

A dramatic cosmic scene featuring a bright, glowing nebula or explosion at the center, surrounded by dark, swirling clouds of gas and dust. Numerous thin, white lines radiate outwards from the central point, suggesting a powerful force or light. The background is a deep, dark space filled with distant stars.

FIRST THINGS

AN EXAMINATION OF
GOD'S WORD FROM BEFORE CREATION
THROUGH THE DISPERSAL OF MAN
AFTER BABEL

GENESIS 1:1 TO 11:9

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SCRIPTURE VERSIONS

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

LSB: Legacy Standard Bible
NASB: New American Standard Bible
NKJV: New King James Version
KJV: King James Version
KJVs: Both King James Version and New King James Version
NIV: New International Version
NIVs: Both/Either New International Version 1984 and/or New International Version 2011
YLT: Young's Literal Translation
ESV: English Standard Version
TLV: Tree of Life Version
OT, NT: Old Testament, New Testament

COMMENTARIES AND WORKS REFERENCED IN THIS STUDY

Principal Works

Edwards: Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), *A Dissertation Concerning The End for which God Created the World*, and illuminated by John Piper in his work, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (2006).
Leupold: H. C. Leupold (1892-1972), *Exposition of Genesis*, The Wartburg Press, 1942.
Sailhamer: John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1990).
Guzik: *David Guzik's Enduring Word Commentary* (2014)
K&D: *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, Published in 1866-1891.

Principal Venerable Citations

Barnes: Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*.
Clarke: *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*.
JFB: *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown.
Wilson: William Wilson (1783-1873), *Old Testament Word Studies*, Kregel Publications, 1978.
Luther: Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis: Creation, Sin, and the Flood*.

CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

- Directions to read a passage from the Bible are in bold, dark-red type, such as “**Read Genesis 3:14-15.**”
- Footnotes, used for shorter references or explanations, and Sidenotes, used for longer explanations or additional material, are used throughout.
- Scripture passages quoted that are less than a full verse are in *red italics*.
- All Scripture passages, unless otherwise noted, are from the LSB version, a close cousin of the NASB (Updated Edition).
- Greek, Hebrew, Latin, etc. texts are in italics, such as “*paralambano*”

A FOREWORD

A POLITE WARNING is in order about that which resides on the following pages. This writer is too old and too set in his ways to bother with trivialities. Thus anyone looking for a brief manual to offer a few questions prompting light discussion in your typical Sunday School class will no doubt run screaming into the night after contemplating a study such as this. If that is what you desire, may your tribe increase; those study guides have their place, and you will discover many of that type from which to choose. If, on the other hand, you are looking for something to assist in a thorough, detailed, down-to-the-bare-metal examination of God's word, then you might find this volume useful.

This Bible study—practically, in content and form, a commentary—consists of my weekly notes for our Sunday morning Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) class on the *First Things*—from Genesis 1:1 to 11:9. That is, beginning from before Creation and ending at the consequences of the tower of Babel. Thus, stopping just before the focus of the OT turns to the nation of Israel.

The discussions herein are geared for adults or, possibly, older teenagers, but probably not young children. These notes may be found useful by teachers of similar classes, by leaders of small groups, or even by individuals in private study. Each of the sixty-three sessions typically average between twenty-five and thirty teaching minutes.

As one can readily deduce from these notes, I do not subscribe to the so-called “Socratic Method” of teaching a Bible class—especially for a topic such as this. From my experience such a method of teaching by posing a series of questions for the class to answer would waste an incredible amount of time in a class in which most participants show up not even aware of the passage that will be studied that day, and certainly will not have done any advance study of their own. No, the teacher is the one who has spent the week in detailed study of the text, so his or her voice should predominate. This does not, of course, preclude healthy discussion, and questions or insights offered by the class members.

I approach any study of the Bible from the perspective that not only is it God's holy word, but that it is an astounding, breathtaking document. Even to say it is “rich” is to damn with faint praise. That the Creator of the universe would entrust to each individual believer such a treasure, from His lips, the human intellect cannot fathom. And to have the privilege of its study, along with the many resources we have in this day and age, is a blessing too great to measure.

As to any credentials I might cite, all I have to offer is experience. As of this writing I have been teaching weekly ABF classes, virtually non-stop, for better than seventeen years; I have been writing devotional publications for thirty-five years; and Christian drama since 1983 (I'll let you do the math on that one). All of these products are available, free of charge, at our web site, DLAMPEL.COM.

It is my desire and my prayer that you will find this resource of use in your daily, ongoing walk with Christ, and that it will be put to use for the edification and equipping of the church (Ephesians 4:12). Let all thanksgiving and praise be offered to our gracious God, who equips each of us in sundry ways to serve Him and His Christ, and those in His kingdom.



Winterset, Iowa
April, 2025

SESSION 1: BEFORE EVERYTHING

INTRODUCTION

In my previous class—*Last Things*—we examined and revealed the *end* of this present world. In this class—*First Things*—we will examine and reveal the *beginning* of this present world. For one of the more profound revelations to be discovered in such a pursuit is that in the genesis of this world is laid the roots, the insidious tendrils that lead inexorably to the modern world in which we, today, have our being.

We saw previously how this world will end: in an eternal paradise with Father and Son on a new earth for those whose names are written in His book of life, but in fierce judgment for those who have *rejected* Christ, with a verdict consigning them to everlasting fire. But how did they—the unregenerate—and this world reach that end? How did it come about? Sadly, the roots of this earth's tragic end will be discovered far back in the earliest days of Creation—and even before that. Yet at the same time we discover there the roots of Christ's victory over death, and the believer's promise of eternity with Him.

There are, obviously, many differences between the Last Things and the First Things—not least, for us, the former (Last Things) is *prophecy* yet in our future, while the latter (First Things) is *history*. Yet there is a reflective continuity¹ between the end of all things and the beginning of all things, which reinforces God's overarching sovereignty over it all. This continuity offers conclusive evidence that the entire saga of God's relationship to Creation, and those who people it, was planned out in every detail from the beginning. If we think of Creation as a book, it means that God not only knew the last sentence of the last chapter before He wrote the first sentence of the first chapter, it means that those two sentences and everything between them has been imagined and crafted by an inventive Genius who wrote the first chapter *because of* how the last chapter ends—and vice versa.

So we must broaden our perception of God's Creation to encompass not just how the world began, but how it will ultimately need to end. It is *all* part of His Creation; it is *all* part of His genius.

In many respects the very First Things are a mirror image of the very Last Things:

- The eternal state of the Godhead before time began, along with the pristine state of the earliest days in Eden, are reflected in the pristine eternal state of God with man at the end of all things.
- In between is what is termed “the first things” in Revelation 21:4. In God's economy, just as the New Jerusalem is descending toward the New Earth, He declares the end of the first things with, “The first things have passed away.” God's scope is always larger than our own; according to Him, the entire tapestry of Creation and man on earth comprises the “first things,” in contrast to the “last things” of the eternal state.²

¹ “reflective continuity”

This is revealed in the Hebrew text itself. For example, the word translated “the beginning” (*resit*) is the semantic antipode (exact opposite) of *ahrit* (the end times). This follows a fundamental principle in biblical eschatology that “the last things are like the first things” (Sailhamer).

² “first things”

Thus this study could rightly be called the *beginning* of the “first things.”

- In the Garden, in the beginning, man dwells in blissful communion with his Maker—just as he will in the final eternal state.
- The central “tree of life” in the perfect dwelling place of the Garden will also be central to the eternal perfection of the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:1-2).
- In the Garden sin and evil are introduced into the earth; in the final moments of this old earth sin and evil will be forever eradicated (Genesis 3:6; Revelation 20:11-15).
- This earth is created for the first time in Genesis; it will be created again—not recreated or renewed, for there will be no similarity between the two—at the end of the Revelation.
- In Genesis all mankind but the family of Noah will be destroyed because of its sin, and the world will be remade and reconfigured by the Flood. In Revelation the old earth will be instantly destroyed because of its corruption by man, and a new earth created to replace it.
- In their new state of depravity, Adam and Eve were judged by God and expelled from their paradise. In the final days of this earth Christ will judge all of mankind whose names are not recorded in the book of life, and they will be consigned to eternal torment in the lake of fire (Genesis 3:22-24; Revelation 20:11-15).
- The prophet Jeremiah employs the language of Creation (from Genesis 1:2) to describe the eschatological effects of Yahweh’s wrath (Jeremiah 4:23-26).

The creator *Elohim* (“God”) of v1 is, in a later passage (v2:4), identified as the same with *Yahweh* (“...the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God [*Yahweh Elohim*] made earth and heaven”). They are one and the same.³

An essential prerequisite for a study of the First Things is for the teacher and student to “get their mind right”—to lock in a heavenly perspective, a cosmic perception of God and His Creation. That vantage point begins—*just* begins—by looking out one’s window and accepting and confessing that everything we see and experience even today has its genesis—its beginning—in the God of heaven—*everything* was and is created by God.

That, however, is just the paltry, grossly limited scope of our human eyesight. This globe was created by Him; the planets that share our solar system were created by Him; the universe beyond, extending to its furthest reaches—*everything*—was first imagined, then spoken into existence by God. This means that everything at its inception was created by God from nothing else (usually referred to by the Latin, *creatio ex nihilo* (cree-AH-tee-oh ex-NEE-hee-lo): “creation from nothing”). Just as God Himself is self-existent, whatever He creates depends on nothing beyond Himself. With only a few notable exceptions, He has spoken it all into existence out of His own supernatural, creative genius and nothing else.⁴

³ In this study, just as in the previous, the members of the triune Godhead are essentially inseparable. When I use the term “God,” in almost every instance I am referring to the Godhead—especially God the Father and God the Son. If I am speaking of just one I will make that clear by their individual references, as in “Father God” or “Yahweh,” “Christ” or “Son of God,” and “Holy Spirit.” Scripture is clear that God the Father (Yahweh) and God the Son were both active in Creation (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15-20).

⁴ “exceptions”

e.g., man and woman (Genesis 2:7), and “every beast of the field and every bird of the sky” (Genesis 2:19).

But we have already leapt far ahead of ourselves. For, a study of the first things must begin before Creation, before Genesis 1:1, before time itself.

BEFORE

Here, as is so often the case in God's word, our human vocabulary and grammar fail us in describing God and His ways. The words "genesis," "beginning," and "creation" all refer to the starting point for *man*—not God. But we must find a way to describe—or at least imagine—what was before Creation. Even that word "before" fails us, for "before" is a word of time, and prior to Creation there was no time (because the things by which we "*tell* time"—sun, moon, stars, day, night—did not yet exist); time was created along with everything else. Nonetheless, humanly speaking we have no better way to speak of what was "before" creation than by employing that inadequate word, "before." What can we glean from God's word about the state of things—specifically, the Godhead and heaven—before the universe was created? We find a clue to its physicality (or lack thereof) in The Revelation, in its description of the setting for the great white throne judgment.

Read Revelation 20:11.

In the closing days of the Millennium Christ Jesus both begins and ends the final act of rebellion by Satan and his armies by calling down fire from heaven to consume them. Almost immediately John sees Christ on his glowing, pure-white throne sitting not in Jerusalem, but somewhere in empty "space" (even *that* word is a misnomer) disengaged from all temporal or heavenly foundations: a throne and a King "from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them."

What we have before us in v11 is the precise moment after the earth and universe have been destroyed—but before the new earth and new heaven have been created. Around the throne of Christ there is nothing—*nothing*. All have "fled away." In this moment there is Christ upon His throne, surrounded by millions of resurrected, unregenerate dead—and absolutely nothing else. In our limited vernacular we would say that Christ on His throne is "floating in space"—except space has just been destroyed. There is no space, no universe, no planets or stars: just nothingness.

That imagery is about as close as we can get to imagining what it was like for the Godhead "before" Creation. What was there? God. Period. Just God—the triunity of the Godhead dwelling in itself.

We might rightly raise the question, then: Was there a *heaven* before the universe was created—that is, did God have a specific, set-aside dwelling place—in 2 Chronicles called "His holy dwelling place" (30:27)—in eternity past? I am not aware of any passage that tells us outright yes or no, but the evidence would seem to indicate that there was. Turn please to Job 1. In v6 we read,

Now it was the day that the sons of God came to stand before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them.

That phrase “sons of God” (*bene ha-elohim*) refers to the members of the court surrounding the throne of Yahweh. We could generalize it (as does the NIV) as “angels,” but the word is indeed “sons,” here referring to several kinds of angelic beings comprised of seraphim, the four living creatures (Revelation 7:11), cherubim, archangels as well as more common angels. In this moment, chronicled during the lifetime of Job, we can add to that congregation Satan—who has, by now, fallen,⁵ yet still retains access to the precincts of God’s throne. Later in the book of Job, when Yahweh angrily responds to all the whining and sophistry of Job and his chums, we see the “sons of God” mentioned again—this time at the moment of Creation.

⁵ See Chart #16 from my Last Things study.

Read Job 38:4-7.

We can only take this to mean that the God-created angelic beings were also in residence at the time of Creation. And if, as in Job 1 and 2, they were referred to as “sons of God” because of their proximity to and service to the throne, then that means there *was* a throne in place. And we could rightly extend this to include the heavenly tabernacle, or temple, which would have housed the chair and dais of God’s throne.

So it is logical to assume that God’s dwelling place, heaven, is as timeless and eternal as He. But note: the existence of a pre-Creation heaven has no bearing on the eternal (i.e., without beginning) emptiness in which Creation will take place, for God’s dwelling, though material and tangible, exists outside the time and dimensions of Creation. His Creation, that which is recorded in Genesis, does not contain God’s dwelling place; one cannot strap into a spaceship and travel to the end of the universe (if there even is an end) to reach heaven. It is not there; it does not dwell on our plane.

We conclude from this that before the creation of our world the only thing in existence was God’s dwelling place, which we name “heaven.” *That* heaven existed (and still exists) outside the plane of this created universe. Thus, outside of God’s dwelling place there was only nothingness.

What more does His word tell us about God before time?

First, the members of the Godhead were unified in love and joy for and with each other. At the beginning of John’s gospel we are told that Christ “the Word” was *with* God, but more than that He *was* God (John 1:1). We need no more than that to marvel at the holy mystery of the Godhead: its members are both *with* each other—and they *are* each other; Christ the Son is fully God, yet at the same time subservient to Father God (John 14:31; Hebrews 5:8).

Second, we know that this was far more than just *physical* proximity. Later in John’s gospel—his Chapter Seventeen is a treasure trove of information

about the relationship between Father and Son—we learn of the type of relationship the members of the Godhead had with each other; it was one of shared glory and love.

“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:5)

This was and is a bond not just of mutual glory, but mutual *love*.

Read John 17:22-26.

Third, God is without beginning.

Before the mountains were born
Or You brought forth the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (Psalm 90:2)
[written by Moses]

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from everlasting,
From the ancient days.” (Micah 5:2)

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

Our minds rebel against this, for in our world *everything* has a beginning. Every oak began as an acorn, every bird began as an egg, every human being began as a twinkle in his father’s eye. Before this world was, it was not. But God is the exception: God—consisting of Father, Son, Spirit—always has been. The Levites who led the confession and worship of Israel in the day of Ezra and Nehemiah seem to suggest that there was a point in eternity past when there was, literally, just God, who then subsequently created “the heaven of heavens” as well as the angels (see also Psalm 148:2-5, Colossians 1:16).

Read Nehemiah 9:6.

Fourth, the love expressed within the Godhead was nonetheless not a selfish, self-contained or exclusive love, but a love that energized God’s creation of man, with man’s hope of eternal life with his Maker all worked out in eternity past.

Read Titus 1:1-2.*

Within the sublime mystery of the Godhead we see the three working out all the details of man's future eternal life with God through the atonement of Christ. Were they discussing? debating? arguing? negotiating? We cannot say, for They are spirit-kind with all the qualities and attributes of deity; it is almost certain that were we to eavesdrop on Their "discussion" we would not understand one word of it—if it were even audible to human ears.

Thus, before anything was created, all the details of that Creation were worked out—everything, from beginning to end, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, the name of every human being who would ever live and whether or not they would be claimed for Christ, as the apostle Paul explained to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3–6)

Fifth, the Godhead made the astounding decision that when They did create man, he would be made in Their "image."

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

God could have made man as just another animal insensibly grazing Eden's pasture; He could have made him in the likeness of an over-ripe turnip. Instead man was made in the "image" of God, "according to [Their] likeness." That is profound beyond words. Man is set apart from every creature made before or after him. He is different, and that difference begins with the image in which he was made: God's.

Sixth and finally, the Godhead made the even *more* astounding decision that man would require external salvation—that if he were to spend eternity in communion with God, someone other than himself would need to supply the necessary regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. This new creation would not—and *could* not—do it on his own; he would require a Savior.

* literally, "before times eternal"; ESV: "before the ages began"

Long before the first word of Creation was uttered, God worked it out that one of Them—the Son—would pay the necessary price for man’s redemption. He—that is, God Himself, in flesh—would be the Lamb slain to pay the penalty for man’s sin.

Read 1 Peter 1:17-21.

The Godhead not only existed,⁶ it would seem It was rather busy during the timeless eons before Creation. In our next session we will answer another pressing question: Why? Why did God create the universe, the earth, and human beings? Why?

⁶ God’s “preexistence”

More than one person has typed into a search engine the query, “Did god exist before creation?” And, of course, most evangelicals would answer that query with, “Well, duh.” But if you have been raised in the public school system of the last few decades, being taught that the creation of the universe was just an explosive accident, and that man simply evolved from tadpole-like slime, let us at least be grateful that those asking the question acknowledge the possibility of the existence of God.

SESSION 2: WHY CREATION? PART ONE

PREFACE

Because of the nature of this topic—and because of its foundational importance—I have decided to split it into two parts, two sessions. Not only is this topic important, it includes concepts that may not be grasped easily in one telling. So along with spreading it out to allow time for questions and clarification, or even repetition, I have expanded the information in the handout. Perhaps more than usual, you may also benefit from obtaining the complete notes for these two sessions. I am in no way casting aspersions on anyone's intelligence; my reasoning is that if it took me several readings of some of the source material to grasp the information there, then it is a reasonable assumption that it may not take hold for you in just one telling. The last thing I want to do is rush through this.

INTRODUCTION

If, as Scripture makes clear, no one or no thing can add anything to our utterly complete and holy God, we might rightly wonder why He then went to the bother of creating the universe, the earth, and human beings to dwell on that earth?

To reach some understanding of *why* God created all there is—and, for the sake of this argument, created especially human beings—I will lean heavily upon the Jonathan Edwards' classic treatise, *A Dissertation Concerning The End for which God Created the World*, published in 1765, along with John Piper's extremely helpful discussion *about* Edwards' dissertation in his book, *God's Passion for His Glory* (1998).¹

I must frankly admit at the top that I find Edwards' treatise extremely dense and challenging to digest; since John Piper saw fit to publish a companion book on Edwards' work, which does indeed assist the poor plebes struggling to comprehend it, I must not be the only one so struggling. Yet, I confess I have always found some of even *John Piper's* books to be almost as thickly composed and reasoned as Edwards', so his book, in some instances, is faint help. Thus, for the sake of this study (as well as my own sanity), I have done my best to whittle down the admirable work of both of these eminent scholars to their essential points—because, in the final analysis, Jonathan Edwards does indeed make a profound, well-reasoned argument for the reason God “created the world.”

We begin with something Piper writes, “**God's moral rectitude consists in His valuing the most valuable, namely, Himself.**” This introduces a critical perspective for us to consider and adopt, to wit: that which is reprehensible conceit or presumptuous vanity in man, is, in God, nothing less than proof of His deity and holy righteousness.

For example, were I to mount the platform on a Sunday morning to sing a solo, perform on an instrument, or deliver a sermon for the *sole purpose* of

¹ Resources

Edwards' treatise may still be purchased, but is also available for free at a number of web sites in various forms. Perform a search to find one for your needs. Here is one: go to “<http://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1.iv.ii.html>”. If you would like to read or download Edwards' complete works, go to “<https://ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1>”. Although it can be purchased in book form, Piper's examination of Edwards' treatise is also available for free in PDF form at “<https://document.desiringgod.org/god-s-passion-for-his-glory-en.pdf?ts=1439242050>”.

basking in the adulation of the congregation—that is, to be glorified in its midst—then you would rightly condemn my conceit, and be right to encourage my repentance for such sinful pride.

Yet that is a fairly accurate human illustration of God’s character and behavior. *His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself.* In mere human beings that is self-centered conceit; in God, it is the sublime demonstration of His righteousness—or, “rightness” (i.e., rectitude).

We can rightly agree, as did Jesus Himself, that God is the ultimate expression of every righteous quality. To the rich young ruler who greeted Jesus with, “Good Teacher,” Jesus responded, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:17–18).

By this Jesus meant that God is by nature a level of “good” unattainable for anyone else; in comparison to His, our “good” is like something one would scrape off the bottom of one’s shoe. Or, as Calvin interpreted Jesus’ reply, “Thou falsely calleth me a good Master—unless thou acknowledgest that I have come from God” (Wessell).

THE NATURE OF GOD

Other cosmogonies² invariably emphasize that the living beings are created *by* the gods *for* the gods. Man is little more than a useful servant of the creator’s needs, as detailed in one of the more famous pagan accounts, the Babylonian or so-called “Chaldean Genesis,” unearthed and subsequently published in 1876. Emerging victorious after a struggle among the gods is the Babylonian deity Marduk, who “compounds material of his own blood for the creation of man, the chief purpose of whose creation is ‘that the service of the gods may be established’” (Leupold).

Although it is true that our God created man to worship and serve Him, we see in the Creation account in Genesis, as well as the rest of God’s word, that *our* God loves and serves *man*. We see it in the progression of His creative acts: He builds a universe and earth; He outfits the earth, preparing it for the benefit of its highest creature: man. He is sensitive to man’s lack of companionship, so God creates a companion for him. We see it in His establishment and love for Israel (Isaiah 43:3–4), his longsuffering and grace throughout the span of His creation on earth.

Historically, gods, like most kings, ruled through fear; adherents would make offerings and sacrifices to appease the ever-present anger of their god. Our God, while not compromising one ounce of His omnipotence and majesty, rules through love. His wrath is reluctantly displayed only as a last resort when the good He desires for His people is repeatedly thwarted by their sinful rebellion.

Everything God is and does is “good”; it is right. Thus His Creation will be “good” (Genesis 1:4–31; 1 Timothy 4:4).

² “cosmogonies”

theories or accounts of the origin or generation of the universe.

FOR HIM

One of my favorite verses in Scripture, and one profound in its succinct declaration, is Romans 11:36.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

That verse says it all; we can almost place the period at the end of this session and go home to our pot roast. First, the context makes clear that the “Him” in the verse refers to “God” (*Theos*), also as “the Lord” (*Kyrios*).

This verse is another way of stating that God is “the first and the last,” and Edwards has something to say about that.

