matt. 15:19] [n]ch. 9:11, 15; Isa. 54:9
22 [o]Jer. 5:24 [p]Jer. 33:20, 25

Chapter 9

1 [q]ch. 1:22, 28; 8:17
2 [r][Ps. 8:6-8; James 3:7]
3 [s]Deut. 12:15; 1 Tim. 4:3, 4 [t]ch. 1:29
4 [u]Lev. 17:10, 11, 14; Deut. 12:16, 23; 1 Sam. 14:33; Acts 15:20, 29
5 [v]Ex. 21:28 [w]ch. 4:10, 11
6 [x]Ex. 21:12, 14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:31, 33; [Matt. 26:52; Rev. 13:10] [y]ch. 1:27; 5:1; James 3:9
9 [z]ch. 6:18; 8:20-22
11 [a]Isa. 54:9, 10
12 [b]ch. 17:11

some of the clean animals and birds. While this is undoubtedly intended to express gratitude for divine deliverance, it is also an act of atonement. This is a normal aspect of **burnt offerings** (see Lev. 1:3–17, esp. v. 4) and is supported by the mention of the **pleasing aroma** (Gen. 8:21; cf. Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). The Hebrew term for "pleasing," *nikhoakh*, conveys the idea of rest and tranquility. It is related to the name "Noah" (Hb. *noakh*) and is probably used here in order to remind the reader of Lamech's remarks in Gen. 5:29. It also has the sense of "soothing." The burnt offering soothes God's anger at human sin, so although human nature has not been changed by the flood, God's attitude has changed. Notice how 8:21 (**for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth**) echoes very closely 6:5 ("every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"). In spite of the human propensity to sin, atonement through sacrifice is possible, securing a peaceful relationship between the Lord and humanity. **I will never again curse the ground** (8:21). The clear force of the Hebrew text is that God will not send another flood; he is not revoking the curse pronounced in 3:17, which continues to be in place (the words for "curse" are different; see ESV footnote). This short comment about the effect of sacrifice underlines the importance of sacrifice in the Bible's plan of salvation.

9:1–4 While God's speech here closely parallels 1:28–30, two important changes are introduced. First, the positive instruction to exercise dominion over the living creatures is replaced by the negative comment that they will **fear** and **dread** human beings. Second, whereas the emphasis was previously on people's eating from plants, humans are now given permission to be carnivorous. While God now permits the taking of animal life for food, the animal's blood remains sacred and is not to be consumed, as an acknowledgment that all life is from God (see Lev. 17:12–14).

9:5–6 Following his comments about the killing of animals, God addresses the issue of homicide. Violence by "all flesh" (v. 11), i.e., by man and animals, prompted God to send the flood (6:11, 13). If human nature has not improved after the flood (6:5; 8:21), how is violence to be prevented in the future? This legal enactment is the answer: **From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man**. This means that any animal or person that takes a human life will be held accountable by God, working through human representatives (e.g., Ex. 20:13; 21:28). **Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed**. Here the principle of *talion*, a life for a life, is applied (see Ex. 21:23). This measured response is preferable to Lamech's seventy-sevenfold vengeance (Gen. 4:24). Human life is to be valued so highly that it is protected by this system of punishment because **God made man in his own image**, and so to murder another human being is to murder what is most like God, and is thus implicitly an attack on God himself. Many would see this statement as establishing the moral principle permitting the death penalty in cases of murder—with the understanding that the person charged would have been justly tried and his guilt established beyond any reasonable doubt (cf. the OT requirement of two or three witnesses, Deut. 19:15; repeated in the NT, e.g., Matt. 18:16; Heb. 10:28). A further requirement is that such a death-penalty verdict must always be carried out under the jurisdiction of the established authorities (cf. Deut. 19:15–21; Rom. 13:1–5). The difficulty of establishing guilt beyond any reasonable doubt and the difficulty of ensuring justice in a modern, complex urban society (as compared to an ancient village-based society) underscore the great care and caution that must be taken in applying this principle today.

9:7 God's speech ends as it began in v. 1, repeating what was said in 8:17 and echoing 1:28. God wants humanity to flourish and not to be destroyed by violence or another flood. This positive view of population growth (cf. note on 1:28) stands in sharp contrast to the Babylonian flood story, which ends with the gods taking measures to inhibit mankind from filling the earth.