Edwards: When God is so often spoken of as the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning, it is implied, that as he is the first, efficient cause and fountain, from whence all things originate, *so, he is the last, final cause for which they are made; the final term to which they all tend in their ultimate issue.* (emphasis added)

For from Him: God is the source—the only source—of all things.
and through Him: God is the sole Channel through which all things are generated.

and to Him are all things: God is His own “end.”

To Him be the glory forever: God’s “end”—His ultimate end—is His own glory.

Amen: Truly! So let it be! (Bank on it.)

While this passage is Father-, or Godhead-centric, the apostle Paul states essentially the same thing about Christ Jesus specifically in his letter to the Colossians.

Read Colossians 1:15-17.

“all things have been created *through* Him and *for* Him.”

We begin with that: Why did God in His fullness create the earth, the universe, and man? For Himself. At this beginning point we can conclude that God did this because it *pleased* Him to do so. That still leaves us with questions, of course, and it is certainly not the complete answer, but it is a starting point. He *chose* to do it; it brought Him pleasure to do it.³

In this alone we can already sense the disruptive dissonance of original sin. It brought God pleasure to do something He had never done before: create a universe outside of Himself and His own dwelling, and in that universe He created something particularly special to Him: human beings—not as an afterthought, not as insignificant playthings to observe from afar, as a child will

³ In this alone we can already sense the disruptive dissonance of original sin. It brought God pleasure to do something He had never done before: create a universe outside of Himself and His own dwelling, and in that universe He created something particularly special to Him: human beings—not as an afterthought, not as insignificant playthings to observe from afar, as a child will amuse himself watching ants scurrying about. No, we will see in the early Edenic days that God created man in His own image to have a relationship with his Maker. But in even those earliest days, man will turn against his Maker, relinquishing his sweet fellowship with God for Satan’s lies. This was not just a mistake, not just a stumble, but represented a cosmic tear in the fabric of Creation, something akin to what happened on the cross. In fact, even as the temple veil was being torn in two, the death of Christ was repairing the damage done by Adam and Eve in the Garden. His death meant that man would now have an opportunity to break from the consequences of that first rebellious sin.

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God's purpose behind His Creation goes far beyond just doing it because it pleased Him to do it. As mentioned earlier, this Creation—both the act and the product—will be intended to bring glory to Him.

Edwards does the leg-work for us to associate the phrases “for Him” (Colossians 1:16) and “for My own sake,” even “My name” with God's ultimate end, “His *glory*,” which we see illustrated so well in Isaiah 48.

Read Isaiah 48:9-11.

Yahweh would curb His rightful wrath against Israel—

“Indeed, you have not heard; indeed, you have not known.
Indeed, even from long ago your ear has not been open
Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;
And you have been called a transgressor from the womb.”
(Isaiah 48:8)

—yet in spite of this, He would not—and still will not—release the fullness of His anger against Israel. When He does, what will that look like? Read Revelation, chapters six through sixteen, for a description of the seven-year Tribulation, a crescendoing symphony of misery on earth, culminating in its third movement with the seven bowls (plagues) of God's wrath, a period of hideous suffering accompanied by massive geographic upheaval. There will then be poured out the last of the seven bowls.

Read Revelation 16:17–21.

Oh, throughout history God would chastise, He would punish, He would deliver Israel off to a foreign land; He might even, to a limited extent, destroy or kill. But the *full measure* of God's wrath will be restrained until the last things. And that longsuffering restraint will be for one reason: for His glory.

(continued in Session 3)

SESSION 3: WHY CREATION? PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

In our last session we established that God created all that is, first, for His own pleasure, but, second (and far more important), for His own *glory*. In this session we will dig deeper into this. John Piper writes, “**God’s moral rectitude consists in His valuing the most valuable, namely, Himself.**” Thus, *His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself.*

It is time now to define this important term; just what is meant when we speak of God’s glory, or that He be glorified. From *Brown’s Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (regarding the Greek equivalents),

Two different Greek word-groups are represented by the English words *glory* and *honour*. From classical Greek onwards *timē* denoted recognition of another’s work by giving him the position and honours he merited. **It is always something given to God or one’s fellow-man** (though not necessarily one’s social superior). *doxa* is often used as a synonym, but in the Bible **it is a quality belonging to God and is recognized by man only in response to him.** It is more often translated *glory*. **It suggests something which radiates from the one who has it, leaving an impression behind.** As such, it is inapplicable to relationships between men. (emphasis added)

1 “LXX” (Septuagint)

Though somewhat legendary in character, the Letter of Aristeas (second-century BCE) preserves some valuable information on the origins of the Septuagint. It tells us that an Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philadelphus (reigned from 285-246 BCE), commissioned a translation of the Hebrew Bible for his library in Alexandria. Seventy-two translators from Jerusalem were subsequently sent to the Island of Pharos to translate the Torah into Greek.

The term Septuagint, meaning “seventy,” actually refers to the seventy-two translators—six from each tribe of Israel—involved in translating the Pentateuch [Genesis to Deuteronomy] from Hebrew to Greek in the third-century BCE (seventy-two is rounded down to seventy, hence the Roman numeral LXX). The rest of the Hebrew Bible was translated from Hebrew to Greek by various hands over the next century or so. (Ryan Reeves at *The Gospel Coalition*)

We need to discuss the LXX for a moment.¹ It is the LXX which is responsible for detaching *doxa* from secular Greek for its use in the Bible, moving it from meaning opinion or conjecture, to expressing God’s glory and power. Remaining constant, however, is the word’s general structure, “for in the LXX also [the *doxa* word group is] used for appearance, i.e., for the manifestation of a person, with special stress on the impression this creates on others. This aspect is essential for our understanding of the concept” (Brown).

This is illustrated beautifully in the familiar passage from Isaiah 6. Turn there, please.

In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory” [Hebrew *kabod* (kah-vode)]. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called out, while the house of God was filling with smoke. Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts.” (Isaiah 6:1–5)

When the prophet found himself in the presence of “Yahweh of hosts” and experienced the fullness of His immense glory, what was his response? *I am a dead man*. That powerful glory emanating from the throne had a physical and psychological effect on the prophet. *I am about to die*.

So God’s inherent glory is not just something that is: His abundance, His radiance and splendor, His dignity, His “weight” or “heaviness” (which is a root meaning of *kabod*); it is something that has a profound effect on those who witness it.

Perhaps at this point you are wondering just how this works. That is, if God’s glory is something He alone possesses, something unique to Him and as timeless and eternal as He, just how can He be glorified through Creation and, even more befuddling, through broken, fallen man?

Since we cannot *add* to God’s glory, what is the point? How does this play out? What is meant that we were created for His glory?

Answering these questions is not unlike trying to bottle air, or capturing moonbeams in a jar. The answer is maddeningly elusive. There *are* answers, but none of them seem to satisfy. Just as you think you are approaching a resolution, it floats away from you, beyond reach. It is reasonably straightforward to picture in our minds God’s glory in Himself. He is blindingly holy, glorious to behold, majestic, supreme in everything—and unattainable in the flesh. We get that.

Jonathan Edwards writes,

It appears, that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God’s works, is included in that one phrase, ‘the glory of God’; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God’s works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing.

It seems to me that that can be subdivided into two parts: First, God’s *act of Creation* reveals and demonstrates His glory. Absent anything beyond that, just the fact that He *could* do it and *did* it, reveals His glory. No one but true God could do such a thing. Second, however, the content and texture of the biblical narrative make it clear that it *cannot and does not* stop there, that the Creation *itself* has a role to play in glorifying its Maker. The evidence for that?

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And the expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
(Psalm 19:1)

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, both His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

All Your works, O Yahweh, shall give thanks to You,
And Your holy ones shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your might;
To make known to the sons of men His mighty deeds
And the glory of the majesty of His kingdom.
(Psalm 145:10–12)

Earlier I spoke of God's inherent goodness; that plays a role in creation as well, for, as Edwards states, "It is certain that what God aimed at in the creation of the world, was the good that would be the consequence of the creation, in the whole continuance of the thing created." That is, His goodness, as Creator, would flow out from Him and into His Creation.

As with His goodness, so with His glory. And here we return to where I began these sessions: ***His ultimate end in all things is to glorify Himself***. In mere human beings that is self-centered conceit; in God, it is the sublime demonstration of His righteousness—or, "rightness."

Edwards: And God had regard to it in this manner, as he had a supreme regard to himself, and value for his own infinite, internal glory. It was this value for himself that caused him to value and seek that his internal glory should flow forth from himself. It was from his value for his glorious perfections of wisdom, righteousness, etc. that he valued the proper exercise and effect of these perfections, in wise and righteous acts and effects. It was from his infinite value for his internal glory and fullness, that he valued the thing itself communicated, which is something of the same, extant in the creature. Thus because he infinitely values his own glory, consisting in the knowledge of himself, love to himself, and complacency and joy in himself; he therefore valued the image, communication, or participation of these in the creature. And it is because he values himself, that he delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being himself the object of this knowledge, love, and complacency. *For it is the necessary consequence of true esteem and love, that we value others' esteem of the same object, and dislike the contrary. For the same reason, God approves of others' esteem and love of himself.* (emphasis added)

Here in this declaration by Edwards is the evidence for the exquisite, albeit maddening problem for mere flesh: There is no obvious endpoint to this; the relationship between God and His Creation—be it the stars, the forests and mountains, or man himself—is utterly *circular*. He has poured out His goodness and glory into the world He made so that His Creation could enjoy as much of His fullness as mere flesh can manage. In that is His love and gracious condescension manifested. We, as His created beings, revel in that connection to a

holy God and bless His name. But He, too, revels in the goodness and glory that flows back to Him from us! ***Because God esteems Himself as highest, He is pleased by our high esteem of Him.***

And how is that esteem manifested?

- **In our worship—true worship:**

Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up,
O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!
Who is this King of glory? Yahweh strong and mighty, Yahweh
mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift
yourselves up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
Who is He, this King of glory?
Yahweh of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.
(Psalm 24:7–10)

- **In our praise and thanksgiving (two expressions invariably entwined):**

I will give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart;
I will recount all Your wondrous deeds.
I will be glad and exult in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. (Psalm 9:1–2)

- **In our obedience:**

And Samuel said, “Has Yahweh as much delight in burnt
offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of Yahweh?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the
fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

[Jesus said,] “He who has My commandments and keeps them
is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by
My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”
(John 14:21)

- **In our adoration:**

He said, “I love You, O Yahweh, my strength.”
Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies. (Psalm 18:1–3)

- **In our witness:**

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may
see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in
heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

² **glorified as a Redeemer**

Beyond this, and presenting a bit of a paradox, is that God is glorified as a *result* of man's sin. Precisely how? It is God's *redemption* of fallen man that demonstrates that He is a God of grace and love. He redeemed Israel from Egypt, and He redeemed believers at the cross. He is glorified as a god of grace, forgiveness, and love because of His redemption of fallen, sinful believers. (See Psalms 71:23; 107:1-2; Isaiah 51:11; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.)

This, then, answers the perennial question, "Why does God permit sin?" Because He is glorified in His response to it; just as Yahweh was glorified in His forbearance and longsuffering with Israel's sin, He is glorified in His demonstration of grace, mercy, longsuffering, and forgiveness toward us.

Not only are God and His Christ glorified when we live out our faith in such a way, thus validating His reason for creating us, but our righteous behavior then witnesses to those not yet part of Him. When *they* come to faith as a result, God is again glorified in their repentance.²

Believers are an expression of God's glory. Just as Isaiah was overwhelmed by the fullness of His glory, so too individuals on earth can be overwhelmed—or at least impressed or influenced—by the expression of that glory in the lives and behavior of believers.

And so it goes—on and on.

First Things Text Outline

1:1 – 2:1	Creation of the Universe and Earth
2:2-3	Creation of the Sabbath
2:4-14	More details on earth's creation, including Eden's garden and the first man
2:15-17	Restrictions
2:18-23	A helper created: the first woman
2:24-25	Marriage created
The Fall	
3:1-5	The Temptation (a lie)
3:6	The Sin (the fall)
3:7-8	The result of the sin (shame)
3:9-13	Dissembling and blame-shifting ("it's not my fault!")
3:14-19	Cosmic Judgment for the serpent, the woman, and the man
3:20-24	Care mixed with banishment
Generations	
4:1-16	Cain and Abel: the first homicide
4:17-24	Cain's descendants: from Enoch to Lamech
4:25 – 5:32	The Generations of Adam: from Seth to Noah's sons
6:1-4	The Nephilim and the Daughters of men
6:5-8	Yahweh regrets creating man and animals
6:9-10	The Generations of Noah
The Flood	
6:11 – 7:4	God's instructions and the first covenant with Noah (6:18)
7:5-16	Noah's Obedience
7:17-24	The flood prevails
8:1-14	The earth dries
8:15-19	The ark empties
8:20-22	Noah worships and Yahweh responds with a promise
9:1-7	Three changes after the flood:
	animals will now fear man
	man may now be carnivorous
	murder now requires the death of the murderer
9:8-17	God's second covenant with Noah
9:18-29	Noah's three sons and, after 950 years, Noah dies
Generations	
10:1-32	The descendants of Noah's sons and where they settled (the families disperse)
Babel	
11:1-9	The Tower of Babel is built; Yahweh responds by giving each nation its own tongue, and scatters them over the entire earth

SESSION 4: IN THE BEGINNING...

Genesis 1:1

¹ Principal Commentators

During this study, and especially as we now begin to dig into the text of Genesis 1-11, I will be referring often to the work of two learned scholars: John H. Sailhamer, and his commentary of Genesis in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1990), and H. C. Leupold, from his classic work, *Exposition of Genesis* (1942).

The commentator¹ John H. Sailhamer points out that chapters 1 to 11 of Genesis form an introduction to the book as a whole and, beyond that, the entire Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy. That is no doubt true, but that is not the intended purpose or perspective of this class. The venerable scholar H. C. Leupold states that the purpose of Genesis is “to relate how Israel was selected from among the nations of the world and became God’s chosen people.” Again, certainly true, but that is not our focus.

Genesis can be easily divided into two sections: The first, chapters 1-11a, deal with the general history of mankind, while the second, chapters 11b-50 deal with the special history of God’s chosen people. Our elder Jake Hopper has already addressed the history of Israel in his class, *Israel in the Old Testament*. This class will *end* where his began, in the middle of Chapter Eleven, where the generations of Shem, leading to Terah, and his son, Abram, are introduced. This class will end with the tower of Babel, which is discussed through verse nine of Chapter Eleven.

The **purpose** of this class is to understand *how* it all began, *why* it all began, and what that tells us about who and what we are today. For the cultural and societal roots of 2023 dwell securely in the Creation epic of Genesis. The **perspective** of this class will be, of course, *historical*, for we will be examining events that occurred in the past; it will be *textual*, for we will be studying in detail (as always, down to the bare metal) the biblical text; but beyond that the perspective will be *cosmic*, yet at the same time firmly rooted in the soil of this earth—just as Moses expresses in the first two verses of his *magnum opus*.

Read Genesis 1:1-2.

Verse one is cosmic; we might paraphrase it, “In the beginning God created the entire universe”—the unending vastness of all that is, far more than the human mind can encompass. Verse one is expansive, even vague, but verse two zooms down immediately onto our own little blue marble, with, “And the earth...”

Interestingly, when God creates the sun and the moon in vv14-18, He doesn’t even bother to call them by those or any names, referring to them only by that which they produce *for the benefit of the earth*; note the perspective in these verses:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night [on earth], and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years [on earth]; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens

to give light on the earth”; and it was so. So God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night [on earth], and also the stars. And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness [on earth]; and God saw that it was good.

Before we begin our dissection of the text, I need to address the first of two elephants in the room. The second I will address later, with v2, but the first elephant in the room is the authorship of Genesis and the Pentateuch as a whole.

Just as there are those who smugly speak of evolution or man-produced global climate change as an established scientific fact with which only ignorant knuckle-draggers would disagree, there is a group of biblical “scholars” who claim that the text of the Pentateuch we hold in our hands is actually a composite created from four separate documents/writers/schools, compiled somewhere around 400 BC. I will let H. C. Leupold summarize this for us.

Leupold: Critics speak with much assurance, as though the proof for their position were unassailable, of the various sources that have been worked into the Pentateuch as we now have it; and they assure us that this composite work was finally compiled by an editor—commonly called Redactor (R)—after the time of the Exile perhaps as late as 400 B. C. The four major documents that have been worked into the Pentateuch are not only occasionally discernible in the work as a whole, but the cord has, as it were, been unravelled, and the four strands that compose it are laid before us side by side. The names given to these four documents or their authors are: (a) the Elohist document, written by the Elohist—abbreviated designation E—; (b) the Jahvistic or Yahwistic document—described as J; (c) the Priestly document or P; and (d) the Deuteronomistic document—or D. Some critics consider E, J, D, and P as persons, others regard them as literary schools.

Many of us have seen or heard references to this literary criticism. As I will not be propounding their theory I’ll not waste time going into further detail. This class will take the more “pedestrian” approach of believing what the *Bible* says about the Pentateuch’s authorship—especially what God’s Son Himself said about its authorship. Repeatedly in the gospels Jesus refers to Moses as the author of what is written in the first five books of the Bible (e.g., on four separate occasions, as listed in the handout). Let’s look at just one of those.

Read Luke 20:37.

We take this our text—chapters 1 to 11a—to be *revelation with retentive memory*. That is, ancient man, who often had nothing better at hand, possessed a retentive memory that would shame most of us today. During Adam’s long lifetime language and writing did indeed develop, but the accurate, almost photographic memory of people, events, and sequence, passed down from every generation to the next, was, in many ways, more reliable—and often more *available*—than memory today so dependent on writing, recordings, still and video images, and computers. Although individuals such as Moses might have at hand some ancient writings or chronicles from which to glean information, the ancient mind for such things was far more developed than that of modern man—or, more precisely, the memory “muscle” in people today has almost atrophied from disuse. We have replaced human memory with the ubiquitous internet search.

Beyond that, however, and even more trustworthy, is that to Moses Yahweh *revealed* this history, just as He revealed to the apostle John the *future* history of the Apocalypse.

These two combined—revelation and retentive memory—give us a solid foundation by which to study the text, and take it to be the reliably accurate writings of just one man: the Spirit-inspired Moses.

v1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The first three words in our Bible translate two Hebrew words: *bereshith* (be-reh-sheet), which translates to the English “first [or original] beginning.” I like what Matthew Henry has to say about this:


Henry: In the beginning, that is, in the beginning of time, when that clock was first set a going: time began with the production of those beings that are measured by time. Before the beginning of time there was none but that Infinite Being that inhabits eternity. Should we ask why God made the world no sooner, we should but darken counsel by words without knowledge; for how could there be sooner or later in eternity?

Some, such as *Young’s Literal Translation*, would make v1, “In the beginning of God’s preparing the heavens and the earth...”, which makes the first three verses into one continuous statement:

“When God set about to make the heavens and the earth—the world being then a formless waste...—God said, ‘Let there be light’” (Sailhamer paraphrase).

Or, in *The Old Testament, An American Translation* (in which Genesis was translated by Theophile J. Meek),

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth being a desolate waste, with darkness covering the abyss and the spirit of God hovering over the waters, then God said: ‘Let there be light.’

A purely grammatical case can be made for this,  but none of our common versions (i.e., NASB, ESV, NIV, KJVs) take that line. The problem with this alternate reading (as Sailhamer points out) is that “according to such a reading the world, as unformed material, *would have been present when the first act of Creation was performed*, that being God’s command in v3, ‘Let there be light.’ The first act of creation would have been the creation of light from darkness.” Instead, we hold that the text says that God’s first act of Creation was “creat[ing] the heavens and the earth.” That is, as stated earlier, *creatio ex nihilo*: “creation from nothing.”²

In the beginning God...

Remember, Moses is writing this as an explanatory, historical account for the benefit of the Hebrew nation, the people of which are already familiar with the standard names or references for their God: *El* or *Elohim*, *Adon* or *Adonai*, and *Yahweh* (YHWH). So as he begins this account, he employs the reference that best fits the moment; here it is *Elohim*.

By the very reference chosen, by that one word, Moses paints a word picture that every Israelite can understand. Who else but all-mighty, all-powerful, majestic *Elohim* could have spoken all that is into existence. As Leupold puts it, “God’s omnipotence outshines all other attributes in this account. Omnipotence rouses man’s reverence and holy fear rather than his love. In other words, it brings the Creator to man’s notice rather as *Elohim* than from any other point of view.”

So put this in perspective: Moses is not introducing to the Hebrews the god who created the heavens and the earth, as if he were asked, “Which god created all that is?” No, he is answering the question, “How did the heavens and the earth come into being?” And the answer is, “The one you bow before in holy reverence—the one before whom you quaked in fear at Sinai, even *Elohim*—He made all that is from absolute nothingness.”

The apostle Paul verifies the interpretation of *creatio ex nihilo* in his letter to the Romans—

as it is written, “A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU”—in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. (Romans 4:17)

—as does the writer to the Hebrews:

² “creation from nothing”

By the way, I like the way Leupold paraphrases this elsewhere: “The beginning was made by God.”

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

...*God created the heavens and the earth.*

Verse 1 concludes with the *object* of His Creation. What did Elohim create? “the heavens and the earth.” Let’s look at the three operative words.

created

The Hebrew is *bara*, and it is only ever used of divine activity, and expresses “the origination of something great, new, epoch-making, as only God can do it” (Leupold). The word itself does not *have* to mean “something from nothing,” but the context does, in that when no existing material is mentioned, no such material is implied. For example, look at Isaiah 65:17-18.

Read Isaiah 65:17-18.

There the same word (*bara*) is used to describe the creation of the new heavens and new earth (*ex nihilo*) as well as the creation of Jerusalem and its people (not *ex nihilo*).

heavens

As we have seen in other studies, the word translated heavens (*samayim* [sha-MY-eem]) is a flexible word that can, depending on the context, refer to the sky overhead, endless space, or God’s dwelling place—i.e., collectively, “the upper regions.” Hebrew has no word for “universe,” which is how we might interpret the statement. If we are correct that God’s dwelling place predates Creation, and dwells on a different plane, then that would not be included in His creation of “the heavens.”

earth

In this “heavens” God created, specifically, “the earth,” the stage on which everything will be played out in the rest of His word, from Eden all the way to this earth’s destruction and its replacement with (as mentioned in Isaiah 65:17) a *new* earth—which will then become the stage for everything that plays out into eternity future.

The word is *erets* (AIR-ets), which is the entire solid earth in contrast to the heavens; that is, if the heavens are “the upper regions,” the earth is “that which is lower.” This word can refer to the material earth, the ground, but is also used to refer to the totality of the planet.

In fact, to the Hebrew mind, the phrase “the heavens and the earth” would have been a common figure of speech expressing “totality”—i.e., everything there is.³

³ an orderly, systematic Creation

We will see as we proceed further into Genesis 1 and 2, that God employs what might be termed a “form and fill” method: First the “container; followed by what goes *into* the container. That is,

Day and night (day 1) with the sun and moon to fill and rule them on day 4.

Waters above and below (day 2) with birds and fish to fill and rule them on day 5.

Land and vegetation (day 3) with land mammals to fill and rule them on day 6.

Behind these few simple words in v1 of God's word we see the beginning of its perspective. Yes, there will now be a vast, apparently endless universe of stars and planets and other fantastical creations, but all of that is just "above." If something is "above," then there must be something over which it is above—there must be something "below" that which is "above." If there is a ceiling, there must be a floor.

Here in these words we see God's perspective: There is a *foundation* to His Creation; it is not the sun or the moon or any other planet, but specifically this earth, this globe. Just as man himself, once he is created, will be special *on* this earth, the earth itself is special in all of Creation.

WHY v1?

Now we need to consider how Moses is using v1; that is, what does v1 contribute to the Creation epoch? How does it fit in? Do we see it as a title, a preface, or a summary of what will be restated in greater detail later? Or is it merely the first portion of a longer statement that is made in the first three verses? Also, is Moses intentionally referring to the Trinity when he use the plural Elohim? Let's consider this last point first.

What does it mean that the word Elohim is plural?

To be precise, the Hebrew Elohim is masculine, plural, absolute; Leupold calls it a "potential" plural. By this He means that we go too far to conclude that this is a purposeful reference, by Moses, to the Trinity as we know it—but we also go too far to conclude that there is no reference at all here to the Trinity.

Leupold: The term 'Elohim...allows for all that which the fuller unfolding of the same old truth brings in the course of the development of God's Kingdom. When, then, ultimately the truth concerning the Trinity has been revealed, the fullest resources of the term 'Elohim have been explored, as far as man needs to know them.

We might think of this as a placeholder of sorts; the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* helpfully puts it this way:

JFB: ...by its use here in the plural form, is obscurely taught at the opening of the Bible, a doctrine clearly revealed in other parts of it, namely, that though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit, who were engaged in the creative work.

We might explain it this way: Moses himself could not know the fullness of the Triune Godhead, but the Spirit had him use a word for God that would permit that fullness to be realized by those who would follow—especially after the Incarnation.

Yet, v1 is more than just a free-standing introductory or summary statement, for such a preface would not be followed by “and,” which is the first word of v2 in the Hebrew text. No, we see v1 as describing the opening acts of Creation and, along with vv2-5, part of the first day.

We could draw a number of conclusions from this, but perhaps the most immediate and obvious is that this is a first expression of God’s grace—His *common* grace that envelops all people on this entire globe. We saw this earlier, for example, in v14-18 of Chapter One, where the universe “overhead” is created explicitly for the benefit of the earth.

Everything in that passage is earth-centric; the heavenly lights were not created as mere objects of beauty, or for the benefit of Mars or Jupiter, or the far-distant planet Vulcan (home of Spock), but specifically for planet earth—*this* planet. The imagery reveals a God who considers this planet—and, of course, its people—as not just another anonymous component in an endless sea of anonymous components, but as something dear to Him: a place where He would reveal Himself more fully than anywhere else, where His story would be enacted and told—and where, as we see in Revelation 21, He will dwell, now on a new earth, with his loved ones for all eternity:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...” (Revelation 21:1-3)

SESSION 5: A BLACK EMPTINESS

Genesis 1:2

In our last session we addressed the first of two elephants in the room: the authorship of Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch. It is now time to address the second elephant in the room.

During our wilderness years, back in the mid-90s, Linda and I studied together Paul's epistle to the Romans, using as our primary extra-biblical resource Donald Grey Barnhouse's classic (full title) *Romans: Exposition of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*.

It was during this study that we were first introduced to the topic I begin with in this session as we consider Genesis 1:2. Here is what Barnhouse wrote (and said during his regular radio broadcast in the 1940s and early fifties).

Barnhouse: "In the beginning God created the (first) Heaven and the (first) earth" (Gen. 1:1). It was perfect, and mirrored the perfect creation which inhabited it. Then sin entered and God blasted the universe. "The earth was without form and void," or, as it would be more correctly translated, "The world became a wreck and a ruin." The RSV correctly translates Isaiah 45:18 to say, "He created it not a chaos." How long the world existed in that wrecked condition we do not know. There are evidences from geology that it may have been for several million years. Continents rose and fell, glaciers crept down toward the equator and receded again, leaving the tell-tale scars of their passage written deep in the skin of the earth. Giant beasts roamed the earth, and the descendants of the beings that followed Lucifer in his fall left their trail across the crust of earth. Then, suddenly, God brought light into the dark of that sinister creation and in a few brief days brought a covering of perfection to His creation. Like snow that covers a garbage dump and makes all things clean for a moment, so Adam's world was beautiful for the moments of his walk with God. Then with the rebellion of man came the words of condemning judgment, "Cursed be the ground for thy sake... thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:17, 18). This is the earth on which we live. The scars of the past are beneath our feet, and the death of judgment is all around us.

At the time, I had never heard of this so called "two- or three-earth" position—also referred to as the "Gap Theory"—that Barnhouse so casually stated as gospel truth. The first time I read this my response was, not surprisingly, "Where did *this* come from? What in the world are you talking about?"

I ran into it again while doing my research for *Last Things*. Like Barnhouse, Clarence Larkin in his well-known series of charts published in 1919 and Buel

¹ At this point I need to revert to a bit of counsel I mentioned at the beginning of the previous class on the *Last Things*.

While I will propound (by God's grace), a convincing specific position regarding this, there are well regarded biblical scholars that subscribe to *different* positions—indeed, some of those different positions (for example, as voiced by Barnhouse) include some attractive aspects that make them at least worth consideration.

Ultimately, we must decide upon just one. But that does not mean that those holding to other interpretations are deserving of our scorn. Worthy arguments can be made for most of them. Thus I will not quarrel with anyone choosing an alternate interpretation.

² “Now...”

Leupold's paraphrase: “And now, as far as the earth was concerned, it was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was hovering upon the face of the waters.”

³ In precisely the same way, in v1 God creates “the heavens” but not until later (piece by piece) does he add the moon

(cont. next page)

Liming in 1970, posit three earths: the original earth of Genesis 1:1; the chaotic earth of 1:2; followed by the restored earth of 1:3ff.¹

Creation was a process; Chapter One alone of Genesis makes this clear. In the beginning, the very, very beginning moments of God's creating, the earth looked nothing like it does today. But was this, as Barnhouse and others claim, a *first* pristine earth that would eventually be replaced or reformed as a *second* or *third* earth? Or was it simply the natal shape of the earth before it was, as part of the process of Creation, refined?

Barnhouse does not shy away from the temptation to use this interpretation to resolve those nagging conflicts that arise between old-earth and new-earth proponents. Rock strata scientifically dated to an age multiple millions of years into the past? Erosion claimed to have required billions of years to occur? Giant dinosaurs roaming the earth before even the first man? No problem: all this occurred, according to Barnhouse and others, during the period of the second chaotic (and, assumed) sinful earth. As he says, “How long the world existed in that wrecked condition we do not know. There are evidences from geology that it may have been for several million years.”

David Guzik rebuts this with one simple, biblical fact:

Guzik: Whatever merit the gap theory may have, it cannot explain the extinction and fossilization of ancient animals. The Bible says plainly death came by Adam (Romans 5:12), and since fossils are the result of death, they could not have happened before Adam's time.

Now let's read our text.

Read Genesis 1:1-2.

The original Hebrew begins v2 with “And,” which is removed by the ESV, NKJV, and NASB95 (but *not* the original NASB); the NIVs replace “and” with “now,” which works just fine.² The point being that in the original text, verse two does not speak of a different earth, but continues to flesh out the description of the *same* earth in v1: the conjunction “and” makes this clear. Again, Creation was a process; it was a jigsaw puzzle put together a piece at a time, over time, until all of it was “very good” (1:31).³

What *really* lights the fire of the proponents of the “Gap Theory” are the next two words that describe this newly formed earth: “formless” and “void.” They take this to mean that the original earth—the pristine earth—has now “been laid waste by some catastrophe,” typically interpreted to mean by sin and corruption through the fallen angel, Satan—that is, they interpret this verse as saying, “the earth *became* formless and void.”

But the Hebrew *tohu*—without form, emptiness, waste—can also mean “not yet put into shape.” The second part, *wabohu* (“and void”), can mean “to be empty, emptiness, without inhabitants of any kind.” Used together these express a picture of “an unformed and unshaped mass,” and point the reader toward the conclusion that this “newly created world will undergo further changes: first it must be shaped and formed into definite molds; second, it must be peopled with all kinds of inhabitants and beings” (Leupold).

Speaking against the “Gap Theory,” the venerable *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary* reads v2 as “And the earth was (not became) waste and void.”

Think of it this way: Every exquisite pot begins as a shapeless (“formless”) lump of clay. What it will eventually become lies not within the clay itself, but in the hands of its maker. As a potter will take in hand a large ball of amorphous clay and slap it down onto the wheel to begin the process, just so the Lord God spoke into existence a formless lump of earth devoid of any character or personality—and most certainly devoid of any beauty—and slapped it down in its place in the nothingness that would soon be a universe of planets and stars.

Then—and only then—did He begin the process of shaping it into something we might eventually recognize.⁴

What did this shapeless mass look like? What was its composition? We are tempted to imagine in our mind the most desolate, lifeless expanse of desert waste, and that is indeed how the same word is used later in Deuteronomy:

Read Deuteronomy 32:9-10.

But the rest of v2 dissuades us from that conclusion.

...and darkness was over the surface of the deep,

Only later in the narrative (v9) is dry land created:

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

Thus what we have in v2 is a shapeless earth with surging water covering its entire surface. Whether there is land lying beneath the waves or not, we cannot say with any certainty.

Moses paints a picture that any Israelite would recognize; the “deep” (or “abyss”) is the Hebrew *tehom*, and often refers to the primal ocean, the deep—even the underworld, the realm of the dead—rendering the ocean depths representing a fearful place to Israel. On top of that, this “deep” is wreathed in utter blackness; there is no light yet created to pierce its mysteries. The word *tehom* is from the root *hum*, which means “to resound,” thus revealing that this

and sun (“lights in the expanse of the heavens” [1:14]), as well as the the stars (1:16).

⁴ Additional Resource

I will not take time here to itemize all the various evangelical interpretations and theories for the Creation epic—specifically, how it compares to so-called scientific theories such as evolution, etc. If you are interested in this, visit the link below for an excellent, but succinct summary of the various interpretations.

Evangelical Interpretations of Genesis 1-2, by Vern Poythress
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/evangelical-interpretations-genesis-1-2/>

⁵ Have you ever noticed the utter silence in your house when the power goes out. We may think our home is quiet, but there are always ambient sounds that we have come to ignore: the hum of the refrigerator or freezer, the purr of the desktop computer, even the barely audible buzz of fluorescent lights. Suddenly all those are gone and the silence is deafening. In the same way we are almost continually surrounded by light from one source or another; even what we call “dark” is rarely utterly black. There is invariably some ambient light from somewhere. But I have been out in the middle of the desert on a cloud-covered night, with no artificial light from city or houses, no moon or stars in the sky, when I literally could not see my hand held in front of my face. Utter blackness. This is the state of the earth at this point of Creation.

is no placid pond, but endless, surging, even raging primeval waters (Leupold)—and all in utter darkness. A fearful place indeed.⁵

...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

At this point in the Creation process we have a shapeless—i.e., in transition—earth, dark, with its surface consisting solely of roiling waters. And now a new element is introduced into the narrative: the “Spirit of God.”

As in the Greek (*pneuma*), the Hebrew for “spirit” (*ruach*) can be proper or no; that is, it can be either “spirit” or “Spirit.” It can also be rendered wind, breeze, or breath, and some do like to paint this picture in v2 as a wind blowing over the waters. Thus one interpretation of this is of a wind associated with the churning waters—in other words, an *element* of the creation itself: water and wind.

Others, especially some older translations, choose different verbs to describe what this wind or spirit is doing; for example, YLT has the Spirit of God “fluttering on the face of the waters.” Others prefer translating *rachaph* “brooding,” rather than the more common “hovering” or “moving” (as in most of our versions) which the Hebrew seems to require. However, a mother bird “broods” over her *eggs*—not her young (Leupold). The earth in this moment is young, but not waiting to be hatched. The text signifies an active, vibrant moving, a protective hovering—as we see back in the Deuteronomy passage.

Read Deuteronomy 32:11.

So it is clear that whatever is moving over the waters is there in more than just an *elemental* role, but is actively playing a role in the creative process itself. But is it wind or spirit? If spirit, is it “spirit” or “Spirit”? In Deuteronomy 32:11 it is Yahweh hovering over His people like an eagle; here it is the Holy Spirit, third member of the Godhead, hovering over the earliest moments of Creation. But what is His role?

If we say that the Spirit is here depicted in an active, creative role, are we forcing the text to say something it isn’t? Does it make sense for the Holy Spirit—“the Spirit of God”—to be involved in Creation? Yes indeed, and we see it paralleled in the account of the creation of the tabernacle, where He—the Spirit—was a necessary component.

Read Exodus 31:1-5.

Sailhamer: As God did His “work” of creation by means of the “Spirit of God,” so Israel was to do their “work” by means of the “Spirit of God.”

The psalmist states it explicitly.

Read Psalm 33:6-9.*

And here is the delightful insight that adds depth and texture to the simple “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.”

Leupold: This “hovering” was not a single and instantaneous act. It rather describes a continued process... From all other activities that are elsewhere ascribed to the Holy Spirit we conclude that His work in this case must have been anticipatory of the creative work that followed, a kind of impregnation with divine potentialities. The germs of all that is created were placed into dead matter by Him. His was the preparatory work for leading over from the inorganic to the organic.

The venerable Keil and Delitzsch agree—in fact, surely it was their commentary that inspired Leupold in some of his remarks.

K&D: In such a way as this the Spirit of God moved upon the deep, which had received at its creation the germs of all life, to fill them with vital energy by His breath of life. The three statements in our verse are parallel. All three describe the condition of the earth immediately after the creation of the universe. This suffices to prove that the theosophic speculation of those who “make a gap between the first two verses, and fill it with a wild horde of evil spirits and their demoniacal works, is an arbitrary interpolation” (Ziegler).⁶

By this interpretation we see the Spirit of God literally breathing life into the dark, “formless and void” earth. And as the narrative proceeds, even all the way to the end, in Revelation, we see the Spirit active and vital on and in the earth.

⁶ The Life-breathing Spirit

Are we pushing this too far? No, for it will happen again in just the same manner in Chapter Two:

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.
(Genesis 2:7)

* breath: same word (*ruach*)

SESSION 6: LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Genesis 1:3-5

Read Genesis 1:3-5.

v3

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Here we have the first explicit instance in the creative acts of God speaking something into existence. We assume that the same method was employed in vv1-2, but in v3 it is stated explicitly. As we read in our previous session, from Psalm 33,

By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host...
For He spoke, and it was;
He commanded, and it stood.

Leupold: No one need think it strange that an inanimate object is addressed as animate when God speaks to the light. The situation is really even stranger: *God speaks to the things that are not, that they might be*. The nature of creation requires just that. (emphasis added)

“Darkness” (*hosek*) God had already created, because it “was over the surface of the deep” in v2. Now, in contrast to this darkness, He creates “light.”

There are generally two ways that v3 has been interpreted:

1. The sun was created in v1, but its light did not penetrate the darkness enshrouding the earth until v3. That is, v3 is interpreted from an earth’s-surface perspective, as if God said, “Let there be light *upon the earth*.” As Sailhamer puts it, “Verse 3 then does not describe the creation of the sun but the appearance of the sun through the darkness.” This assumes there is no light without the sun (but, of course, runs into a problem when, later, the sun [“the greater light”] is created in vv14-19).
2. “Light” here (*or*) represents the primordial element of light, divorced from any object that will later employ it.

This, the second interpretation, follows our interpretation of the earth’s creation in v2, and the overall progression of Creation itself—i.e., a step-by-step process.¹ When God created the “heavens and the earth” they *both* were essentially “formless and void.” This was His creation of spaces, as it were, that would later be filled in piece by piece, which fits perfectly with the textual progression.

¹ “a step-by-step process”

Remember what was pointed out in Session Three: God’s workflow in His Creative process was to first create a space, or environment, then later either complete it, or populate it with other “creations.”

Verse 3 does not say “Let there be sunlight” or “Let there be the sun,” but “Let there be *light*.” That is, let there now be the fundamental element of light itself—a light that God will later put to use in myriad ways, in myriad objects throughout His universe.

Are we confused by an apparent difference between light and the sun—that the former was created on day one and the latter was created on day four? *Asaph* (ah-SAPH), in his Psalm 74, delineated them in a similar fashion.

Yours is the day, Yours also is the night;
You have established the light and the sun. (Psalm 74:16)

Spurgeon: “Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.” Both light and the light-bearer are of thee.

Humans, as a rule, have small minds that think small, with a small scope. We tend to think pragmatically, even mechanically. If we can’t imagine something, we often think it impossible.

As individuals with small minds and a small scope, we too often—even without meaning to—diminish God’s capabilities by unconsciously imagining His abilities somehow akin to our own. As a result we have those who labor to explain, for example, the Egyptian plagues and the parting of the Reed Sea in Exodus by earthly means: minerals sweeping out of the southern cataracts to explain the “blood” of the Nile; freak atmospheric disturbance blowing back the waters of the Reed Sea—in opposing directions, no less.

But God does not require earthly, mechanical means to perform His will. He *may* employ such means, but He needn’t depend on them.

Thus in our context of vv3-5, there are those who conclude that even though the sun is spoken into existence on the fourth day (vv14-19), the sun *must* have been created when God “created the heavens and the earth” in v1. For how else could there be “light” in v3? That’s reasonable to a mind with a small scope, but why then does He specifically create the sun and moon during the fourth day? No, here we see the Divine power to separate light from the created instruments that shed it.

Calvin: It did not...happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments the agency of which he employs. The sun and moon supply us with light: And, according to our notions we so include this power to give light in them, that if they were taken away from the world, it would seem impossible for any light to remain. Therefore the Lord, by the very order of the creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.²

² “without the sun and moon”

As He does for the final, eternal state on the new earth in the New Jerusalem:

And I saw no sanctuary in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its sanctuary. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.
(Revelation 21:22–24)

v4

From the account of the Egyptian plagues we learn that God can create a darkness that is far more than just the absence of light.

Read Exodus 10:21-23.

This sounds like a darkness similar to that of the primordial earth in v2. Yet the text says that “Israel had light in their places of habitation.” I take it that both of these—the tangible darkness and the localized light—were of supernatural origin.

And God saw that the light was good;

Once again we must detach ourselves from our human, earth-bound perspective to grasp what is being said here—not least because this is the first of a *series* of “goods” in the Creation epic. And this is challenging—not because it is technically difficult, but that this word translated “good” (*tob* [tove]) is used in so many different ways in the OT. Thus it is not surprising that there is no consensus among the various commentators for how it is intended here:³

³ Interpreting “good”

- not perfect, but approved (Alexander)
- not approved, but perfect, hence worthy of praise (Leupold)
- beneficial for man (Sailhamer)
- fitting, right, as a thing should be (Wilson)
- approved (Calvin)

⁴ “the light was good”

We should not miss the parallelism taking place between 2 Corinthians 4:6, John 1:4-10, and other passages in the NT with Genesis 1:3.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Eventually God will declare the entirety of His Creation “good” (indeed “very good”). But when He created the initial earth in vv1-2 it is described as formless, void—and dark. God created all that—but He does not declare it “good.” The first thing He creates and deems “good,” is light: “And God saw that the light was good” (v4). In John’s gospel, the Word is

(cont. next page)

My thoughts incline toward William Wilson’s definition, found in his classic work, *Old Testament Word Studies* (1870). I would express it this way: When God created something and declared it good, He was saying something like, *I have made this exactly as I meant to, and it is just as it should be for the purpose intended*. Thus we shy away from the idea of “perfection,” which implies *complete*, because some of the things God declares good—especially early on—will be either altered or added to later on.

Just so, we probably should not place too great a load on this solitary word, for note that God does not declare everything He does in Creation “good.” For example, look at vv6-8. Here He separates the waters below from the waters above, thereby creating the first heaven (which we refer to as the sky, or immediate atmosphere). But He does not declare it good. Does this mean it isn’t? Not at all. Likewise He creates the primordial earth in v2, but does not declare anything good until He creates light (vv3-4). The earth in v2 is not complete, but does that mean it is not just as He intended? I doubt it.⁴

and God separated the light from the darkness.

We find another clue in Isaiah’s prophecy that this light and darkness—*not created* in vv4-5, but separated one from the other—are far more than just light beaming from a sun and its lack thereof.

Read Isaiah 45:5-7.

In v4 God has not yet invented “day” and “night,” nor has He created the sun and the moon; He has just created the elements “light” and “darkness” (v2).

And now He “separates” them. This does not suggest that they were once one, or once tangled up together with each other, but that God now creates a distinction, a space, even a time-interval (as with the intermission, or interval, between the acts of a play). Light and darkness henceforth will not share the same space; there is one, or there is the other, never both together or at the same time.⁵

v5

And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night.

And here is, at a glance, a deep mystery. Now that the two are separate, God names them; the light He calls “day,” the darkness He calls “night.” *Yet He has not yet created the sun and moon!* (v14ff) Even so, God declares that all that has thus far been created He sets into one day:

And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

The venerable church father, Augustine, helps us understand how light and darkness can be separate from day and night, yet also be associated with them by God’s will: “All light is not day, nor all darkness night; but light and darkness alternating in a regular order constitute day and night.” K&D puts it this way: “The first day did not consist of the primeval darkness and the origination of light, but was formed after the creation of the light by the first interchange of evening and morning.”

And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

T. Desmond Alexander: Day 1 describes the creation of a repeated pattern of darkness followed by light. Light does not eradicate darkness; it merely alternates with it. Day and night are formed. This results in the creation of time. This chronological structure is then reflected in the rest of the chapter, as day gives way to night in the evening, and as night gives way to day in the morning. As elsewhere in the earliest books of the Old Testament, the chronological day is understood to begin with sunrise. Later, due to Babylonian influence after the capture of Jerusalem in 586 BC, Judaeans viewed the day as starting with sunset.

As we reach the conclusion of this passage, and v5, we face two decisions we must make:

First (the lesser of the two), Is it “first day” or “one day”?

Within our common versions, only the NASB and LSB translate this literally: “one day.” This is a minor point, in my opinion, which is not worthy of much of our time; no one’s faith or theology is going to be determined by this.

and brings to the world not darkness, but “Light.” Likewise, we are called to walk in the light—not darkness (Isaiah 2:5; 1 John 1:7).

⁵ **supernatural light and darkness**

I personally believe that “light”—that peculiar, supernatural light unattached from any object of illumination—and “darkness”—that indefinable darkness that covered the face of the initial earth—belong to that category of “God-things” that will remain a mystery so long as we mere humans reside on this earth, and away from the physical presence of our God.

Nonetheless, we should always endeavor to interpret God's word as accurately as possible.