9:9–11 God outlines the **covenant** he is now establishing with all living creatures, having mentioned it briefly before the flood in 6:18. This is the first covenant explicitly named in Genesis (see note on 2:17); a similar covenant is later established with Abraham and his descendants in ch. 17. A covenant formally binds two parties together in a relationship, on the basis of mutual personal commitment, with consequences for keeping or breaking the commitment. God makes this kind of covenant with a group of people by covenanting with one who represents them: everyone else then experiences the covenant by virtue of being included "in" the representative (see note on 12:3); here, the animals are included as well as Noah's descendants, showing Noah to be a kind of new Adam. Emphasizing that the covenant is for all living creatures, God states that there will never again be **a flood to destroy the earth** (9:11).

9:12–17 Different covenants have appropriate signs or symbols linked to them. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant with Abraham (ch. 17), and the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 31:12–17). On this occasion God's designated **sign** is the rainbow (Gen. 9:13). Its presence, when rain clouds are in the sky, will be a visible reminder of God's

between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:
13 I have set [c]my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and
the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 [d]I will
remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.
And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in
the clouds, I will see it and remember [e]the everlasting covenant between God and every
living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the
covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Noah's Descendants

18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were [f]Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham
was the father of Canaan.) 19 These three were the sons of Noah, and [g]from these the people
of the whole earth were dispersed.[1]

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.[2] 21 He drank of the wine
and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw
the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth
took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the
nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their
father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from his wine [h]and knew what his youngest son
had done to him, 25 he said,

> [i]"Cursed be Canaan;
> [j]a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

26 He also said,

> "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
> and let Canaan be his servant.
> 27 May God enlarge Japheth,[3]
> and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
> and let Canaan be his servant."

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

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

13 [c] Ezek. 1:28; [Rev. 4:3; 10:1]
15 [d] [Lev. 26:42, 45; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Ezek. 16:60]
16 [e] ch. 17:7, 13, 19
18 [f] ch. 5:32; 10:1
19 [g] ch. 10:32
24 [h] [Hab. 2:15]
25 [i] Deut. 27:16 [j] Josh. 9:23; Judg. 1:28; 1 Kgs. 9:20, 21

everlasting covenant (v. 16). It is not necessary to think that rainbows first began to exist at this time; in any case, God says that he will now use rainbows as a sign of this covenant. This sign should not be interpreted as symbolizing that God has hung up his warrior's **bow**, since there is no hint of that meaning in the text.

9:18–19 These verses, which bring the flood story to an end, anticipate the next two episodes. The reference to Ham's son **Canaan** (v. 18) prepares for the events of vv. 20–29. The mention of people's being **dispersed** over the **whole earth** (v. 19) is developed in ch. 10.

9:20–29 *The Cursing of Canaan.* This unusual episode provides an unexpected sequel to the flood story. After the flood and the "new creation" comes another fall, by Noah—a sort of second Adam, in that he (like Adam) is father of the whole human race. It also anticipates similar activity by Lot's daughters after the destruction of Sodom (19:30–38). Noah's drunkenness and Ham's indiscretion result in contrasting announcements regarding the futures of Shem, Japheth, and Ham's son Canaan.

9:20 The reference to Noah as a **man of the soil** and his success in growing vines points to a fresh start after the flood (see note on 5:28–31).

9:21–23 became drunk. The brevity of the description of Noah's drunkenness is an indication of disapproval. Ham's actions, however, are the object of serious criticism because Ham unashamedly looks on the **nakedness of his father** in the tent and then reports this to his brothers (v. 22). There is no indication, however, that perverse sexual behavior was involved in addition to Ham seeing his father drunk and naked. Though the text does not explicitly state what happened, it is clear that Ham humiliated and dishonored his father and that he apparently sought to make his brothers a party to that humiliation. Instead, Ham's brothers make every effort to avoid seeing Noah's naked body, as readers are told twice that they approached him **backward** (v. 23). The response of Shem and Japheth is in sharp contrast to Ham's actions, as the brothers honor their father despite his foolish behavior (Ex. 20:12).