The Hebrew is *yom echad* (yome ekh-AWD), and there is no article ("the") in the text. The difference would be this: "*First day*" suggests the first of many, or several—i.e., a succession. The text does not get ordinal—a number in a series, e.g., second, third—until *after* day one. Instead, the text is "one day," meaning something like *all that has just been described was created in one day*.⁶

⁶ **"one" / "second"**

"One" in v5 is numeral, cardinal, (i.e., of main importance, principal, chief), singular, absolute.

"Second" in v8 is numeral, ordinal, singular, absolute.

Second (the more important of the two), does "day" mean 24 hours, or an indeterminate period?

I will just touch on this lightly here, but return for a more in-depth look at this important question in our next session.

As we saw in our last session, some (such as Donald Barnhouse) would explain the supposed conflict between the Bible and science by creating a "gap theory," which places a second fallen, chaotic earth after a first, pristine earth. Among other advantages, this permits this second earth to exist for an indeterminate period, allowing time for what "science" claims is the incredible age of this earth. All of this takes place, as they claim, between v1 and v2 of Genesis Chapter One.

A second group prefers to explain this assumed conflict between Bible and science by claiming that the word "day" in Genesis 1 can mean "eon," or "period," here an indeterminate period of perhaps thousands of years. This allows those in this camp to fit into this first "week" of Creation all the innumerable millennia necessary to age this earth into its present state.

I will argue, however, in our next session, that there is no reason to corrupt the meaning of God's written word—why is it always the *Bible* that must compromise, and not science?—to harmonize the truth. This earth can be as ancient as some believe, *and* Creation can be accomplished in six literal days.

SESSION 7: WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

Genesis 1:5ff

In any consideration of the time span of Creation's six days, one must begin with the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. For far too many interpret Genesis 1:1-2:3 based on current science, current theories, and the capabilities of today's nature, rather than on the nature of Almighty God. It all boils down to that: either we interpret God's word based on the *creation* we know—or the God we know. Or, stated a different way, do we take God at His word, or do we force His Spirit-inspired text to conform to what today's science claims is possible? Do we confine God to humanity's constrictive box, forcing Him to play by our rules, or do we accept and believe that He can do whatever He sets His mind to?

So we begin with some of what God's word says about who He is and His capabilities—such as Jeremiah 32:17.

'Ah Lord Yahweh! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm!
Nothing is too difficult for You...'

The Lord Jesus concurred:

And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25–26)

The prophet Isaiah does a splendid job of describing the unlimited power of our God.

Read Isaiah 40:12, 15.

Read Isaiah 40:21-26.*

Every reference in the Bible to "God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*) or just "the Almighty" speaks of His unbounded omnipotence: God is absolutely capable to do *anything*. So if one subscribes to that, taking the Bible as God's word on the matter, then one cannot, at the same time, chip away at His omnipotence by suggesting that, "*based on what we know*" about geology, carbon dating, the age of this earth, it would be impossible for it to be created in only six calendar days. No, either God is capable or He is not.

Let's begin with what the text says in v5.

* See also Romans 1:18-20.

And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

That is, everything in vv1-5 God accomplished in one day. The operative word here in the Hebrew is *yom*, translated “day.” And the perennial question is, Does *yom* here (and, of course, throughout the extended passage) mean a twenty-four hour day, an age or eon—that is, an indeterminate period of time—or, as a few commentators would have it, a “day” in God’s eyes (Psalm 90:4). Thus, by necessity, the length of time for Creation is linked to the age of this earth, and there are several clues in the text itself to point us to a twenty-four hour day:

- Verse five paints a picture of a literal, earthly day, with “God called the light day [*yom*] and the darkness He called night [*laylah*].” Just as any human being would describe it, “there was evening and there was morning, one day.”
- As Leupold points out, “There ought to be no need of refuting the idea that *yom* means period [of time]. Reputable [Hebrew] dictionaries...know nothing of this notion.” Skinner agrees: “The interpretation of *yom* as aeon, a favourite resource of harmonists of science and revelation is opposed to the plain sense of the passage and has no warrant in Hebrew usage.” Finally, K&D concur: “If the days of creation are regulated by the recurring interchange of light and darkness, they must be regarded not as periods of time of incalculable duration, of years or thousands of years, but as simple earthly days.”
- Remember, the entire Creation narrative, from the end of 1:1 to 1:31 is earth-centric. Why, then, would the Spirit inject the yardstick of eternity to describe a day?

So if we conclude that the days of Genesis Chapter One represent earthly, twenty-four hour days, how do we then answer those who claim that science demands an older earth that required millions of years to be created and become what it is today? Let’s consider just one example, the Grand Canyon in the United States; this from the National Park Service web site:

With one of the clearest exposures of the rock record and a long, diverse geologic history, Grand Canyon is an ideal place to gain a sense of geologic or “deep” time. The oldest rocks exposed in the canyon are ancient, 1,840 million years old. Conversely, the canyon itself is geologically young, having been carved in the last 6 million years. Even younger deposits, including ice age fossils in caves, 1,000 year-old lava flows in the western canyon, and recently deposited debris flows, bring Grand Canyon’s geologic record to the present. (Nation Park Service web site: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/age-of-rocks-in-grand-canyon.htm>)

It is probably safe to assume that most people who believe in a literal earthly week for Creation also believe in a relatively far younger earth—i.e., from the end of the first week to today—than would be necessary to form the Grand Canyon according to the time span just presented by the National Park Service. If so, how do we resolve this apparent conflict?¹

This brings us to two terms commonly used to label these two camps: “old earth” and “new earth”—in the parlance meaning an earth millions or billions of years old, and an earth only thousands of years old. My proposal is that we adopt, but *redefine*, the term “old earth” to encompass both. Stay with me on this.

If we subscribe to the days of Creation being literal, earthly days of (at least approximately) twenty-four hours each, then this means that it was all accomplished in what would be familiar to us as six days. Let’s fast-forward in this first week to the third day in vv9-13. It was in this day that God separated the waters on the earth and thus revealed (or created; it’s hard to say which) dry land for the first time.

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

Note that each verse here ends either with the declaration “it was good,” or the statement “and it was so.” In other words, God repeatedly says, “Let... [something happen],” but the narrative confirms that this was not simply a command that somewhere down the line these things would occur—i.e., thousands of years later—but for them to occur *immediately*.

So when the dry land appears (*raah*, made visible) for the first time, we might imagine that this would be something like the raw stone of the earth’s crust raised above the water.

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Yet note what all happens immediately within the very same day (“....and it was so”).

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

Well now, this means that the “dry land” did not consist of raw slabs of steaming rock, but was complete with soil and nutrients suitable for vegetation (i.e., grass), plants or herbs—already bearing seeds, no less—and fruit trees sufficiently mature to be already bearing mature fruit with seeds. In other words within the brief span of one day God revealed dry land and created full-flowering gardens, meadows, and orchards.

Verse 12 confirms that this occurred immediately.

¹ The two—the first six days of Creation, and the age of this planet earth—are, admittedly, two separate issues, yet, as we are beginning to see, inevitably intertwined.

And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

Verses 26 to 31 of Chapter One state that within the sixth day of Creation God made both man and woman. Now let's fast-forward again to v7 in Chapter Two, to the more detailed narrative of the creation of man.

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.

Look at vv15-16.

Then Yahweh God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may surely eat...

Here we have the evidence that God created man a mature human being; the first man did not begin life as a newborn baby (born from whom?). A baby would not be able to "cultivate" the garden in which he had been placed, nor could he reach the fruit hanging on the trees for sustenance. Likewise a baby would not be able to name all the "cattle and...birds of the sky and...every beast of the field."

Thus we see a pattern during the Creation of the heavens and the earth, of God creating things "ready to go," as it were. The world, its components of gardens and fields and rivers and mountains, and its inhabitants—man, woman, the beasts of the field—were not created each in its seminal state, but in a mature, developed state—a state that any scientist examining a mountain or chasm during these first days would declare "old," yet it had just been created out of nothing by the word of God!

Professor John C. Whitcomb (who, by the way, has spoken at our church), in his classic work *The Genesis Flood*, speaks of the creation effort itself imposing such "age" upon the earth.

This initial act of creation [in Genesis 1:1] quite evidently included the structure and materials of at least the earth's core and some sort of crust and surface materials. The first description given of its appearance is that of water ("the deep") covering its surface and of a dense shroud of darkness (Genesis 1:2) enveloping it. It seems reasonable that, even if the earth's creation was accomplished as an instantaneous act, its internal heat and the waters on its face would immediately have begun to perform works of profound geological significance.²

² Another good source in agreement with Whitcomb's thesis is *Carved in Stone: Geological Evidence of the Worldwide Flood*, by Dr. Timothy Clarey (Institute for Creation Research, Copyright © 2020).

He goes on in his work to make the case that the deluge itself—the great flood of Chapters Seven and Eight—would do even far more to chisel the earth with “age.”

We have had, for a very long time, a “poster child” for the young-earth position: Archbishop Ussher.

The late Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher (1581-1656), basing his conclusion primarily on a literal interpretation of the king lists and genealogies in the OT, calculated—to the day!—that the earth was 4,004 years old; following his method, we would have to add to Ussher’s total approximately 350-400 more years, since he died 367 years ago. But just as the NT does not include every word spoken or every act done by Christ Jesus (John 21:25), the OT can be taken literally while still acknowledging that there are gaps in the king lists and genealogies—e.g., a “son” does not have to mean a literal next generation, but can simply mean a descendant, as it does in Matthew 1:1.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David,
the son of Abraham:

The Bible does not list every person descended from Adam and Eve, or Noah, nor does it contain the name of every king or queen who ever ruled, so that is an inaccurate measure by which to ascertain the age of the earth. Yet because his estimation was included in most King James Bibles, many of us grew up taking Ussher’s figures as gospel truth. On the face of it, however, four thousand years would not be sufficient for all the historical civilizations and empires for which we have both documentation and solid archaeological evidence.

Yet there is a considerable span of possibilities between 4,404 years and 1,840 *million* years. I conclude that from the evidence of Scripture and from the physical evidence of this earth that our earth is older than Ussher’s calculations, but far, far younger than the calculations of today’s scientists. It is indeed an “old earth,” but much of that age was built into the earth from the beginning, with additional layers of age and weathering accomplished by the Deluge of Genesis Seven and Eight. And, of course, the earth has aged since then.

Most scientists, geologists, etc., begin from a position that it is simply nonsensical and impossible to take the Bible literally when it comes to things that should, by all rights, be relegated exclusively to science. But they forget—or deny outright—that it was Almighty God who *created* the science they so worship. Science—God’s created science—is correct; it is their *conclusions* that are incorrect.

Contrary to the fallen philosophies of this world, *we* are to begin from a position that nothing is impossible for an omnipotent Creator of the universe. If we find some of what He did, some of what He writes, confusing or even hard to grasp, that reflects a deficiency in our faith, not a deficiency in Him.

SESSION 8: THE FIRST HEAVEN

Genesis 1:6-8

One of God's greatest gifts to man, a gift that almost daily shouts His glory and beauty, is His creation of clouds. Something that reinforces the majesty and grandeur of our God is beholding either the early morning or fading daylight appearance of clouds painted in the golds and pinks and purples of dawn or sunset—or the overwhelming mountains of dark and ominous thunderclouds that speak so eloquently of His might. Here, in these moments, is the Lord God speaking to us through the rather mundane element of common water vapor.

Lest we forget, however, the *operative* element in these heavenly displays—that which is responsible for their beauty—is not the vapor itself, but the sun, and very often the condition of the atmosphere between our vision and the clouds themselves.

At this moment in the Creation narrative, the element of *light* has been created (v3), but not the star created to carry that light to earth: the sun (vv16-18). Thus as we examine God's creative acts during the "second day," we must keep in mind that He will have not yet created the colorful symphony we today enjoy as we gaze toward the western or eastern horizon.

Read Genesis 1:6-8.

v6

Perhaps there is no other passage in Scripture that cries out so for clear definition of its words than vv6-7 of Genesis Chapter One—especially in some of the older versions. Verse 6 in the KJV reads

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

I don't know about you, but whenever I read the word "firmament" I imagine, not surprisingly, something *firm*, solid, like a rock escarpment. And whenever I read "divide the waters from the waters" I imagine it speaks of something like what happens in v9:

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

Verse 9 says, let dry land suddenly appear to separate the water in one sea from the water in another sea. But, of course, neither of these—a rock escarpment and vast oceans—describe what is happening in vv6-7.

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters,
Here is a classic example of how someone in the 1600s reading the word

“firmament” in their King James Bible would have an absolutely correct image in their mind, while many of us today do not. Most of our common versions have settled on the word “expanse,” while the newer NIV has, bless its heart, reverted to simply another, somewhat archaic reference: “vault.”

We must remind ourselves of the current condition of the created earth, which is (at this point in the narrative) completely covered with surging water, and completely dark. Added to this is the Spirit of God taking part in the creative process.

Read Genesis 1:2.

In two words, the entire earth is wet and dark. But now, in v6 something new is about to happen—and although we cannot say for certain, for Scripture does not state it beyond later oblique references, such as in Psalm 33 and Exodus 31—we can make the assumption that the Holy Spirit will be active in the actions of v6.

The Hebrew *raqia* was historically translated firmament or vault. The root of the word means to hammer and spread out;¹ we get the word “firmament” from the translation of the Vulgate (Latin Bible) *firmamentum*, which involves the idea of something firmly put in place. In antiquity this firmament was thought to be a literal, solid dome or vault overhead. And when one thinks about it, the colorful opinions of many in history for what we would simply call “the sky”—that is, the immediate atmosphere overhead, where the birds fly—is a rather remarkable invention of our God.

¹ *raqia*

Think of these modern, one-piece, seamless cans or aluminum bottles that begin life as a simple metal disk. The disk is set into a press, which then pushes and spreads the metal into an extended shape, thinning it along the way.

Leupold: The *raqia*’ is the vault or dome of the heavens, or “that immense gaseous ocean, called the atmosphere, by which the earth is encircled” (Whitelaw). That so widely differing definitions as “dome” and “gaseous ocean” can be given in one breath is due to the fact, that a whole set of physical laws is involved which makes the lower heavens possible: an air space encircling the earth, evaporation of waters, rising of gaseous vapours, etc.

We might imagine that up till this moment in the Creation the earth waters on the surface and the cloud waters (vapors), as we would recognize them, were contiguous—that is without any intervening clear space between them (Leupold). Remember, step-by-step, the Godhead is systematically preparing the surface of the earth for its inhabitants. With the surface of the earth, as we suppose, shrouded by continuous, impenetrable fog, it would be unsuitable for human habitation.

and let it separate the waters from the waters.”

Similar to what was done with light and darkness in v4, the two “waters” are now separated—this time, however, they are separated by something: an

expanse, a firmament, a vault. We know from practical experience that this expanse is not a rigid, impenetrable dome over the surface of the earth. Clouds can ascend and descend through it, rain and hail and snow can descend through it, and rockets can ascend and descend through it. But there is a distinct layer of atmosphere between earth's surface and space, and during the Creation this meant a lifting of the vaporous clouds from the waters on the surface.

vv7-8

So God made the expanse and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.²

² below...above

Note carefully what is being said here. Since I sometimes make this mistake myself, it is possible others do as well: The water we see overhead (in the form of clouds) does not dwell in what is called the “expanse”—the division being created here. No, they dwell “above the expanse.”

Verse 7 expands on this, adding more specificity from the initial statement of v6.

Verse 7 essentially reiterates the work in v6, but does so emphasizing that God accomplished what He set out to do. In v6 He “said”; in v7 He “made,” closing the verse with “and it was so”—that is, it happened, His audible command accomplished its purpose. Some commentators like to differentiate between the v6 “God said” and v7 “God made,” taking the position that the first states a *verbal* creating, while the second states a *mechanical* creating. That distinction isn't necessary; the two together simply mean that God “made” something by speaking it into existence. We can rely upon Charles Haddon Spurgeon to make a more devotional application to the text.

Spurgeon: Note those four words, “and it was so.” Whatever God ordains always comes. You will find that it is true of all his promises that, whatever he has said, shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall one day say of it all, “and it was so.” It is equally certain concerning all his threatenings that what he has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled, and the ungodly will have to say “and it was so.” These words are often repeated in this chapter. They convey to us the great lesson that the word of God is sure to be followed by the deed of God. He speaks, and it is done.

As to what has been accomplished during this second day of Creation, let's check in with John Sailhamer (with whom, for once, I agree—in part).

Sailhamer: We must be careful neither to let our own view of the structure of the universe nor what we might think to have been the view of ancient men control our understanding of the biblical author's description of the “expanse.” We must seek what clues there are from the biblical text itself. One such clue is the purpose that the author assigns to the “expanse” in v6: it is “to separate water from water.” The “expanse” holds water above the land; that much is certain.

We must be cautious, however, with something else Sailhamer says. In referencing v8—specifically, “And God called the expanse [or heaven or sky]” (depending on your version). The Hebrew is *samayim* (sha-MY-eem) and Sailhamer states that “*Here* the term refers not only to the place where God put the sun, moon, and stars (v14) but also to that place where the birds fly (v20” (emphasis added). No, used in v8 is a word that in Hebrew usage *can* be used to refer to either the sky or space—even God’s dwelling place. But here, in v8, it refers to the sky—as in v20, a place where the “birds fly above the earth.” There is no water in space; but there is water in the clouds and the atmosphere immediately above the earth. We can agree that what is referenced in this passage is what we call, the “sky.”

THREE HEAVENS

This business of there being three entities called by the same name—“heaven”—can be confusing. Let’s take a few minutes to see what God’s word says about this.

The First, or Lowest Heaven (earth’s sky)

This current passage in Genesis One describes this first heaven, referring to it as an expanse. Elihu, the companion of Job, in Chapter Thirty-five uses the same Hebrew word when he says,

“Look at the heavens and see;
And perceive the clouds—they are higher than you.” (Job 35:5)

The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *samayim* is *ouranos* (ur-ah-NOS), and it is used in Matthew’s gospel to denote the place where the birds fly—in all our common versions translated “air.”

Read Matthew 6:26.

This is the first, or lowest heaven; the one closest to the earth.

The Second Heaven (space)

The next heaven is what we would call space—everything above the earth’s upper atmosphere (the “expanse” of Genesis 1:8). Since we are in Matthew, look at Matthew 5:18, in which Jesus (probably) refers to “the heavens” or space.

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Read Isaiah 45:12.

I believe Acts 2:19 (part of Peter’s sermon) also refers to space; I take slight issue with the NASB and LSB translation of *ouranos* here as “sky,” since it is

clearly referring to celestial objects.

‘And I will put wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.’

Perhaps the rationale is that the phenomena will be seen, from earth, in the sky overhead.

³ For a graphical representation (with cross-references) of the three heavens, see the last page for this session.

The Third or Highest Heaven (God’s dwelling place)³

Ancient Hebrews referred to the highest heaven also as the “heaven of heavens.” The apostle Paul referred to it as the “third heaven” and “Paradise” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Moses tells Israel that this is where Yahweh lives.

Read Deuteronomy 26:15.

Jesus said that this is where the angels live, along with the Son and the Father.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”
(Mark 13:31-32)

Finally, let’s read a passage of praise in the Psalms that includes at least two—perhaps all three—of the heavens.

Read Psalms 148:1-5.

Now back to our passage in Genesis. This work of the second day will have world-wide ramifications for climate and ecology. Henry Morris points out that had the waters not been separated,

- i. [The contiguous waters] would serve as a global greenhouse, maintaining an essentially uniformly pleasant temperature all over the world.
- ii. Without great temperature variations, there would be no significant winds, and the water-rain cycle could not form. There would be no rain as we know it today.
- iii. There would be lush, tropical-like vegetation, all over the world, fed not by rain, but by a rich evaporation and condensation cycle, resulting in heavy dew or ground-fog.
- iv. The vapor blanket would filter out ultraviolet radiation, cosmic rays, and other destructive energies bombarding the planet. These are

known to be the cause of mutations, which decrease human longevity.
Human and animal life spans would be greatly increased. (source: Guzik)

And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

God naming something is no small thing. As we will see as the Creative narrative proceeds, naming things is important with God; it means something—to Him, and thus should to us as well. He will either name things Himself, or see to it that they are named by others.

He has already named day and night (v5); the expanse He has named heaven (8); in v10 He will name “the dry land earth” and “the gathering of the waters,” seas; and in 2:19 Yahweh God will present to the first man “every beast of the field and every bird of the sky” this time for the man to name.

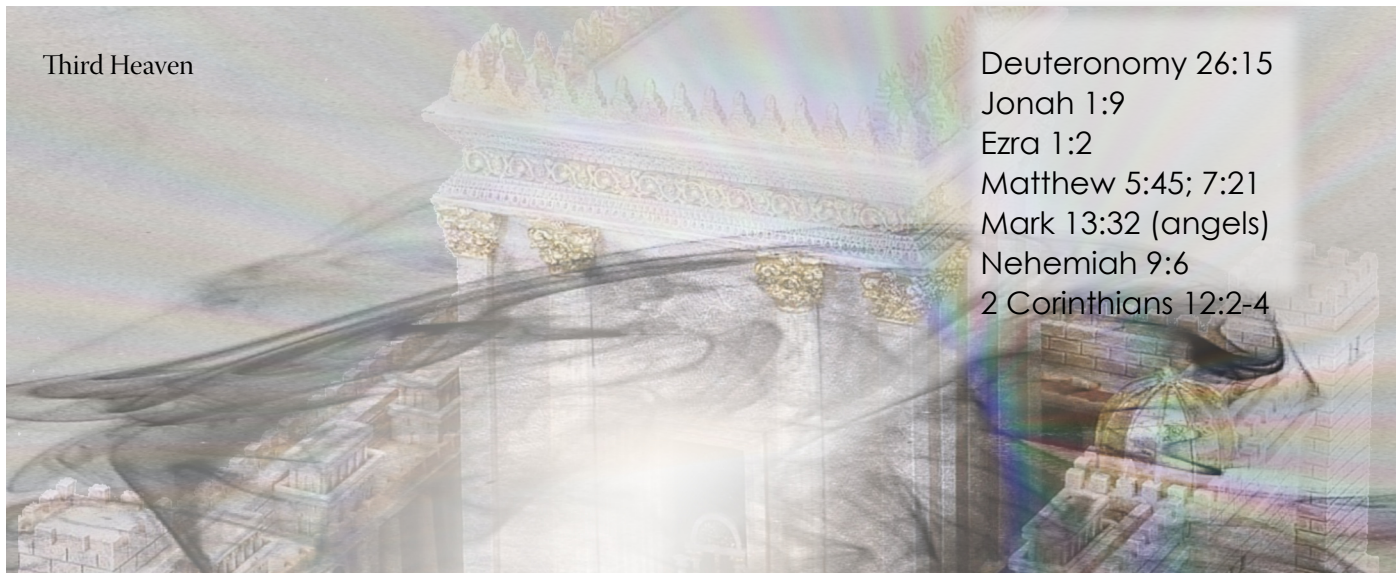
I don’t mean to make more of this than there is, but at the least we know from Scripture that someone’s or something’s name is more than just a handy label for reference, but represents what that person or thing actually is, enveloping their character, their potential.

Spurgeon: It is a good thing to have the right names for things... It is a good thing also to know the names of truths, and the names of other things that are right. God is very particular in the Scripture about giving people their right names. The Holy Spirit says, “Judas, not Iscariot,” so that there should be no mistake about the person intended. Let us also always call persons and things by their right names: “And God called the expanse heaven.”

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

The meteorologist knows that there is a specific, natural explanation for every drop of rain and every flake of snow that falls from the sky. The naturalist can expound at length about the climatic and seasonal influences upon deciduous trees that cause them to drop their leaves every year. But the *poet* knows that above science is heaven—and the hand of God. The believer knows that even before He created man, God created (and thus controls) science. Science may have its rules, but God created the rules; clouds may form according to natural laws, but God created those laws.

So maybe it is a good thing that the closest of the three heavens—the one so close we can almost touch it, and certainly feel its effects—has been named by God, “heaven.” For by its name it associates it *with* God; it may not be where He dwells (third heaven), and it is, by nature, more of earth than space (second heaven), but it is above and over us, and thus reminds us of the One who made it and named it: the *God* who is above and over all.



Third Heaven

Deuteronomy 26:15
Jonah 1:9
Ezra 1:2
Matthew 5:45; 7:21
Mark 13:32 (angels)
Nehemiah 9:6
2 Corinthians 12:2-4



Second Heaven

Genesis 14:19 (1:1)
Jeremiah 10:12
Isaiah 45:12
Acts 2:19 (sky = ouranou)



First Heaven

Genesis 1:6-8
Job 35:5
Matthew 6:26
(air = heaven = ouranou)

SESSION 9: DAY THREE: FIRST LIFE

Genesis 1:9-13

After Day One of Creation the earth was anything but an inviting domicile for man, dark and covered in surging water and a shroud of fog or mist. On Day Two of Creation God did something important that set the stage for what would follow: He took the first step in creating an atmosphere for the planet, thus establishing an environment in which plants and beasts, and eventually man could thrive.

So God's methodical, logical piecing together of His Creation continues apace. There had to be rain for the growing things, so in vv6-8 He established the first heaven: an expanse separating moisture above from moisture on the surface; now there would be clouds from which rain would fall to sustain vegetation.

It would do no good to create Man before the growing things, for then he would have nothing to eat. So on Day Three God sets the stage for this by revealing (or creating) dry land. He then wastes no time at all in creating grass, and plants, and fruit trees—all in their mature state, bearing mature fruit and seed for the continuation of each species.¹

Along with raising the clouds above the earth, by the creation of the expanse during Day Two, so that rain could now fall upon the earth, the expanse was necessary to permit sunlight to fall upon the earth, beginning in Day Four, to sustain the growing things created in Day Three.²

Read Genesis 1:9-13.

v9

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

The beginning of v9 is straight-forward and easily understandable: the "waters below the heavens" are the surging waters still upon the surface of the earth. On the previous day God had separated from *these* waters the waters—the vapors, or mists—that would become earth's clouds. The rest of the verse, however, is a bit more of a challenge to nail down.

Let the waters...be gathered into one place,

We could interpret "into one place" as meaning that all the water on the earth was removed to dwell in only one (singular) place—although the consensus of commentators all seem to agree that the better interpretation would be that this means that the water was shifted to *one place*, and the dry land shifted to *another place*—"that is, evidently, into a place apart from that designed for the land" (Albert Barnes). They all also seem to agree that this refers not just to

¹ **mature fruit and seed**

There is an important distinction. God is not planting the *seeds* of Creation. Whether mountains and streams, growing things, animals, or man, He is speaking mature, developed earth components and inhabitants into full existence. And He is accomplishing this in days—not in years or millennia.

² **rain could now fall upon the earth**

In a moment we are going to be looking at Genesis 2:6; when we do I will be adding some thoughts on this business of falling rain during Creation.

what we would term the “oceans,” but *all* water, including rivers and lakes and streams, etc.

So once again God is “separating”—first light from darkness (v4), then creating the expanse to separate the waters (v6), now separating the waters of the earth from the dry land (v9).

and let the dry land appear

I have previously mentioned that we cannot say with certainty whether this means that in this moment God creates the dry land, or that the land that has always been beneath the waters now rises to reveal itself. If I were forced to choose, I would say the latter to be the case. This verse seems to suggest it; it could have said something like, *Then God said, Let there be dry land*, but instead it says “let the dry land appear.” There is more evidence for this found in the Psalms.

Read Psalm 104:5-8.

This would seem to confirm that the dry land had been beneath the waves all the time—but that this is found in poetic Scripture, which cannot always be interpreted as stating cold fact, means we must be cautious with it. Nonetheless it describes not just an emerging of dry land, but a convulsive reordering of the earth’s surface. And this would help explain the supposed “aging” of the earth we discussed earlier.

Leupold: Surely, in the course of these gigantic upheavals, not catastrophic in nature because they involve organization rather than disruption, there was a tremendous amount of geologic formation. In fact, it would be perfectly safe to assume that all basic and all regular formations were disposed of in this day’s work. As a result, indeed, no record of the rapidity with which, certain formations took place is written upon the various formations, for vast as these formations were, they were controlled by the orderly operations of divine omnipotence and by these potentialities, no doubt, which the Spirit “hovering over the face of the waters” had implanted.

v10

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Once more God names what He has just created. That which has just been exposed, that which will become the foundation for growing things, He names “earth”—a Hebrew word which, similar to *samayim* (heaven) is flexible enough to mean anything from the globe, to a country on that globe, down to soil and even dust. The word is *eres* (AIR-ets). In contrast now to the dry land, God

names the contained waters, “seas”—the plural Hebrew *yamim* (the root means “to roar”). And after naming these two earthly components, God sees that they are “good.” Step by step God is bringing order to His Creation.

v11

It will be necessary, from time to time as we proceed through Chapter One, to harmonize portions of it with portions of Chapter Two—specifically, here, 2:5-6.³

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

Chapter Two, beginning with v4, can be interpreted as being not a reiteration of Chapter One, but as filling in some of the missing details. At the same time, however, it does not follow the strict, day-by-day timeline of Chapter One; as such it is difficult (if not foolhardy) to draw explicit time-marks between the two chapters. In a general sense we can say that Chapter Two supplements Chapter One, but it also lays the groundwork for the events of Chapter Three—as Leupold expresses:

Leupold: The truth of the matter, however, is simply this: the account of chapter two does not aim to present a complete creation story, nor is the time sequence followed by the author, Moses. Rather, those supplementary facts, essential to the right evaluation of chapter three, are given in a sequence which is entirely logical... The stage is being set for the tragic drama of the next chapter. The things enumerated by the author as appearing on the stage, as it were, need not be listed in the order in which they were placed there.

Man will not be created until Day Six. So those plants created for the brand new soil of earth in Day Three (in Chapter One) will be on their own for a few days; it must be vegetation that does not require human intervention and husbandry. And we can see that when we dig beneath the surface of the text.

In v11 we have the words

vegetation = *dese* = grass, moss

plants = *eseb* = herbs, grass, weeds

fruit trees = *pri-es* = trees that bear offspring

In other words, with the possible exception of the “fruit trees” the vegetation created in Day Three was of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated.

Now turn to Chapter Two. Verse 4 describes the state of Creation prior to Day Three. The NIV, alone in our common versions, offers a misleading picture in v5, with

³ harmonizing

Even though a cursory comparison of the two chapters seems to present a contradiction, or at least a quandary, it is not difficult to harmonize the two; but one does need to burrow beneath the surface of our translations to do so.

Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant
had yet sprung up,

The rest of our versions do a better job translating the text. Here is v5 in the LSB:

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of
the field had yet grown, for Yahweh God had not caused it to
rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the
ground.⁴

⁴ rain falling upon the earth

There is a school of thought that declares that rain did not fall upon the earth until the flood. One proponent of this is John C. Whitcomb (*The Genesis Flood*). The evidence many give for this position is that it was after the flood God created the first rainbow—i.e., no rainbow, no rain. Well, I'm from the Midwest, where it rains quite often without the producing of a rainbow.

Especially in matters so ancient and mysterious as the earliest days of Creation, I am loathe to be dogmatic, insisting that my interpretation is the only true one—and here I will take that path. (When it comes to Bible Study one never knows what one—especially a layman—will discover tomorrow that one does not know today.)

Even so, I am not alone in my interpretation regarding rain earlier than the Flood. Peter Lange and K&D, for just two examples, both agree that not only was this period when there was no “rain upon the earth” momentary, but (citing Job 36:27) what could be described here is an account of ground mist ascending to then fall as rain.

In any case, my position is that rain indeed did fall upon the earth, especially after Man was created to tend the crops.

Here the operative words are different from v11 in Chapter One:

shrub of the field = *siach hassadheh* = field shrub or bush

plant of the field = *esebh hassadheh* = field plants, herb, or grass

That is, none of these—*cultivated* vegetation of the prepared and planted field—had yet been created because they required regular rain from the clouds and man to tend the field of crops. But the wild, uncultivated vegetation described in v11 in Chapter One had. The difference between Chapter One and Chapter two, then, is the difference between vegetation that occurs in the wild and that which occurs by reason of man's cultivation—the former “the widespread plain of the earth, the broad expanse of land,” the latter “a field of arable land, soil fit for cultivation, which forms only a part of the ‘earth’ or ‘ground’... the ‘shrub of the field’ consists of such shrubs and tree-like productions of the cultivated land as man raises for the sake of their fruit, and the ‘herb of the field,’ all seed-producing plants, both corn and vegetables, which serve as food for man and beast” (K&D).

Verse 5, then, of Chapter Two adds a little more information to the setting in vv11-12 of Chapter One—that is, Day Three.

Verse 6 in Chapter Two explains how the earliest vegetation survived without rain or tending by man:

But a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole
surface of the ground.

It is difficult to say whether v6 speaks of the vegetation in Chapter One or that in Chapter Two. Even so, it speaks of a time when the full atmospheric infrastructure was not yet in place and man was not yet on the scene. Because of that I would lean toward it applying to Chapter One, vv11-12.

But it is important to remember that Moses' agenda, as it were, in Chapter Two is much different from Chapter One. In Chapter One he is setting forth the *timeline* of Creation: this happened, then this happened, etc. In Chapter Two he is setting the stage for Man's tragic fall—even the subsequent flooding of the earth. The focus in One is the physical Creation; the focus in Two is on Man.

But back to our text. The word translated “stream” or “mist,” depending on your version, in v6 is *edh*. David Guzik seems to associate this with the va-

porous mists that blanketed the earth before the creation of the “expanse” (v1:6), but that cannot be, since vegetation was not created until *after* the expanse was created and the clouds were lifted off the earth. In both instances we must remember that what God is establishing is a fully developed system of vegetation for the earth.

K&D: Moreover, we must not picture the work of creation as consisting of the production of the first tender germs which were gradually developed into herbs, shrubs, and trees; on the contrary, we must regard it as one element in the miracle of creation itself, that at the word of God not only tender grasses, but herbs, shrubs, and trees, sprang out of the earth, each ripe for the formation of blossom and the bearing of seed and fruit, without the necessity of waiting for years before the vegetation created was ready to blossom and bear fruit. Even if the earth was employed as a medium in the creation of the plants, since it was God who caused it to bring them forth, they were not the product of the powers of nature, *generatio aequivoca*⁵ in the ordinary sense of the word, but a work of divine omnipotence, by which the trees came into existence before their seed, and their fruit was produced in full development, without expanding gradually under the influence of sunshine and rain.

⁵ **generatio aequivoca**
equivocal generation: spontaneous generation involving the origination of a living organism from a living organism of a different species.

This reference to mists or streams watering the land is difficult to place in the timeline of the first chapter, so we are probably better off not trying to force it into one place or another. Back to Chapter One.

v12

With nominal rephrasing, v12 confirms, that what was spoken in v11 was indeed accomplished—and it was good.

And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

Thus Day Three of Creation draws to a close in v13.

SESSION 10: THE CREATION OF TIME

Genesis 1:14-19

PREFACE

We have witnessed God’s methodical, systematic creative steps from the beginning. At times He—one could rightly substitute “They”—will create something that requires something else by which to thrive, but then will immediately create that which was initially lacking, such as creating, in Day Three, living vegetation that will obviously require sunlight to survive, and then immediately creating that sunlight on Day Four.

At other times, however, God will supply in advance that which will *soon* be needed—not unlike a general pre-stationing stores and fuel for the troops that will soon be advancing—such as God supplying food from the plants and trees in Day Three for the living beings He will create in Day Six, or as He created “light” in Day One before there was a sun to contain and shed that light in Day Four.

In our text for this session God does both. The plants and trees, created yesterday, will now today receive their necessary sunlight. But on this Day Four the sunlight and moonlight will be created in advance of the creation of the beasts of the field and Man, for whom the light will be necessary two days hence. Equally important, however, is that in this day God creates the means by which Man will tell time, establish calendars, and be able to navigate the globe.

Read Genesis 1:14-19.

Occasionally a passage of Scripture seems to reveal that God has embedded it in His word, not for the sole purpose, but for at least one purpose: to keep us honest. If we have adopted one interpretation earlier—in this case, vv1-5—then to be honest we must likewise hold to that same interpretation as we proceed deeper into the narrative. We can’t change horses in the middle of the race.

Consider, for a moment, the natural world we live in: the vast grasslands of the prairies; the forests containing myriad species of trees; the risings from low, rolling hills to majestic peaks that pierce the highest clouds; the seemingly endless variety of living beasts, from the desert, to the grasslands and forests, to the sea. Then add to that the myriad human variations, as the politically-incorrect childhood song puts it—

*Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight.
(C. H. Woolston)*

Now look at how this narrative begins in vv1-2:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

We—that is our congregation and your humble teacher—do not subscribe to the so-called “Gap Theory,” which interprets v1 as God first creating a beautiful, pristine, lovely earth first, which became corrupted by Satan and sin, and was subsequently replaced. We hold that God created the one and only earth just as it is described in these two verses—which will only be replaced at the end of the apocalypse and the start of the believer’s eternal state.*

Now, why am I regurgitating something we’ve already covered. Because these two verses are where we establish the roots of our perspective on the Creation epic. And I would posit that God’s methodology with “the heavens” was the same as with “the earth.” Why would He, as some suggest, completely populate the endless universe with all the planets and stars and moons, solar systems, et al—including our *own* star and moon at the outset of the first day—yet take five more days to outfit and populate the most important planet in His universe? Why would He complete everything else in His Creation, yet leave the solitary location of His gospel to Man a shapeless, dark, wet mass.

I believe I have shown that God’s method from the beginning was to begin with the basics, then refine and add over time, in a systematic fashion. Doesn’t it follow that He would employ the same method for both heavens and earth? More than a few commentators base their conclusion that the sun and moon *had* to be created on day one because they are part of the “heavens”—space. To that I—and others, of course—say, Why? Did the Day One earth look *anything* like earth today—even the earth in Day Three? As I read v2, the initial state of the earth sounds more like a clumsy asteroid than a globe fit for humanity.

When those scholars that claim the sun and moon were created in v1 get to the passage before us today, they stand on their heads and do a little etymological song and dance to explain away the cold fact that God says He made them—as well as all the stars—on Day Four—*not* Day One.

v14

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

I conclude that the evidence of Scripture is that on Day One of Creation God made the universe—the “heavens”—in a similar “not yet” form as He did the earth: Empty, formless, and void. He created the empty space that would later be called by Man, “space.” Now, in Day Four, in vv14-19, He will populate that empty space with “lights”—luminaries, light-bearers. And by them He cre-

* Revelation 21:1-5.

ates one more essential Creation-component to make earth hospitable for Man: Time. On Day One (v3) God created elemental light; now He implants that light into the stars—most importantly, the one star closest to earth—to light the day, and reflects that same light off the moon to light the earth’s night, along with the myriad long-distant stars in space.

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens...”

Here Moses uses a different word than before, and recycles a couple of words he used earlier.

“Light” in v3 is *or*, and is a root word meaning to be or become light, and is used for the dawn, but also for spiritual illumination:

The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
(Psalm 27:1a)

For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.
(Psalm 36:9)

O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let
them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places.
(Psalm 43:3)

The “lights” in v14 is a different word, *meoroth*, which means a luminary (luminous body), light-bearer, lamp, source of light. Less common than *or*, I could find only one instance of this word, in Psalm 90:8, where it is used in a more symbolic or metaphorical manner:

You have placed our iniquities before You,
Our secret sins in the light of Your presence.

All others refer to the mechanics of an instrument shedding light. But Moses uses the same words used earlier for “expanse” and “heavens.” We shouldn’t confuse them with their earlier application, however; “expanse” in v14 does not refer to the expanse or firmament created to separate the waters in v6, nor does “heavens” refer to the first heaven of earth’s atmosphere. Both, here, refer to the second heaven, space.

The text lists the reasons for the lights—

- to separate day from night
 - for signs
 - for seasons
 - for days and years
 - to give light to the earth (v15, v17)
 - to rule the day and the night
 - to separate light from darkness
- all for those dwelling on the earth.

...to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

In a sense, of course, “time” had already been created—at least from God’s perspective—by the application of “evening and morning” comprising a day. But now, with the creation of the sun and moon and stars, there would be the means by which the earth’s approaching inhabitants—from mice to men—could measure time.

Those of us of more pedestrian ilk may give little thought to the utilitarian fullness of the objects in the heavens. The sun rises in the morning, it sets at night; the moon rises in the evening, and sets around dawn; the stars are just out there—and we give all of these celestial bodies little thought in the course of our daily lives.

But there are others who actually *use* the heavens; they can read the sun, moon, and stars.

- Israel will need the celestial objects to be faithful and obedient to the Lord, to know the months and seasons for the observance of the sacrifices and feasts ordained by God.
- Those who pilot ships must know the phases of the moon, for it affects the tides.
- Those who navigate the seas (at least prior to GPS) read the stars for knowing where they are and where they are going.
- The farmer must pay attention to the seasons, all governed by the position of the sun, for planting and harvesting. The sun will also govern what the farmer is able to plant, based on where he lives on the earth and its proximity to the heat of the sun.

Many are under the mistaken impression that grace is an artifact of the NT, that it came in through Christ. But grace has been part of God’s nature and character from eternity past—as evident in Creation itself. God is methodically, systematically piecing together a world and universe that will become a perfect habitat for man and woman and all the beasts of the field—all because of God’s grace. As to “signs,” Leupold helps us out.

Leupold: Now “signs” (*’ôthôth*) is here used in the broadest possible sense. Indeed, the luminaries are signs from various points of view. They are “signs” to devout faith, declaring the glory of their Creator (cf. Ps. 8 and 19). They are “signs” by which men get their bearings, or the point of the compass by day or by night. They may convey “signs” in reference to future events (Matt. 2:2; Luke 21:25). They furnish quite reliable “signs” for determining in advance the weather to be expected (Matt. 16:2, 3). They may be “signs” of divine judgments (Joel 2:30; Matt. 24:29). That they may well serve in all these capacities is clear both from Scripture and from experience.

v15

and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.

I’m not going to pretend that I understand all the ins and outs of ancient Hebrew, but I am fascinated by the second “light” reference in v15. At its root it is the same word used in v3—to be or become light, the dawn, etc. But the variation used in v15 is related more to fire than just illumination—and how appropriate! To very ancient man the sun will indeed be his source of heat, of warmth like that found in the heat of a simple fire, as well as illumination. When the first man and woman are created they will be naturally and innocently naked, like the beasts, and they will be warmed by the sun. Other than the sun, what was the source of his artificial illumination? Fire.

v16

So God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and also the stars.

The end of v15 gives us the standard indication that God has now accomplished what He set out in this fourth day: “...and it was so.” Now, as He has before, Moses adds more information and context for the preceding acts. Verse 16 remains earth-centric; the sun—the greater light—is not greater compared to any other star, nor is the moon—the lesser light—lesser compared to any other moon, but the one that rules (has dominion over) the day is the dominant light of the two—especially since the light of the moon is reflected light of the sun—as perceived from earth.

...and also the stars.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the “starry host” created on Day Four. As with other aspects of God’s six-day Creation, scientists and evolutionists take issue not just with a simple reading of God’s word, but especially considering the vastness and distance from earth of the stars, planets, solar systems, etc.

By their reasoning, many of them claim that the incredible distances between stars—measured in light years, a measurement of *time*, the distance light travels in a year—is solid evidence of the great antiquity of the universe, and by extension, the earth. They reason that since the light from some stars takes multiple thousands of light years to reach earth, it cannot possibly be true that the earth is only a few thousand years old.

Some Bible scholars argue against this by pointing out that “the laws of light refraction in the interstellar spaces cannot be asserted to be identical with those prevailing under conditions as we know them” (Leupold). That may be, but we don’t even need to go there. The Bible says that on and in Day Four God “made...the stars.” Let us assume that that statement means that on that day

God made (spoke into existence) absolutely every star that will ever be, and set in space just where He intended them to go: “...and God saw that it was good” (v18).

Where is it recorded that this means that Adam and Eve, gazing up into the night sky, were able to see every star God had just created a few days earlier—or even all the stars we can see today? Their visibility to those on earth has no bearing on whether or not, or when, they existed. How does it validate Darwin that Adam and Eve saw perhaps only a subset of stars that we can see today? It fits entirely within the economy of God’s Creation, as recorded in Scripture, that those in the Garden of Eden may not have seen every star that had just been created. Besides, there is this important point:

Matthew Henry: The scriptures were written, not to gratify our curiosity and make us astronomers, but to lead us to God, and make us saints.

When faith gets sidetracked into such arguments it diminishes God’s purpose behind it all. His written word, His incarnate Word, the reason for Creation itself, and the reason for our redeemed lives is His glory. Science need not be the enemy of faith, but it can become a distraction to the process of our becoming more like Christ.

vv17-19

And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

Verses 17 and 18 reiterate what had been stated in vv14-16, effectually reinforcing how—as strange as it may seem to many today—all this, the sun and moon and even the distant stars, He has set in place for the benefit of this earth. That is, a determined, reasoned, intentional population of space (“the expanse of the heavens”) to benefit man. And v19 offers the now-standard conclusion: “evening and morning, a fourth day.”

SESSION 11: THE FIRST CREATURES

Genesis 1:20-23

Verse 20 of our text begins a progressive creation of living beings. Note the order in which these beings are brought into existence.

Read Genesis 1:20-23.

First the water dwelling creatures, including reptiles, then those that fly in the expanse. After that, land animals are created, followed by human beings that will have dominion over all the other living beings.

Read Genesis 1:24, 26-27.

After setting the stage in the second to fourth days, in a span of two more days God (*Elohim*) will populate this globe. He now, in this fifth day creates the water-dwelling and sky-dwelling “living creatures” (souls) in advance of the land-dwelling animals and human beings in the sixth day.

Before digging into the text of this passage we should pause to note the subtle differences in the creative steps of our God. Before we do, let us affirm that no other being or thing—or accidental calamity—created anything, but the sovereign Godhead—Father, Son, Spirit—is responsible for it all. But, as we see and will see in the text, this sovereign Creation came about by various means. Let’s return for a moment to Day Three.