9:24–27 The designation of Ham as the **youngest son** (v. 24) is peculiar, given that he is always listed after Shem and before Japheth. Possibly, for some unexplained reason, the traditional order of names does not reflect the birth sequence of the boys. **Cursed be Canaan**. Noah's reaction to Ham's action is to curse Canaan, Ham's son. This outcome has clearly been anticipated in the narration, for twice previously it has been mentioned, in each context unnecessarily, that Ham is the father of Canaan (vv. 18, 22). **a servant of servants shall he be**. This passage was wrongly appealed to in past centuries to justify the enslavement of African people, resulting in grievous abuse, injustice, and inhumanity to people created in the image of God. Noah's curse of Canaan, which focuses on his being a servant, anticipates the judgment that will later befall the Canaanites (cf. Deut. 7:1–3 with Gen. 10:15–19). This, coupled with the fact that the curse falls on Canaan alone and not on Ham's other children (who settled in northern Africa), shows how illegitimate it was to use this text to justify enslaving African people. (For more on the overall biblical position on slavery, see notes on 1 Cor. 7:21; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22–25; 1 Tim. 1:10.) Shem, however, is given pride of place, as is implied by Noah's remark that Japheth will **dwell in the tents of Shem** (Gen. 9:27).

9:28 The report of Noah's death continues the pattern used throughout Genesis 5 to describe the total age and death of Adam and his descendants.

10:1–11:9 *The Descendants of Noah's Sons.* The next main section of Genesis outlines developments after the flood, focusing on how humanity becomes divided into different nations.

Chapter 10

2 [k] For ver. 1-5, see 1 Chr. 1:5-7; Ezek. 38:1-6
4 [l] Ps. 72:10; Ezek. 38:13 [m] Num. 24:24; Isa. 23:1, 12; Dan. 11:30
5 [n] Isa. 11:11; Jer. 2:10; 25:22; Ezek. 27:6; Zeph. 2:11

Nations Descended from Noah

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

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

10:1–32 *The Clans, Languages, Lands, and Nations.* This entire passage sets out, largely in the form of lists, how the descendants of Noah's three sons populate different regions of the earth. Additional details of special interest are occasionally added. This genealogical-geographical passage is describing a process that covered a long time, as family clans migrated to particular regions (see map below). The ancestor after whom the clan or tribe is named may not have lived in the region that later bears his name. Each of the three main parts of this section concludes with a reference to clans, languages, and nations (vv. 5, 20, 31).

10:1 These are the generations of. This distinctive formula marks the start of a new section in Genesis (see note on 2:4).

10:2–5 Japheth's descendants are listed first. **From these the coastland peoples spread** (v. 5). This is the only additional remark that is made

Table of Nations

c. 2200 B.C.

Many of the people groups mentioned in Genesis 10 can be identified with relative certainty. In general, the descendants of Ham settled in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean coast, the descendants of Shem in Mesopotamia and Arabia, and the descendants of Japheth in Europe and the greater area of Asia Minor.