Read Genesis 1:11.

Note: “God **said**,” but then “**Let the earth** sprout vegetation...” Now look at two similar statements, the first in v20—

Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth...”

—and a similar statement in v24:

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind...”

In these three, God commands something to occur, but seems to involve the elements of water or earth in the creative process.

Now back up to v12. Each of these creative acts are followed by a further reiterating comment. Verse 12 seems to emphasize the earth’s contribution with, “And the earth brought forth vegetation...,” while v21 and v25 reinforce God’s sovereign hand with “And God created,” and “God made,” respectively.

Leupold: God could have called forth these creatures by His mere word; instead He speaks the word that enables the earth to bring them forth.

v20

Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens.”

First, the KJV erroneously translates the beginning of this verse with “And God said, Let the waters **bring forth** abundantly the moving creature that hath life...,” as if it is, again, the water itself creating the living creatures. Our other translations correctly express the original text, which reads “Then God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures...’”

When God made humans, He made first a solitary male, then a companion female—hence, a couple, a reproducing pair from which the rest of humanity would spring. But with the beasties the text makes clear that God makes a “swarm” of “swarming things.” The verb *sharats* is a root meaning to teem:—breed abundantly(1), increased greatly(1), populate abundantly(1); the noun, *sherets*, is translated swarmers, swarming things:—insects(3), swarming things(5), swarms(1), teeming life(2), teeming things(1).

Likewise the birds were created in the same manner and in similar numbers. These—in the water and in the air—are life forms that love to move in “continual agitation through one another, like shoals of fish.” This instinct marks these creatures to this day.¹

“Living creatures” translates *nephesh*, which means a soul, a breathing, living being—not “soul” as it is in humans, but here just affirming that these are living creatures as opposed to plants and rocks, etc.² Here, the first time that *nephesh* (soul) is used, is regarded as nothing more than referring to “that which breathes” in any being.

Most commentators seem to agree that these two groups would include insects and reptiles, the latter sometimes referred to as “saurians,” which is a suborder (*Sauria*) of reptiles including the lizards and in older classifications the crocodiles and various extinct forms (such as the dinosaurs and ichthyosaurs) that resemble lizards.³

In other words, by the end of Day Five and the beginning of Day Six God, will have created all species of non-human life for the earth—which brings us to v21.

v21

And God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

¹ swarms

Beneath the waves we find vast schools of fish moving together as one; likewise in the air flocks of birds can move in sweeping turns as if guided by a master intelligence.

² plants and rocks

We may, in our modern vernacular, refer to “living plants,” but the biblical viewpoint is that plants have no life.

³ saurian usage

During the great Age of Reptiles when dinosaurs ruled the land, there were also fantastic saurian in the seas. (Riley Black, *Smithsonian Magazine*, 10 Dec. 2020)

Verse 21 recapitulates v20, but also adds some new information.

And God created the great sea monsters

Along with fish of every shape and kind, and other aquatic creatures, God made the *tannimin*, plural for *tannin* (tah-NEEN), which is translated venomous serpent, devouring dragon, sea monster. The same word is used to describe the serpent Moses threw down before the pharaoh, and is always used in an evil, threatening context, such as elsewhere in the Pentateuch.

Read Deuteronomy 32:31-33.

It is also associated with Rahab, Babylon, and Leviathan during the end times.

In that day Yahweh will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;
And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea. (Isaiah 27:1)

The KJV translates this “whales,” and I have no doubt that whales would be included in this term, but, as I’ve shown, it goes far beyond just a gentle but massive whale.

I personally subscribe to the position that God made the sea and land “monsters”—which would include all manner of dinosaurs—along with all the rest. This means that they walked the earth (and swam the seas) along with early man, but ultimately died out, as a species, earlier than others. Remember what David Guzik wrote regarding the theory that the dinosaurs lived and died out long before the first man:

Guzik: Whatever merit the gap theory may have, it cannot explain the extinction and fossilization of ancient animals. The Bible says plainly death came by Adam (Romans 5:12), and since fossils are the result of death, they could not have happened before Adam’s time.

Verse 21 continues, “and every living creature that moves”; at this point in the Creation narrative, that would have to include any sea-going dinosaurs.

...and every winged bird after its kind;

In v20 it says that the birds “birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens.” That is just a rather poetic way to say that when birds are flying they do so in the expanse of the first heaven described in vv6-8. The “face” of that first heaven is turned down toward the earth, and that is the domain of the birds that fly.

Once again, many of us take for granted the winged creatures that fly in the sky—not just birds, as we think of them, but *all* winged creatures: bats, in-

sects, even pterodactyls, large, winged reptiles, now extinct. These are a brand new type of being: “creatures that breathe and are animated and have power on their own volition to go from place to place” (Leupold).

v22

Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

Here we have the first recorded blessing of God bestowed on any other being. He does so to empower the commandment He gives them, to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

Leupold: From these copious beginnings these creatures are to keep on multiplying until they fill the earth. Every vestige of emptiness is to be ultimately canceled. This blessing of God, however, is not a mere wish or a wishing-well on the part of the Almighty. It is a creative word of power which makes possible the things that it commands, and it continues in power to this day. The Creator is glorified by the multitudes of beings which His creative word makes.

v23

And v23 closes this fifth day with the now-standard line,
And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

By the end of Day Five the earth is populated with living, breathing beings. The oceans, lakes and streams are populated with fish and creatures of myriad kinds: some beautiful, some horrific. (Remember, fish breathe as well as birds and other animals; they just do it through the water.) Likewise the sky above the earth’s surface is now filled with flying creatures of all sorts: some beautiful, some downright irritating.

God continues piecing together this brand new world, and in the next and last day of Creation, He will complete it with beasts that roam the earth, including perhaps the most fearsome beast of all: man.

SESSION 12: THE FINAL DAY OF CREATION, PART ONE

Genesis 1:24-31

As Day Six dawns, we see an *almost* completed earth in the completed expanses of the heavens.

Day One: the primal heavens and primal earth are created, empty, shapeless, void. The earth is utterly dark and covered in surging waters. After this, God creates primal, elemental light.¹

Day Two: God does something that will be of vital importance to all the future beings on earth. He creates the first heaven, which will be an expanse between the waters on earth's surface and waters above (i.e., the clouds). Thus earth will have a surrounding atmosphere, necessary not just for future birds in which to fly, but necessary for a suitable climate for beast and man.

Day Three: Next God separates the waters on earth's surface so that the dry land can emerge. Immediately, within the same day, the fertile dry land sprouts fully mature vegetation, plants and fruit trees bearing mature fruit with seeds.

Day Four: During the following day, Day Four, God populates the second heaven with planets and stars, including the nearest star—our sun—"to give light on the earth" and rule the day, and earth's moon, to rule the night. These two lights He ordains to "separate the light from the darkness." All these lights that dwell in the second heaven—space—receive the light that will shine down on and be used by man from that elemental light created on Day One.

Day Five: Now begins the systematic populating of this brand new earth; there is reason and logic behind this—one might even say, an "intelligent design."² God, the most intelligent Designer there has ever been, will populate the earth in order from the least to the greatest, or perhaps more accurately, from the lowest to the highest beings. He will begin with those that swim in the sea, followed by those that fly in the expanse immediately above the surface of the earth (i.e., the sky). These will include far more than just fish and birds, but some aquatic reptiles and "great sea monsters," and flying dinosaurs, such as pterodactyls. Their Creator not only declares this "good," but, surprisingly blesses these two "kinds," ordaining them with the power to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

So we now come to the sixth and final day of Creation, the first part of which we will look at in this session. But let's begin by reading the full account of this last day.

Read Genesis 1:24-31.

¹ elemental light

Remember: For the final, eternal state of man, there will be no need for "light," for that will be supplied by the Godhead (Revelation 21:23). There is no reason not to assume that that was also true in eternity past, prior to Creation.

² "intelligent design"

according to Wikipedia
"Intelligent design is a pseudo-scientific argument for the existence of God, presented by its proponents as 'an evidence-based scientific theory about life's origins.' Proponents claim that 'certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.' ID is a form of creationism that lacks empirical support and offers no testable or tenable hypotheses, and is therefore not science."

v24

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so.

What I quoted Leupold on in our previous session applies to the creative act of v24 as well:

Leupold: God could have called forth these creatures by His mere word; instead He speaks the word that enables the earth to bring them forth.³

Once again we have “living creatures” (i.e., “soul of life”). As I pointed out in our last session, even though these land animals, as well as the aquatic and flying beasts, have souls, this does not mean the same as it does with man. The soul in this regard means merely an animating principle, that which causes them to breathe. The difference—in the nature of the soul, and in the hierarchy of beings—between animals and man can be seen when v24 is compared to v7 in Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 2:7.

We see two differences—one subtle, one more pronounced—between the Chapter One and Chapter Two accounts.

First, as to the soul, we see that the process is inferior to that for man. In v24, as in vv20-21, we see God commanding that creatures come forth with “souls,” that is, they are created that way from the outset, prefab as it were. But with man the soul is introduced, by God, in a more personal, even intimate manner.

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.

Here the personal name for God is used—*Yahweh Elohim*—and only after the man is formed from the ground is he given his soul. How? By having it *breathed into him personally by Yahweh*.

Second, the picture in v24 is of God commanding something to emerge from the earth, but in v7 of Chapter Two—even though the earth or soil is involved in both—it is a picture of (how I have always described it) *God getting His hands dirty* in the creation of man. There is a measure of detachment in God’s creation of the aquatic and flying animals and the mammals created just before man. But with the creation of man it is different: *God* is the one literally forming man out of what Luther calls, a “lump of earth.”

Yet, just *how* detached God is in His creation of the land animals—if at all—is hard to say. Look at v19 in Chapter Two.

³ But note:

A comparison of vv20-25 (the creation of living creatures) with vv11-12 (vegetation and trees) reveals a subtle difference.

Note that v11 says, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation...’” and is reinforced in v12 with “And the earth brought forth vegetation...” Verses 20 and 24 say something similar: “Then God said, ‘Let the waters swarm...’” and “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth...’” respectively.

But instead of simply reinforcing this as in v12, the text reminds us that even though the waters and earth played a role in this creative effort, it was God who made the creatures: v21, “And God created...” and v25, “God made the beasts of the earth...”

In this systematic Creation God draws a distinction between living creatures, and plants and trees. And later in Day Six He will draw an even sharper distinction between the beasts and man.

Here is evidence—even in the first week—that God is sovereign, and holds the right to establish a hierarchy within His Creation. He calls the shots (1 Chronicles 29:11; Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:14-18).

Read Genesis 2:19.

That word translated “formed” is the same as that used in v7 to describe Yahweh God forming man from the earth—*yiser* (yets-SAHR). More on all this, of course, when we get to Chapter Two.

... living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind

Here we have three groups, or classifications, of land animals—three “kinds” (i.e., species)—that God “brings forth” from the earth: cattle, creeping things, and “beasts of the earth”.

cattle

The translation “cattle” is common, and OK, but I think the ESV and NIVs are better with “livestock,” for *behemah* is a broader term than just bovines. The idea is domestic beasts, those dumb (i.e., non-speaking) animals bred and managed by humans.

creeping things

I seldom have opportunity to recommend the NIVs, so let me do it again here. The standard translation for this among our versions is “creeping things,” but the NIVs have “creatures that move along the ground,” and that is closer to the meaning of the Hebrew *remes*. This would then include everything, large or small, moving upon the earth or close to the earth moving about on short legs.

beasts of the earth

Once more the NIVs, while no doubt the least literal in their translation, leave us with a clearer idea of *chayyath haarets* with “wild animals.” That is, non-domesticated (wild) beasts with freedom of movement upon the earth.

v25

God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing of the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

As he has before, Moses reiterates the facts of v24 in v25. But I can’t help but think that in this instance, considering the pedantic, repetitive nature of v25, he is using it to draw a contrast with what follows—and what a dramatic contrast it is.

Look at the rhythm of v25:

God made
the beasts of the earth
after their kind,
and the cattle

after their kind,
and every creeping thing of the ground
after its kind;
and God saw that it was good.

The creation and allocation of all these creatures was precisely according to God's plan—as with all those before. They were allocated into different species, sharing some traits, but each still distinct from the others. It pleased God to create them this way; it was “good.”

But now He is going to create something entirely different—something that will share its kind with nothing less than God Himself.

In v26 we eavesdrop on the planning for this new creation; this isn't the *doing*, but the discussion and establishing of the *purpose behind* the doing in v27. This is the Godhead, as it were, sitting around the conference table, working out the details for the next and most profound step of the Creation.

v26

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Every Sunday morning during our prayer time in class we are reminded of the consequences of man's fall in the Garden—the consequences of his short-sighted rebellion against his Maker. This twisted, depraved, painful, disease-ridden, groaning world in which we live is the direct result of the first man and woman forgetting—even just for one, fatal moment—that they and they alone in all of this fresh Creation had been made in the image of God.

I would contend that there are three—and perhaps *only* three—epochal events in the vast history of time that sent (or *will* send) a cosmic quake throughout the universe. Surely one of these was when the Son of God/Son of man died upon the cross; that quake is described in Matthew's gospel.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27:50–53)

Mortal man cannot fathom the fierce temblor that coursed through the universe in that moment.

Like unto His death on the cross will be Christ's return. The universe will quake, but most especially this earth will be literally torn apart and reshaped, as is described in profound detail in Zechariah 14, when Christ once again stands upon the earth.*

The *first* event, however, to cause such a shudder and tremor throughout earth and the heavens occurred not long—in cosmic terms—after the first week of Creation. And we have to understand the depth and impact of that betrayal before we can truly comprehend the supreme grace that a holy God dispensed upon the human race on this sixth day. Then, of course, it works from the opposite direction as well: understanding the unimaginable grace of being made in God's image, reveals the true nature of the insidious action of Adam.

We have clearly seen, as we have progressed through the days of Creation, that that Creation was no higgledy-piggledy mish-mash of random acts, but a well-ordered, systematic plan that began with the elemental basics, then moved steadily and logically into the more detailed aspects of the universe and this world. This plan, as made clear in the Genesis narrative, was *earth*-centric; everything was being created for the benefit of this globe we call home. And now we see that it was all being done for the benefit of man.

God didn't do all this for chipmunks, or garter snakes, or polar bears. He didn't do it for the trees (as disappointing as that surely was to J. R. R. Tolkien), and He didn't do it for the fish in the sea. No, He did all this for human beings, and it is a measure of God's forgiveness and grace that even after Adam's betrayal God would send His own Son as the price of man's eternal salvation. Indeed, knowing that Adam would betray Him, did not stifle God's grace—nor the blessing of giving man dominion over the earth and its other creatures.

Chapter Three will reveal in no uncertain terms that man's betrayal of his Maker was a cataclysmic offense that will reverberate not just through the heavens, but through time on earth all the way through to the Great White Throne judgment of Christ (Revelation 20:11-15). Only then will the penalty of sin be removed in preparation for the new heaven and new earth, and the believer's eternal state with God.

In our next session, we will examine in full God's last act of creation: Man made in God's image (vv26-31).

* Zechariah 14:4-10

SESSION 13: THE FINAL DAY OF CREATION, PART TWO

Genesis 1:24-31

The sixth day of Creation opened with God commanding the earth to bring forth the beasts of the field.

Read Genesis 1:24-25.

Verse 24 paints a picture of the beasts issuing forth from the ground, but even if that were the means by which the deed was accomplished, v25, as well as v2:19, make clear that it was God's hand doing it.

Read Genesis 2:19.

Now, in the second part of this last day, God will create the beings He will leave in charge of things on the earth.

Read Genesis 1:26-30.

v26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In just two sentences, a mere 74 words, it is stated *four times* that God—in the plural *Elohim*—created man, male and female. Such repetition is not to be ignored when used in God's word; it is there for a reason. In just about every sense the creation of man is distinguished from every other created thing or being as something special, important, set apart from the rest—even dominant. And it is worth our time to examine just how this difference—this contrast—is expressed.

Now it is Personal

Look at the earlier steps of creation, beginning at

v3: Let there be...

v6: Let there be...

v9: Let the waters...

v11: Let the earth sprout...

v14: Let there be lights...

v20: Let the waters swarm...

v24: Let the earth bring forth...

All of these Creation steps are expressed in an impersonal third-person voice. But now, in v26, we have, for the first time, God speaking in a more personal, first-person voice: “Let Us make man...”

A Kind Different from all the Rest

From vv11-25 the vegetation, trees, and all the creatures of the sea and land are created according to “their [or its] kind,” or species. In our last session I pointed out the rhythm of v25:

God made
the beasts of the earth
after their kind,
and the cattle
after their kind,
and every creeping thing of the ground
after its kind;
and God saw that it was good.

But the creature called “man” (literally the Hebrew *a-dam*) will be different; he will be made not just of a kind different from the rest—as an ape is of a kind different from a flower—but only man will be made “in [God’s] image” (as Albert Mohler loves to express in the Latin, “the *imago Dei*).¹

¹ “man”

If we are not surprised that God would name the first man with the word that means “man” (*a-dam*), we may be surprised that a close cognate of that word (*adamah*) is used in v25 and is translated “ground,” meaning soil capable of cultivation. Thus the word and name for the first human would mean “cultivator of the soil.” Hence, the first man was created to be a farmer.

Sexes

Thus far in the Creation account—even with the animals—there has been no mention of two sexes. It may be implied, and may be inferred by the reader, but it is not mentioned. With the creation of humans, however, it is explicit: “male and female He created them.”

Dominion (rule, have preeminence)

Only man, created in the image of God, is to have dominion on earth, over all other living creatures (v28). In addition, the vegetation and fruit of the trees has been created—initially, at least—as food for man and beast (vv29-30).

v26

So let’s now take a closer look at v26. In v26 the one word translated “Let Us make”, *naaseh* (aw-SAH), is not (as I pointed out last time) the *doing*, but the discussion and establishing of the *purpose behind* the doing in v27. This is the Godhead, as it were, sitting around the conference table, working out the details for the next and most profound step of the Creation. This is stated in the first person, plural: the *Godhead* will do this.

Again, heretofore the fullness of the Godhead's work in Creation has been implied, or suggested with subtlety; here the participation of the second and third members is explicit.

Just as in v1, the Hebrew *Elohim* is masculine, plural, absolute; Leupold calls it a "potential" plural. By this He means that we go too far to conclude that this is a purposeful reference, by Moses, to the Trinity as we know it—but we also go too far to conclude that there is no reference at all here to the Trinity.

Leupold: The term 'Elohîm...allows for all that which the fuller unfolding of the same old truth brings in the course of the development of God's Kingdom. When, then, ultimately the truth concerning the Trinity has been revealed, the fullest resources of the term 'Elohîm have been explored, as far as man needs to know them.

We might think of this as a placeholder of sorts; we could explain it this way: Moses himself could not know the fullness of the Triune Godhead, but the Spirit had him use a word for God that would permit that fullness to be realized by those who would follow—especially after the Incarnation.

...according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion...

Then Elohim makes an extraordinary, radical, cosmic decision—and even includes the *reason* for it: Man—and only man—will be created in the likeness of God. Two words are used to express this:

image = *tselem*

This is a word commonly used to refer to idols, statues formed by human hands to represent a pagan god, as in 2 Chronicles—

And all the people came to the house of Baal and tore it down,
and his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they
killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.
(2 Chronicles 23:17)

—or painted images:

"So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed
on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with
vermilion," (Ezekiel 23:14)

At its root the word means something carved, cut off or cut out. That is, something formed to look like something else. In the Greek (*eikon*), as used in 1 Corinthians 11:7, it means essentially the same.

For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.

likeness = *demut* (dee-MOOT)

This word is similar, but has a different shading. It means a resemblance in outward appearance, similitude, in the same pattern. Based on its use in Exodus 20:4, Wilson adds, that this word includes the idea of “a representation of that which is not visible.”

Guzik: The terms for image and likeness are slightly different. Image has more to do with appearance, and likeness has more to do with an abstract similarity, but they both essentially mean the same thing here in this context.

We can draw some inferences from God’s use of these two words.

- This does *not* mean that, like God, man is deity. God is spirit-kind, and man is flesh-kind. But it *does* mean that man alone of all creatures is made to have a relationship with God. Only he (the corporate “he”) is compatible with God’s indwelling Spirit.
- Just as a carved image of a pagan god reflects the image of that god, man is meant to reflect the image of his Creator.
- Since man is flesh-kind and God is spirit-kind (John 4:24), we cannot say that being made in His image means that we literally *look* like God. So being made in His image must mean something more intrinsic: we are made with a capacity to know Him, to yearn for Him, to communicate with Him and to worship Him, and, not least, to be His temple on earth (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
- This alone—being made in the image of God—is sufficient to set human beings apart from every other created being or thing on earth. Man’s relationship to God is unique in all Creation—including God’s created angels.

I was taken by something Leupold writes regarding God’s creation of man.

Leupold: Taking the verse as a whole, we cannot but notice that it sets forth the picture of a being that stands on a very high level, a creature of singular nobility and endowed with phenomenal powers and attributes, not a type of being that by its brute imperfections is seen to be on the same level with the animal world, but a being that towers high above all other creatures, their king and their crown.

And my response to this was, *How far we have fallen*—both in the perverse culture of this world, and in our self-perception. Over the millennia man has “fallen” not just in his rebellion against God in the Garden, but that rebellion has corrupted his God-ordained stature in Creation. Man was initially created to be a high being, ruling over all other creatures, things, and aspects of this world. Note the extent to which things have reversed, as a fair portion of this

society places the well-being of nature, of climate and weather, of the earth itself over the well-being of humans; how nations such as China have purposely limited human reproduction—to their doom. Now they are experiencing existential societal problems because they do not have enough people, as well as a gross lack of women for all the men in their society.

In the Garden first Eve and then Adam believed the lie that man knew better than God. Today, many thousands of years later, we are still believing the same lie, that man must subjugate himself for the benefit of the rest of Creation. That is not God's order.

v27

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God
He created him; male and female He created them.

If v26 is the planning, v27 is the execution of the plan. Here male and female humans are created “in the image of God”—and let me add one more thought on this.

Read Colossians 3:9-10.

Moses may not have foreseen this, but in Christ we understand that the process of sanctification—of becoming more like Christ—is the process of every Christian returning to the state in which Adam and Eve were first made: in the image of their Creator. Spiritually we are all born in the “image” (as it were) of our fallen forefather, Adam. But in Christ we are set out on the road to return to Adam's pristine state. *Positionally*, in Christ, we are already there; *practically*, we will not attain until we see our Lord face to face.

Note the multiplicity of “one” invested in vv26-28:

- In v26, God (*Elohim*) says “Let **Us** make **man** in **Our** image.”
- Though *Elohim* is plural, it implies one being speaking to other beings—i.e., *let Us agree to make man like Us*.
- “Man” is singular, though the same word (*adham*) is also used for “mankind.”
- In v27 Elohim “created man in **His** own image”—not *their* image—followed by “God created **him**; **male and female He** created **them**.”

We see here a holy co-mingling of singular and plural, of a “three-in-one” Trinity stated as “He,” and the unity of male and female in the term “man.” And for once John Sailhamer contributes something worthwhile.

Sailhamer: Following this clue the divine plurality expressed in v26 is seen as an anticipation of the human plurality of the man and woman, thus casting the human relationship between man and woman in the role of reflecting God's own personal relationship with Himself.

One more pertinent thought from David Guzik—especially for today—on this creation of man and woman.

Guzik: It is vain to wonder if men or women are superior to the other. A man is absolutely superior at being a man. A woman is absolutely superior at being a woman. But when a man tries to be a woman or a woman tries to be a man, you have something inferior.

v28

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.”

We might like to isolate this verse and think that having God’s blessing makes us special. But back in v22 God blessed the creations of day five: the creatures in the sea and the flying creatures of the expanse. He not only blessed them, but gave the same directive to them as he does to man: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill [their respective domains].” Beyond this, God will favor the seventh day—the day of rest—with His blessing. So what does it mean that God “blessed” certain portions of His Creation?

Ultimately the reason for this blessing extends beyond the scope of this study, tying in with the “blessings” thread regarding Israel and the Law. But pertinent to this study is the fact that God’s blessing is linked—in both passages—to reproduction.

Yet I question the conclusion of some commentators that this blessing from God *makes operative* reproduction, for He does not give the same blessing to “the beasts of the earth” in the sixth day; He calls their creation “good,” and they do indeed propagate, but He does not “bless” them.

Adam Clarke: [This blessing] marked them as being under his especial protection, and gave them power to propagate and multiply their own kind on the earth.

The Hebrew word itself (*barek*; bay-ROCK) is little help, since it is a flexible word used in various situations, but first of all means to kneel down in praise—and it is hard to imagine that that is what God is doing here with His creation. There is another word commonly translated bless or blessed (*asre*; ash-RAY) that would seem to be a better fit. This word refers to a happiness from walking in righteousness, as in Psalm 1:1—

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...

—and Proverbs 8:32.

“So now, O sons, listen to me,
For blessed are they who keep my ways.”

Again, ultimately this establishes the roots for what will come later for Israel. And perhaps there we might find our solution. Let’s look at what “the angel of Yahweh”—i.e., the pre-incarnate Christ—said to Abraham after He stopped him from slaying Isaac.

Read Genesis 22:15-18.

Quite a few commentators interpret the blessing in 1:28 as *empowering* man to “be fruitful and multiply”—i.e., that without the blessing he would have been incapable—but I would suggest that the blessing is more God’s formal benediction for future success and prosperity. As we see in the story of Esau and Jacob, both sons were zealous for Isaac’s blessing, but Jacob—the lesser son—obtained it through subterfuge. Upon discovering that their father’s blessing had been given to his brother instead of him, Esau was left bereft of all hope.

And Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing,
my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted
his voice and wept. (Genesis 27:38)

Why did Esau weep so? Because he knew that without the blessing his life would be a mere shadow of what his brother’s would be. It would be Jacob who would rule over him; it would be Jacob who Yahweh would cause to thrive, both in wealth and descendants.

I would say that the blessing of Genesis 1:28 is not a *command*, as some interpret it, but a *promise* that man would indeed “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.” To put it another way, all of that is the *content* of the blessing, the promise from God that man *would* thrive and have dominion over all on the earth.

SESSION 14: THE FINAL DAY OF CREATION, PART THREE

Genesis 1:28-31; Genesis 2:1-3

Read Genesis 1:28-31.

In our previous session we spent a fair amount of time looking at this business of God's blessing on the first man and woman, struggling to understand just what that word (*barek*) means—or at least how it is being used here. Upon re-reading the passage a few more times since, I came away with the image in my mind of a wedding ceremony.

A modern religious marriage ceremony includes someone—a pastor, an elder, or a priest—in a sense standing in for God to “bless” this union of the man and woman. In my mind I see a holy God—Adam and Eve's pastor—standing before the couple, joining them together in wedlock as He bestows His blessing upon them to go forth, to have babies and “fill the earth,” and establish man's dominance over all lower creatures that share it.

In our previous class on the *Last Things* we began that study looking at the sequence of dispensations that proceeds from Creation through to the Eternal State. Here in v28 we have the inauguration of the short-lived first dispensation of Innocence—begun with the blessing of their Creator bestowed upon the sinless first couple. It wouldn't last long; man's Fall would inaugurate the next dispensation.

vv29-30

Then God said, “Behold, I have given to you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has the fruit of the tree yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that creeps on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

In Creation's pristine, sinless state, animals were not killed for food. Man and beast were given the fruit of the trees and the green plants for food. The death of living things did not exist.¹

It is hard for us to imagine such a world, for we have all of us been born into, and been raised from birth in a world *permeated* with death. Animals die, either from old age, accident, killed and consumed by other animals, or slaughtered by man for food. Grandparents die, parents die, and, sadly, even children die. Every one of us knows that there will come a day when *we* die.

We get a pretty clear picture of what a holy God thinks of death near the end of all things in The Revelation.

Read Revelation 20:13-15.

¹ “living things”

Remember: biblically, plants are not considered “living”; only beings that breathe are living.

But that was not the world as first created. Death did not exist until after the Fall. The first thing we note after that fateful day is the death of innocence.

Read Genesis 3:7-10.

Next, although man will remain vegetarian, in God's response to their shame we see the first death of an animal—at the hand of Yahweh Himself.

Read Genesis 3:21.

There will now be death on earth, but man will remain vegetarian until God makes His covenant with Noah after the Flood.

Read Genesis 9:2-3.

Back to Chapter One. Don't miss how v29 begins: "Behold, I have given to you..." As the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon explains, "lo" or "behold" introduces "clauses involving prediction," or, with reference to the past or present, "points generally to some truth either newly asserted, or newly recognized." God is saying here, *This is important. Pay attention.* And Leupold explains the strength behind "I have given."

Leupold: The verb [translated] "I have given" (*nathátti*) stands in the perfect tense, the usual construction in ordinances or abiding decrees. The perfect tense gives the impression of a rule firmly fixed and already unwavering.

Way back on Day Three God created everything man and the beasts would need for food. As He had from the earliest moments of Day One, God has assembled all the pieces of His Creation for the benefit, the sustenance, the edification of human-kind. And as to the food, we should keep in mind that just as man was different before the Fall, so was the earth and those things growing from it. I doubt that we can imagine but in our wildest dreams the extravagant, exotic bounty the Lord fashioned for the first couple. Surely that with which we are familiar (and think to be so wonderful) is but a mere shadow of what was initially supplied in Eden.²

Verse 30 reiterates the giving of the trees and plants for food, this time for the beasts of the earth, et al. Since the animals do not at this point prey upon each other, Leupold *may* be correct that "Rapacious and ferocious wild beasts did not yet exist." But it could also be true that these wild beasts were originally created herbivores, only to become carnivores after the Fall (or after the Flood), just as Noah and his family.

² a groaning earth

One of the advantages of those living in a part of the world with seasonal change is that every year we are offered an illustration of the difference between Eden and the world after the Fall.

In the spring the land bursts forth with burgeoning life, and as we pass into the summer we are surrounded by a landscape bursting with life. The deciduous trees are in full leaf, green and pleasantly shaped.

But come late autumn and early winter the green land has become an ugly brown, and the trees have degenerated into little more than stark, bony skeletons—appearing utterly lifeless.

The contrast is a perfect illustration of the world as God made it, and the world after sin took hold.

v31

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Three words set this sixth day of Creation apart from the foregoing.

- Previously, after steps in His Creation, it would be stated that “God saw that it was good.” Now the declaration is not just repeated, but is emphasized with, first, “behold,” and the addition of the adjective “very.” Here God declares *everything* He has just made “*very* good.”
- Previously the time marks would be, e.g., “*a* fifth day”; now the definite article is added: “*the* sixth day.”

Thus in a number of ways the events of this day are marked as the closing creative bookend to the entire week. God declares that everything lying before Him has just been created perfectly, just as He intended: absolutely perfect, without a trace of evil. This is a world as He wants it, sufficiently clean for Him to visit (3:8) and—in time, after it has been recreated to its original pristine state—a world in which He is willing to dwell for eternity (Revelation 21:3).

And now we are presented with one of the clumsiest chapter breaks in all of God’s word. The next three verses should by all rights be in Chapter One, but they have been broken away from the narrative and placed in Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 1:31-2:3.

v1

The official conclusion of God’s Creative pageant occurs in this verse.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

We tend to read “completed” and think “finished”—which is, indeed, how this word (ka-LA) can be translated, and is in the ESV and KJVs. But it can also include the idea “to be complete,” even perfected. So at this point—the end of the sixth day—God was not just done with His work, He was finished with a perfectly *complete* new task. Nothing more needed to be added; the work required no fine tuning after the fact—as is so often the case with human projects. It was done—and done perfectly, an echo of “very good” in v31. And v1 as a whole speaks to this: *everything* in God’s Creation was completed as intended:

- the heavens (*shamayim*): the immediate atmosphere enveloping the earth and the vast universe (space) above that;
- the earth (*eres*): this globe we call home (for now);
- and all their hosts (*saba [tsa-VAH]*): a military term used to describe those stars and planets populating space, including the “hosts” of earth, i.e., our sun and moon (Genesis 1:14-15).

Read Deuteronomy 4:19.³

v2

And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

Right away we see that we may have a problem in v2. Verse 1 states that *prior to Day Seven*, the Creation process was “completed” (at the end of Day Six). Yet in about half of our versions, v2 begins “And **on the seventh day** God completed His work...” So those paying attention might say, *Whoa, wait a minute. Which is it? Day Six or Day Seven?* Compounding the confusion (at least on the surface) v2 continues with “and He rested on the seventh day from all His work...”

The more literal translation—as in the LSB, ESV, and KJVs—is “**on** the seventh day.” The not inaccurate, but less literal, translation—as in the NIVs and (sadly) NASB—is “**by** the seventh day.” I’ll not bore you with the explanatory details found in the original Hebrew, but the bottom line is that the verb “completed” or “finished,” is in the *Piel stem*, which is sometimes in the *declarative* sense, which supports Leupold’s translation of v2,

And on the seventh day God declared His work on which He was engaged, finished, and He desisted on the seventh day from all the work on which He had been engaged.

This is not just a matter of getting the words right, but it is important for us to know that Day Seven was different from the six previous days; it was special because it established something very important God chose to communicate to His people, as expressed clearly in v3.

v3

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created in making it.

Once again God bestows a blessing—this time on a day: the seventh day of the week. More than that, He “sanctified” the day—He set it apart as a holy, consecrated day. And He did this by “rest”[ing] on this day; the Hebrew is *shabbath*, which means at its root to cease, to desist in what one is doing so as to rest from one’s work. This established not, specifically, the Jewish Sabbath, but the “*creation Sabbath*,” which set the pattern, the concept for that which would be instituted in the Ten Commandments for Israel’s Sabbath.

Read Exodus 20:8-11.

³ “hosts”

Some posit that this can include or even refer specifically to angels. But there has been no mention in the preceding Creation narrative of the creation of angels, so (although in other passages *saba* may refer to angels (see, for example Psalm 148:2), there is no basis for believing it does here.

The Sabbath is not only important to Jews, but to Christians as well—just in a different way. Followers of Christ are not *commanded* to “rest” every seventh day, because for us the Sabbath rest has been fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-11). And, as David Guzik points out,

Christians do not lose the Sabbath; every day is a day of rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Every day is specially set apart to God.

Nevertheless, there is something to be said for the setting aside of one day a week for devotion, for study, for worship, for contemplation of things holy with fellow believers—as well as for physical cessation of one’s work. Yet for us the practice of resting from work on our Sabbath (Sunday) is only one of personal conviction.

Let us finish by pointing out two important truths:

- God did not rest because He was weary. “He rested to show His creating work was done, to give a pattern to man regarding the structure of time (in seven-day weeks), and to give an example of the blessing of rest to man on the seventh day” (Guzik).
- As we were reminded recently in Pastor Jeremy’s study of the gospel of John, the Sabbath instituted by God is ultimately for man; God and His Son never stop working (John 5:16-17).

And so ends the first account of God’s creation of the universe. I want to close with something Leupold writes about what we have studied in the first thirty-four verses of the Bible.

Leupold: Before leaving this initial account we must yet take definite issue with one problem involved in the account as a whole. On the one hand, is this a strictly factual account, reporting what actually transpired in the manner in which it transpired? Or have we here a picture devised by human ingenuity, which picture seeks to convey truth by its general outlines or by the basic thoughts which are here expressed in terms highly figurative? Though this latter view has come to be held almost universally, it is still by no means true. We have not in this chapter a marvellous product of the religious creative genius of Israel. Such efforts would merely have produced just one more trivial and entirely worthless cosmogony. The account as it stands expects the impartial reader to accept it as entirely literal and historical. The use made of it in the rest of Sacred Scriptures treats every part referred to as sober fact, not as a fancy-picture. Compare on this chapter the dozens of marginal reference passages found in almost any Bible.

SESSION 15: THE FIRST “GENERATION”

Genesis 2:4-7

As I mentioned in our previous session, the official break from Chapter One to Chapter Two of Genesis presents us with one of the clumsiest chapter breaks in all of God’s word. Verses 1-3 should by all rights be in Chapter One, but they have been broken away from the narrative and placed in Chapter Two. With v4 of Chapter Two we have the *effective* beginning of the chapter. But first, before we dig into that, please turn to Genesis 25.

In this representative chapter we see a pattern that is employed throughout the Bible’s first book—and is typically used as a heading. Look at v12.

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham’s son,
whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s servant-woman, bore to
Abraham;

Now v19.

Now these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son:
Abraham became the father of Isaac;

Now turn to Chapter 5; here we see it again.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when
God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

But the *first* instance of this heading we see in v4 of Chapter Two, where we begin our text.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when
they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth
and heaven.¹

Read Genesis 2:4-7.

If we think of the OT—and especially the Pentateuch—in cinematic terms, we see that it repeatedly begins with an establishing wide shot, then narrows down to a series of close-ups. The whole thing begins, in Genesis 1, with the wide shot of the creation of the heavens and earth, but then quickly focuses on the details of equipping the earth—just one planet out of innumerable planets in the universe—for man.

Following the creation of Adam and the first family, God presents, in Chapter Six (and using the standard heading) “These are the generations of Noah” (establishing wide shot), down to his three sons in Chapter Ten: “These are the generations of Shem,² Ham, and Japheth,” narrowing it further to “the generations of Shem,” then further to Terah, and finally the close-up of Abram and his seed, eventually from which the nation of Israel will be born.

¹ generations

K&D: Just as the [generations] of Noah, for example, do not mention his birth, but contain his history and the birth of his sons; so the [generations] of the heavens and the earth do not describe the origin of the universe, but what happened to the heavens and the earth after their creation.

² pronunciations

Shem = shame
Ham = khawm
Japheth = YEH-feth
Terah = TEH-rakh
Abram = Ahv-RAHM

Wide shot to close-up, wide shot to close-up.

³ v4a as a heading

By taking 4a as a heading, we mean that it is not a summation of what has preceded, but is a pointer to what proceeds after it—even though the narrative that follows itself shifts back to earlier stages of Creation.

Like any good storyteller, Moses opens the scene in v4 with not just a wide shot—the heading,³ “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created...”—but backing up from where he left off (God’s seventh day of rest in vv1-3) to reestablish the earliest days of creation, so as to set the stage for his primary topic: the close-up story of the first farmer and his mate. The recurring theme throughout Chapter Two is the “ground”—i.e., the soil. The story is earthy, natural, a garden in Eden, rivers and streams, and fertile soil for growing things—and *making* things, including man himself.

The purpose of Chapter Two (from v4 on) is not to offer a *different version* of Creation; nor was it written by a *different author*, who knew God as *Yahweh Elohim* instead of just *Elohim*. In Chapter One Moses gave us the essential, bare-bones outline of the Creative Week. In Chapter Two the same author backs up a little to fill in some of the details left out of the previous account, all for setting the stage for the Fall of man and God’s establishment of His chosen people, Israel.

v4

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created,

Two components of this first verse stand out, and the first of these is the word translated “generations” or “account,” depending on your version.* The Hebrew is *toledoth* (toe-lay-DOT), and, as we have seen, is often used to set up generational descendants of a common progenitor, e.g., Abraham, Noah, etc.; here it is God Himself. In a sense it is an “historical account”—in the way that a biography is also history—which means that it also can be, as Leupold insists, a “story.” But we cannot ignore the element of *descendancy* inherent in the word—as seen in so many of its applications in the OT.

And this adds some poetic texture to this chapter, as revealed in the second part of the verse.

...in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.

In a human sense, all people on this earth can trace their lineage back to the first couple: Adam and Eve. But that is too restrictive; our true progenitor—our true forefather—is “Yahweh God.”

And the passage (along with Chapter One) makes clear that He is not just the forefather of all humans, but He is the Creator/Progenitor of all that is: heavens and earth, growing things and rain and weather, fertile soil, rivers and streams, beasts of the field and oceans and rivers, and then man to manage it all.

Here we have, however, the second component of interest. Here God has a new name. Up till now God has been referred to as *Elohim*, but now we are introduced, for the first time, to His personal name: *Yahweh*, *Jehovah*, *YHWH*.

* the NKJV has “history”

Read Exodus 3:13-15.

Here we have the root of the name Yahweh (typically rendered, “the LORD”) expressing “I AM WHO I AM.” *haya* (“I AM”) is a primitive root meaning to exist, i.e. be or become, come to pass; it is always emphatic. So included in the Lord God’s personal name is the concept and fact of His self-existence. His name alone expresses the fact that He is the root and cause of all that is—the true and only progenitor of everything in His created universe.

One more thing before we leave v4. Although just about everyone agrees that the first portion of the verse is a heading for what follows, some go so far to say that the punctuation should be different: changing a comma to a period. We see the difference in the two NIV versions for vv4-5:

NIV2011 (and most of our common versions): This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were **created, when** the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

NIV1984: This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were **created. When** the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground... (emphasis added)

That is, some commentators say that the heading of 4a should be isolated with a period, beginning a new sentence with 4b flowing seamlessly into v5f—the NIV84 does not close the sentence until, the end of v7.⁴

v5

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet grown, for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

⁴ I do not have a strong opinion on this, as I do not think it makes a lot of difference; neither option alters the facts, context, or meaning. Since none of our other versions follow the NIV84, we will go with them.

Verses 5-6 hearken back to, roughly, Days Two and Three of Creation. We discussed this passage back in Session 9 (November 19, 2023), at which time I said,

Man will not be created until Day Six. So those plants created for the brand new soil of earth in Day Three (in Chapter One) will be on their own for a few days; it must be vegetation that does not require human intervention and husbandry. In other words, the vegetation created in Day Three was of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated.

The original text reveals the difference; the words for the vegetation created in v1:11 (Day Three) are different from those used in our text in Chapter Two. The newer NIV leaves out this distinction, which can cause confusion, but all our other versions make the distinction, as in the LSB with “shrub of the field”—i.e., vegetation requiring the cultivation and attention of man.

Thus the first part of v5 does *not* mean that it is speaking of a time before there was any vegetation whatsoever, just (as the third part points out with, “there was no man to cultivate the ground”) vegetation requiring cultivation: wild plums and wild black raspberries, but no soybeans or corn.

The second part of v5 presents more of a challenge: To what moment in the Creative Week does it refer, with “for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth”? Verse 6 offers more information.

v6

But a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

The word translated “stream” or “mist,” depending on your version, in v6 is *edh*. This reference to mists or streams watering the land is difficult to place in the timeline of the first chapter, so we are probably better off not trying to force it into one place or another.

We take this to mean that prior to His implementing regular rain from above, God watered the wild vegetation by other means—whether by underground streams or springs, or by a daily mist. More important than *when* this occurred, or *how* it was accomplished, is the fact that God was meticulously setting in place everything necessary to sustain His new Creation every step of the way.

v7

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.

The Bible is filled with passages meant to drive us to our knees in reverence and fear of our God; it is filled with passages that speak of his omnipotence, His righteousness, purity and holiness. In contrast to that, few verses in the Bible so splendidly speak of His condescension, His down-to-earth, intimate, hands-on love for His people than v7.¹

Chapter One records that when God made those beasts nearest to man, He commanded “the earth [to] bring forth living creatures,” followed by the simple declarative, “God made the beasts of the earth” (vv1:24-25). Verse 27 records something similar for man: “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” But for human beings more details are necessary and appropriate in Chapter Two, to demon-

¹ If we can tie this into the timeline of Chapter One at all, vv5-6 link back to, roughly, vv6-13 in Chapter One, but v7—along with vv21-25—skips ahead to v27 in Chapter One, during Day Six.

strate their position of authority over the other created beings and, not least, their “likeness” to God.

Here we see in this one verse the measure, and depth, of man’s relationship with God. On the one hand we see in Yahweh Elohim’s personal fashioning of Adam “a work of God that significantly displayed the faithful mercy of Yahweh as well as His awe-inspiring power” (Leupold). It is true that *all* of Creation, whether literally spoken or thought into existence, was personally accomplished by God.

But *this* creation is described in a more intimate, tender manner, revealing its personal importance to an omnipotent God. The verb *yatsar* (formed) refers literally to a potter molding a vessel from damp clay. It is not necessary to anthropomorphize our God, taking this to mean that He literally, physically dug His “hands” into the damp dirt of the earth to fashion the first man. No, we need not waste time imagining *how* it was accomplished, only to accept that this particular portion of Creation was realized by a more intimate, personal involvement by Yahweh.

At the same time, however, the episode reveals that even though man has been created in God’s own image (1:27), this is not meant to place him on a level equal to deity.

Leupold: The writer tells us that the material God employed in making man was “the dust of the ground.” *’Aphar*, rendered “dust,” does not refer to dry pulverized earth only. Here, without a doubt, a damp mass of the finest earth is under consideration. Luther’s rendering is still unsurpassed, “lump of earth.” Lest man form too high an estimate of the first man, it is here recorded that, in spite of the high station involved in being made in the image of God, man has a constituent part in his makeup, which forever forbids unseemly pride on his part.

I am reserving discussion of the rest of v7 for our next session. It is too important, too fascinating to quickly tack it on to the end of this session, so we will return to v7 in Session 16.

SESSION 16: A SPECIAL CREATION

Genesis 2:7

Before we dig into our text, I want to address the question that arose last week in class regarding the two “heavens” in v4. Specifically, why is the second “heavens” singular in some versions. For example, from the LSB,

These are the generations of the **heavens** and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and **heaven**. (emphasis added)

Out of all of our common versions, only the NASB and LSB (which is the most recent faithful iteration of the NASB) make the second “heaven” singular; all the rest make both plural. I have no explanation for why the NASB and LSB make it singular, but both “heavens” in the original Hebrew are plural. I also could not find a commentator willing to discuss this. So, from the textual evidence, we can only conclude that the second “heavens” should indeed be plural—meaning, the two created heavens: space and the earth’s atmosphere, or sky.

Read Genesis 2:7.

7

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.