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

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

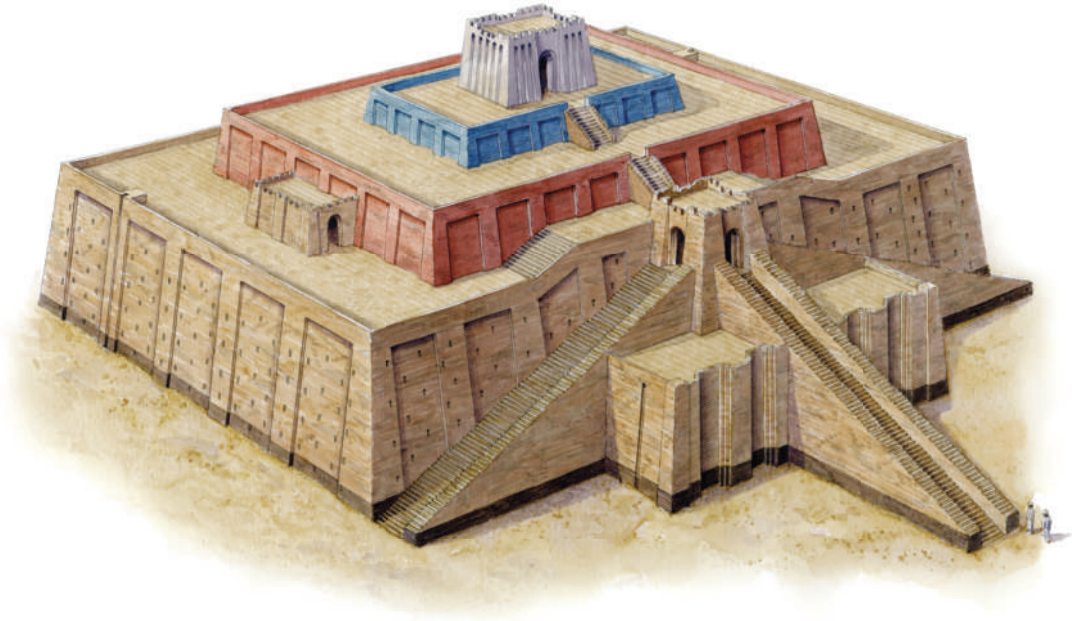
21 To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth,
children were born. 22 The [u]sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.
23 The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. 24 Arpachshad fathered [v]Shelah; and
Shelah fathered Eber. 25 [w]To Eber were born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

[1] Or *he began to be a mighty man on the earth* [2] Or *from where* [3] *Peleg* means *division*

6 [o]For ver. 6-8, see 1 Chr. 1:8-10
10 [p]ch. 11:9 [q]ch. 11:2
13 [r]For ver. 13-18, see 1 Chr. 1:11-16
14 [s]Deut. 2:23; Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7
15 [t][ch. 15:18-21]
22 [u]For ver. 22-29, see 1 Chr. 1:17-25
24 [v]ch. 11:12; Luke 3:35, 36
25 [w]1 Chr. 1:19
29 [x]1 Kgs. 9:28; 10:11

Ziggurat

Ziggurats are monumental temple-towers found throughout the area of ancient Mesopotamia. They were commonly built of sun-dried mud and straw bricks held in position with bitumen as mortar. Stairways ascended to the top of these structures, where a small temple/shrine sat on the summit. The illustration below depicts the Ziggurat of Nanna at Ur, which was constructed during the reign of Ur-Nammu (c. 2113–2095 B.C.). Its area covered 150 x 200 feet (46 x 61 m), and its height was 80 feet (24 m). It is commonly believed that this type of structure was being built in the Tower of Babel episode (Gen. 11:1–9). The text indicates that the builders of Babel had discovered the process of making mud bricks and that they employed "bitumen for mortar" (v. 3). Based on that invention, the builders decided "to build . . . a tower with its top in the heavens" (v. 4).



the east. 31 These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

32 These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, [y]and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in [z]the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, [a]and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower [b]with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." 5 And [c]the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, [d]let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So [e]the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called [f]Babel, because there the

32[y]ver. 1; ch. 9:19

Chapter 11

2[z]ch. 10:10; 14:1, 9; Isa. 11:11; Dan. 1:2; Zech. 5:11
3[a]ch. 14:10; Ex. 2:3
4[b]Deut. 1:28
5[c]ch. 18:21
7[d]ch. 1:26; [Ps. 2:4]
8[e]ch. 10:25, 32; Luke 1:51
9[f]ch. 10:10

concerning them; it associates Japheth's descendants with the coastal regions and islands of the Mediterranean Sea.

10:6–20 Ham's descendants receive considerably more attention than those of Japheth and Shem. Among them figure many of Israel's enemies, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians, Philistines, and various Canaanite groups. Ham's immediate sons are **Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan** (v. 6). Cush and Put are the regions to the south and west of Egypt, respectively. **Cush fathered Nimrod** (v. 8). This association may seem unusual given that Cush is linked geographically with Africa, and Nimrod with Mesopotamia. Nimrod is of particular interest for several reasons. He is linked to the great cities of Babel (i.e., Babylon; see note on 11:9) and Nineveh in Assyria, whose inhabitants at a later stage would descend in destructive power on the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The military might of the Assyrians and Babylonians may account for the related observations that Nimrod was a **mighty man** (i.e., warrior) and a **mighty hunter** (10:8, 9). These descriptions, one of which is linked with irony to the expression **before the LORD** (10:9), are probably to be viewed negatively. Nimrod's aggression as a person runs totally counter to what God had intended when at creation he commissioned humanity to be his vice-regents or representatives. **Babel . . . in the land of Shinar** (v. 10). These details link Nimrod with the Tower of Babel episode (see 11:2, 9). Nimrod's kingdom is the antithesis of what God desired. **the great city** (10:12). This probably denotes a region that included both Nineveh and Calah (see Jonah 3:3). The detailed list of Canaan's descendants includes cities that play a significant role in later episodes in Genesis. The specific mention of **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** (Gen. 10:19) provides a possible link between the actions of Ham in 9:22 and of the men of Sodom in 19:4–8. The designation "Canaanite" is sometimes used to cover all the different groups mentioned in 10:15–19 (e.g., 28:1).

10:21–32 These verses list the descendants of **Shem**. These are the people with whom Israelites felt the most affinity, for Abraham was descended from Shem. Insofar as they can be identified, many of these are Arabian tribes or kingdoms. From the outset, Shem's great-grandson **Eber** is selected for special attention (v. 21), being mentioned even before Shem's own sons are named (v. 22). The designation "Hebrew" (Hb. *'ibri*; see 14:13) is derived from "Eber" (Hb. *'eber*). By way of underlining his importance, readers are informed that he called one of his sons **Peleg** (which may be taken to mean "division"), **for in his days the earth was divided** (10:25). This is probably an allusion to the Tower of Babel incident (11:1–9). The line of Shem's descendants from Arpachshad to Peleg is repeated with additional information in 11:11–19.

11:1–9 *The Tower of Babel.* This episode is significantly more important than its length suggests. It presents a unified humanity using all its resources to establish a city that is the antithesis of what God intended when he created the world. The tower is a symbol of human autonomy, and the city builders see themselves as determining and establishing their own destiny without any reference to the Lord. (The tower story may also be a polemic against Mesopotamian mythology. *Eridu Genesis*, a fragmentary text found at Ur, Nippur, and Nineveh, describes the goddess Nintur's calling for humanity to build cities and to congregate in one place. Her desire, according to this text, is that humans be sedentary and not nomadic. Yahweh demands just the opposite, so that the earth would become populated.)

11:1 The opening description of the **whole earth** having **one language** indicates that the present episode is not placed chronologically after the events narrated in ch. 10, which specifically mention nations and languages. This incident, however, may have occurred during the broad period covered in ch. 10, especially if it is linked to the naming of Peleg in 10:25 (see note on 10:21–32).

11:2–4 Come, let us build ourselves a city . . . and let us make a name for ourselves. The Babel enterprise is all about human independence and self-sufficiency apart from God. The builders believe that they have no need of God. Their technology and social unity give them confidence in their own ability, and they have high aspirations, constructing a **tower with its top in the heavens** (11:4). Contrary to God's plan that people should fill the earth (e.g., 1:22, 28; 9:1, 7), the city-building project is designed to prevent the population from being **dispersed over the face of the whole earth** (11:4). By showing God's continued interest in his creatures, this episode provides the setting for the call of Abram out of this very region, to be the vehicle of blessing to the whole world.

11:5–8 With irony, the narrator points out that it was necessary for the Lord to come **down** in order to **see the city and the tower** (v. 5). Acknowledging the potential danger of a unified, self-confident humanity (v. 6), God intervenes by confusing their language so that they cannot understand one another. This has the desired effect of dispersing the people throughout the world (vv. 8–9).

11:9 This verse links the name of the city, **Babel** (Hb. *babel*), with the verb *balal*, which means "to confuse, to mix, to mingle." But *babel* is also the name used in the OT for the city of Babylon. As a city, Babylon symbolizes humanity's ambition to dethrone God and make the earth its own (see Revelation 17–18).

Genesis 11:4

Action	Purpose	Desire
They built a city . . .	. . . in order not to be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.	Security
They built a tower with its top in the heavens . . .	. . . in order to make a name for themselves.	Praise