In our last session we just began our look at v7; there is much more for us to consider in this important verse. Last week we looked at how the first man was created: he was “formed,” “molded,” as a potter will form damp clay into a utilitarian vessel or a work of art. I pointed out that we need not lose ourselves in anthropomorphizing this admittedly very tactile verb—that God literally dug His “hands” into the soil to shape and mold the first human. The important takeaway for us is the contrast between God’s previous creations and the attention He gives to this very important, intimate creation.

But the second part of this creation is just as important, and even more intimate than the first.

...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

Here once again man is set apart from the rest of the created beings. Of course “the birds [that] fly above the earth” (v1:20) and all the other “living creatures” (v1:24) had breath, but man is singled out for receiving it personally, intimately from his Maker. And it is expressed in a manner even more intimate

than the forming of his flesh, as if the Lord God embraced His creation, pressed His lips to the inanimate face, and exhaled life into him.

But, again, we will not conjecture how this was physically accomplished; possibilities abound, none of which can be proven. It is enough that Yahweh God did it, and He did it in a manner which was exceptional compared to the other living beings in His Creation.

JFB: Respiration being the medium and sign of life, this phrase is used to show that man's life originated in a different way from his body—being implanted directly by God (Ecclesiastes 12:7).²

² **Ecclesiastes 12:7**

...then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit [breath] will return to God who gave it.

Some will say that this in v7 is God imparting His *Spirit* to man, but the Hebrew for “spirit” is *ruach*, which was used in the second verse of the Bible: “...and the Spirit of God [*Ruach Elohim*] was hovering over the surface of the waters,” and in Psalm 51 when David cries out, “...and do not take Your Holy Spirit [*Ruach HaKodesh*] from me.”

However, later in Genesis, in 7:22, although some versions leave it out, the spirit is indeed associated with the “breath of life”; the Hebrew reads

All in whose nostrils was **the breath of the spirit of life**—of all that was on the dry land—died. (emphasis added)

That is, not as in v7, *nishmath chayyim*, but *nishmath ruach chayyim*. And what did Jesus impart to His disciples when He breathed on them in John 20:22?

And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

So in a sense we might suppose that, being created in His image, in God's breath of life imparted to man was also some of His Spirit. Whether that is the case or not, what sets this apart from the other created beings is that

- the animals were *created as living beings*—that is, they were created with air in their lungs, but the lifeless body of the first man was personally and intimately given life by God Himself;
- and, as many scholars point out, what Man received from God was not just air or oxygen, nor was it human breath, but literally *God's* breath—“His own vital breath” (Leupold).

...and so the man became a living being.

We want to be careful not to make too much of this—but we also do not want to ignore the full depth of what this event means.

The same phrase is used to describe the creatures in the sea and the birds: “living creature”.

Read Genesis 1:20-21.

The same phrase is used to describe the land creatures.

Read Genesis 1:24.

The Hebrew is *hay-yah nephesh*, a living creature or being. It would be much simpler if that was all it meant, but the complicating factor is that (as the KJV translates v2:7) the word *nephesh* also means “soul.”

Does this mean that *all* the creatures have a soul, like humans? The problem is with that question—not the answer. The question assumes the existence of a *soul*, a “thing” dwelling inside humans, a concept not found in the Bible. That is a holdover from Hellenistic philosophies. At its most basic—and how it is used in the Creation text of Chapters One and Two—*nephesh* (*psyche* in Greek) means soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion.³

David Guzik claims that we can see it both ways.

Guzik: The King James Version reads: “man became a living soul.” This makes some wonder if man is a soul, or if man has a soul. This passage seems to indicate that man is a soul, while passages like 1Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 seem to indicate that man has a soul. It seems that the Scripture speaks in both ways, and uses the term in different ways and in different contexts.

While some of what Guzik says is true, I would respectfully contend that the use of *psyche* in the NT—same as *nephesh* in the OT—is not that different; it does not need to refer to a separate component *within* the human. Take the Thessalonian passage as an example:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your **spirit and soul and body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(emphasis added)

That can be easily interpreted to reflect what we have learned in Genesis 2, that the physical body is something separate from the life given it by God—God created man, but it was lifeless until He breathed into it life: *nephesh*. There is no *effective, practical* difference between these two definitions, these two ways of thinking of “soul,” just a *perceptual* difference. When we die, our lifeless body remains on earth and gradually decays. This flesh was nothing more than the container for *who we were in life*: our personality, our reason, our beliefs, our likes and dislikes—our essential being. *That* is the part of us that is eternal and goes to be with the Lord. You may think of that as a discrete object, a “soul” that leaves your body, but it is actually just everything you were separate from your flesh—it is your *nephesh*.⁴

³ soul

“The English word soul comes with lots of baggage from ancient Greek philosophy. It’s the idea that the soul is a non-physical, immortal essence of a person that’s contained or trapped in their body to be released at death. It’s a ‘ghost in the machine’ kind of idea. This notion is totally foreign to the Bible. It’s not at all what *nephesh* means in biblical Hebrew.” (bibleproject.com)

⁴ nephesh

“the animal life, or that principle by which every animal, according to its kind, lives; hence life, vital principle, animal spirit, which is often translated soul or spirit.”
(William Wilson)

We have just spent the bulk of our time examining the literal text of v7. I would like to now spend our remaining time considering some of the *ramifications* of this verse—some of which are of a more philosophical bent, food for thought, musings, as it were.

There is much more to contemplate here, for this verse is filled with profound dichotomies. Just as there is more to the second part of this creative verse than literal oxygen, there is something more poetic—even ironic—to be found in the “dust” or soil God chooses with which to form this first man.

Man is made in God’s image, but he is also made from the soil that comprises his dwelling place. Who is—or will soon be; it is difficult to pinpoint that moment in a timeline—who is the ruler of this dwelling place? Satan.⁵ Thus in this particular creative act God is purposely setting in place the environment and capabilities in which the conflict between our two natures will do battle—the battle that will hound believers every day they are on this earth: righteousness vs. sin, holiness vs. sin, walking by the Spirit vs. sin.

We are created in God’s image, yet bonded to this fallen earth by our physical substance.

It at once expresses God’s gracious condescension to man, in His choice to create us in His image and bring us to life with His own breath, and the purposeful design of His economy that man will never be able to commune with Him without a Savior, a go-between, an Advocate, a sacrificial Lamb. It will not matter that we were created in God’s image, that our lungs are filled with His breath; we will each be born with a nature, an earthly bent, that will be a barrier to His righteous and holy ideal.

This apparent paradox seems to indicate—in His choice of material for the creation of man—God not just anticipating, but setting the stage for man’s approaching Fall. But look at what He says in the next chapter:

Read Genesis 3:17–19.

It is not the earth, the soil, that has corrupted man, but man, in his rebellion against God, that has corrupted the earth! The “groaning” of this earth even today (Romans 8:22) is the result of man’s sin against his Maker.

Whether we choose to call it “soul” or “spirit” or just “life-essence,” we all have a measure of God within us. It is that that the apostle Paul refers to when he writes to the Romans that man is without excuse in recognizing the evidence for his Creator.

Read Romans 1:18–20.

And it was this Paul referred to before the council at the Areopagus in Athens.⁶ Because of His very personal creation of man, every person on earth, whether believer or not, is His offspring.

⁵ “the god of this world”

Luke 4:5–6

1 John 5:19

John 12:31

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁶ “...He [God] is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’” (Acts 17:27–28)

SESSION 17: GOD PLANTS A GARDEN

Genesis 2:8-14

As we delve further into Chapter Two—and specifically its narrative about the garden in Eden—it is important for us to remember—to repeatedly remind ourselves, because it is easy to slip back into thinking otherwise—that Chapter Two is an *expansion*, a *recapitulation* of Chapter One, supplying more details.

Simply, I would state it this way: Chapter Two of Genesis does not adhere to the orderly timeline of Chapter One; that is, one cannot lay Chapter Two over Chapter One and the sequence and timing will match up perfectly. However, one *can* rely on the sequence order of Chapter Two *within itself*; that is, in Chapter Two the events of vv1-6 occur before vv7-9.

Read Genesis 2:8-10.

v8

And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east;

There are two maps included on the next page. Please take a look at the first map, showing Canaan next to the Mediterranean Sea. Remember that in this case the chronicler's—Moses'—point of view would have been from, roughly, the area southeast of what we call Israel today—but was then Canaan. We can't say, of course when Moses began writing the Pentateuch—it could have been on day one of the Exodus—but near the end (and near the end of his life) he would have been in Moab or Ammon; remember, it was from Mt. Nebo that Moses gazed upon the Promised Land across the Jordan (Deuteronomy 32:49), and we see that on this map directly across from Jericho.

So from his vantage point the location of Eden, the garden, and the rivers emanating from it would have been east, or, probably more precisely, northeast. And note the phrasing here: “Eden” is not the name of the garden; Eden was the name of the area where the garden was “planted” by Yahweh Elohim. So later when it is referred to as the “garden of Eden” (e.g., v2:15), we take that to mean the garden located in, or associated with, Eden.

We cannot locate with any measure of precision Eden itself. But as we see in v10,

...a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.¹

¹ four rivers

“This is a very unusual situation. We know of no parallel to it. We know of streams uniting to form one major stream. Here the reverse is true: one major stream becomes four.” (Leupold)

Please look at the second map. To the left we see the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee in today's Israel. East of that we have, first, the Euphrates, followed by the Tigris. These are the only two, of the four rivers named in this passage (vv10-14), we can identify. The Euphrates is to the Middle East what the Mississippi is to middle America; in some biblical passages it is referred to simply as “the great river,” or just “the river.”

MAP ONE



MAP TWO



It is reasonable to assume, being in the northern hemisphere, with rivers flowing southward, that Eden would be located somewhere in the vicinity north of Haran (haw-RAHN). But keep in mind that earthquakes and other upheavals, not to mention the Flood itself, could have altered the courses of these two rivers. So we take this map as offering just a general idea for the locations.

I need to point out one variant in our versions—unfortunately, once again in the NIVs. All our common versions have “God planted a garden,” but the NIVs add a word, changing the tense of “planted”:

Now the LORD God **had** planted a garden in the east,
(emphasis added)

John Sailhamer points out that the NIV translation (of pluperfect tense) “is not warranted by the immediate context or Hebrew syntax.” He goes on to explain that this is done by those wanting to force Chapter Two into the tighter and more sequential order of Chapter One; as I have explained, there is no reason to do this. So, no, contrary to the NIV, the garden was planted by God *after* the creation of man, as affirmed by the second half of the verse.

...and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Probably most of us have a picture in our mind of Adam being created *in* the garden, but the text clearly states that the first man was made elsewhere—perhaps elsewhere in Eden—*then* placed in the garden. The word translated “garden” (*gahn*) includes the idea of an enclosure.² This helps explain the effectiveness of God barring entrance to the garden in v3:24.

Read Genesis 3:24.

Presumably this suggests that the cherubim and “flaming sword” were stationed at an entrance—or perhaps the only entrance—to the garden.

v9

And out of the ground Yahweh God caused to grow every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This verse amplifies v8: “Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden.” I love the fact that periodically we see mirrored in the first days of this earth some of the elements that will mark its final eternity. This is not just textually fascinating, but affirms the cohesive narrative of God’s word: It is all of a piece; His genius, divine economy was planned all the way through to the end from *before* the very beginning of Creation. And here in the subtext of the adjective “every” we have the first of a couple in this verse. In Chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel the prophet describes in detail what is commonly termed the “Millennial Temple,” but which,

² garden

“The word ‘garden’ (*gan*), an ‘enclosure,’ or a sheltered, protected spot, corresponds to the Oriental conception of a garden. Paradise, the conception borrowed from the Persian by the Septuagint translators, is appropriate but suggests rather a royal park. A place of particular beauty and excellence best reflects God’s favor toward His chief creature.”
(Leupold)

I concluded for our *Last Things* study, was not, and will not, be built.³ Even so, in his description of the river flowing out from the temple he uses the same imagery and words that are here in v9.

Read Ezekiel 47:6-7, 12.

John, in the Revelation, says much the same thing about the eternal New Jerusalem on the New Earth.

Read Revelation 22:1-2.

This passage not only echoes the imagery of v9 in Genesis, but here we see again “the tree of life”—its importance revealed by its first appearance in Eden, and reappearance in the New Jerusalem of the eternal state.

But back to the beginning of the verse. This time God makes the man before He makes a place for Him (as opposed to most of what He did in Chapter One). However, He logically makes the space and then populates it with the trees that will delight and feed the man.

What God “caused to grow” or “spring up” within the garden was *kol ‘ets*—not just a few, not just a variety of, but literally “all, the whole, all the of every” tree—not every tree created or that would be created, but “every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food.” I take that to mean it did not include trees such as thorny acacias or even maples, thus predominantly an orchard of fruit trees. All *these* trees were beautiful *and* good for food. Two trees are highlighted: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And I am intrigued by something Leupold writes about these two trees.⁴

As we have seen, the tree of life will also be prominent in the believers’ eternal state. But if what Leupold writes is correct—and I see no reason to take issue with it—it raises an interesting parallel with the testing of Job, where, in Job chapters one and two, Satan is given permission to test Job’s allegiance to Yahweh. We are all familiar with the story.

In Genesis, man is created without knowledge of good and evil; I would suggest this means he doesn’t know anything about evil, nor does he know anything about good. He not only doesn’t know anything about the difference between them, he doesn’t even know either exists. To him, there is just what is.

Into this situation God plants two trees. Both trees have an actual, physical purpose, but both also *represent* something. The tree of life represents eternal life—implied, with God. Based on Genesis 3:22, were the man to eat from this tree he would “live forever.” Interestingly, God does not issue a restriction on this tree, as he does for the other.

For the moment, in this setting, the second tree is the one far more important—*critically* important—for it will determine the path man will take here on out.

³ Ezekiel’s Temple

See *Last-Things.pdf*, page 140, and the two-page handout located after page 362, at the end of the study notes for that class.

⁴ Leupold

“Both trees are mentioned because both were there and both were destined for a very definite purpose. The tree of life, as appears from 3:22, would have served its purpose in the event of the victory of man in the first temptation. Its existence shows that God had made ample provision for man’s good. Since, however, it never came to be used, it at once very properly recedes into the background after the first mention of it and is alluded to only after the Fall in 3:22. Its purpose apparently was to confirm man in the possession of physical life and to render physical death an impossibility.”

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil does just that: it doesn't *make* the eater either good or evil; it just informs him that both exist. Adam didn't have this knowledge; he was good, but was ignorant of that fact. Having eaten of the fruit of this tree, he then understood that both good and evil existed—and *his eating from the tree proved the existence of evil.*

Just as Job was tested by God when He permitted the actions of Satan, the two trees created by God will represent (in Chapter Three) a test of Adam and Eve's love for their Maker, and allegiance to Him by their obedience to His command. By eating from the tree they realized the existence of evil because it now dwelt in them, and they suddenly realized they had once been good. Robert Hawker states it more succinctly.⁵

⁵ Hawker
"And the tree of knowledge of good and evil; perhaps, a token that man, by disobedience, had learnt the knowledge of the good he had lost, and the evil he had taken to him."

If they had passed the test, presumably they would have been invited to dine from the tree of life. Having failed the test, that meal would be denied them. And the tragedy is that it took the introduction of evil for Adam to learn that he had been good. More on this when we get to vv16-17 in Chapter Two, and, of course, Chapter Three.

v10

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

Note carefully what this verse states: the river does not originate in the garden, but above it, in another portion of the Eden region. It then flows *into* the garden as one river to supply the plants and trees (and man) with water. And either while still in the garden, or after it flows out of the garden, it branches out to become four separate rivers: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates.

vv11-13

No one knows where the first two rivers are located. Guesses range from the Nile to the Ganges in India, and we cannot even be sure the rivers still exist.

v14

And the name of the third river is Tigris; it is the one that went east of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The Hebrew does not say "Tigris," but *Hiddekel*, which stands for the river called in Assyrian *Hidiqlat*, and in old Persian *Tigra*—i.e., Tigris. And in the Hebrew text the river Euphrates is *Perath*; no description was necessary, for everyone knew where it was.

In Chapter Two, from v4 on, God is setting the stage for the epochal, tragic events of Chapter Three, when Adam and Eve, and all of Creation will veer off-course.

For the moment—and only for a short while—the garden is truly a paradise. The first man has everything he requires for survival, for health, for joy (at least once Eve is created), and for communion with Yahweh God. Life is good; *he* is good.

In no time at all things will go south.

SESSION 18: LIFE OR DEATH

Genesis 2:15-17

In our previous session (vv8-14) God created (“planted”) a garden in Eden, a suitable, beautiful and bountiful dwelling for the first man, Adam. Yahweh populated the garden with every tree that was both beautiful and “good for food” (v9), along with two special trees that He located in “the midst” of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Next Yahweh established a river—He either created the river after the garden, or planted the garden in the path of an existing river—to water and sustain the garden plants and trees, which then branched out into four more rivers, two of which are the Tigris and Euphrates.

Read Genesis 2:15-17.

v15

Then Yahweh God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.¹

¹ Matthew Henry

“Man was made out[side] of paradise; for, after God had formed him, he put him into the garden: he was made of common clay, not of paradise-dust. He lived out of Eden before he lived in it, that he might see that all the comforts of his paradise-state were owing to God’s free grace. He could not plead a tenant-right to the garden, for he was not born upon the premises, nor had any thing but what he received; all boasting was hereby for ever excluded.”

Verse 15 expands on v8. Here we have the *reason* God set the man in this new garden: to cultivate and keep it.

In our previous study, *Last Things*, I remember questions and discussion about what would be our occupation in the eternal state. Would it be constant, non-stop worship before the throne? Would it be singing, would it be fellowshiping with each other? Just what will we be doing for eternity? Verse 15 may offer us a clue; here in this perfect state of new Creation, before sin enters the picture, man is given work to do. In his “paradise” he will not be idle, but working the soil and managing the garden.

I find it interesting that the Hebrew translated “cultivate” in the LSB and NASB is more literally translated in the NIVs with “work”—as if respective editors suddenly switched places for this verse. For work, toil, even to be in bondage or slavery is what *ob-dah* (aw-VAD) means—a form of the same word used describe the status of Israel in “hard labor” in Egypt.

“Paradise” is not synonymous with idleness and sloth; “work and duty belong to the perfect state” (Leupold). But we should understand one difference between man’s work in the perfect state and his later fallen state.

Read Genesis 3:17-19.

Because of His rebellion against God, man will remain a tiller of the soil, but now it will be a hard slog. Now, after the Fall, he will have to deal with rocks

and weeds, “thorns and thistles” as he ekes out a living, whereas (one can assume) in the perfect state he simply had to “manage” the growing things.

...and keep it.

The Hebrew *shamar* typically means to guard or watch, as a sentry would keep watch on a city or fortress wall. Here, however, it is used in the sense of having charge over, or to look after. No watchful guarding is required in Paradise—not until, that is, sin has encroached, ruining the perfection.

John Sailhamer and a few other commentators take issue with the common translation that implies some measure of labor for the man to sustain the garden. Translating the Hebrew differently, Sailhamer concludes that it should more accurately express, “to worship and to obey.”²

Sailhamer’s argument is sound, and other interpreters make the same point. But I believe Keil & Delitzsch express this the best by marrying the two interpretations.

K&D: As nature was created for man, it was his vocation not only to ennoble it by his work, to make it subservient to himself, but also to raise it into the sphere of the spirit and further its glorification. This applied not merely to the soil beyond the limits of paradise, but to the garden itself, which, although the most perfect portion of the terrestrial creation, was nevertheless susceptible of development, and which was allotted to man, in order that by his care and culture he might make it into a transparent mirror of the glory of the Creator. Here too the man was to commence his own spiritual development.

² John Sailhamer

“Man is put in the garden to worship God and to obey Him. Man’s life in the garden was to be characterized by worship and obedience; he was a priest, not merely a worker and keeper of the garden.”

According to this viewpoint, we have here the genesis of what the apostle Paul termed our, “service of worship,” and expressed more fully in his letter to the Colossians, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).*

In the life of the believer the “spiritual” is never to be detached from the corporeal; for the Christian they are to be one and the same. We are to live—to work, to play, to eat, to rest—as to God. Our whole daily existence is to be offered as a sacrifice of praise and worship to our God.

vv16-17

And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may surely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it; for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

If Genesis were a novel written by man, we would say that these two verses comprise a *foreshadowing* of what will take place in Chapter Three. It does in-

* see also: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:5-9.

deed foreshadow the tragedy of Chapter Three, but it also is a worthy and essential commandment of God. His commands are always—*always*—for our good, and here with His first command set down to Adam, God tells the first man that the garden is to be a veritable smorgasbord for him, but there is one tree from which he is *not* to eat: “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

“From any tree of the garden you may surely eat...”

There is nothing wrong with the translation of the Hebrew *kol* as “any” in this portion of the verse, but the ESV and KJVs have it a little better with “every,” which coincides with v1:29 regarding “every plant yielding seed...and every tree...” Same word.

“but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it;”

Here is the birth, the inception of free will, of man’s free agency. Were God to create human beings as mere automatons, there would be no need for restrictions (there also would be no true worship); but He did not create us as automatons. While it is true that every believer has been selected by God (Romans 8:30; John 6:44), He grants us all life-choices, so that our faithfulness, our allegiance, our obedience to Him will be by choice—and hence, authentic, from the heart.

As to our previous discussion in class regarding the tree of life, we can only take God at His word. In both Chapters One and Two He states explicitly that *every* plant and tree in the garden is there for the man and woman—except this tree, the tree of knowledge. So we can only conclude from the text that the fruit of the tree of life was available to them as well; v3:22 would seem to indicate that for whatever reason, man and woman did not eat from the tree of life.

“...for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

The biblical concept of dying is not the physical extinguishing of breath and life, but separation from God.†

Leupold: That separation occurred the very moment, when man by his disobedience broke the bond of love. If physical death ultimately closes the experience, that is not the most serious aspect of the whole affair. The more serious is the inner spiritual separation.³

So we might paraphrase this portion of v17 with, *In the day you eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will no longer be a part of My life.*

I see the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a pivot point—not just for man, but for all of God’s Creation. Turn please to Deuteronomy 30. We could paraphrase these two verses in Chapter Two as God saying, *I’m offering*

³ Gustav Oehler

“For a fact, after the commission of sin man at once stepped upon the road of death.”

† The Hebrew reads, literally, “dying thou shalt die”

you a choice: life in a bountiful paradise communing with Me, or death. Even though Yahweh God knows what man's choice will be, He still leaves it as *his* choice—his decision.

And Yahweh God will offer this choice to man again, this time to the nation of Israel as they are about to cross into the Promised Land. He will command a dramatic illustration of opposing wills: On Mount Gerizim (gher-ee-ZEEM) six tribes from Jacob are arrayed to pronounce the blessings that would be Israel's if they obey the commandments of Yahweh; on Mount Ebal (ay-BAWL) are arrayed the other six tribes to pronounce the curses that will fall upon them if they do *not* obey Yahweh's commandments.

What follows in Deuteronomy 27 to 29 is a detailed list of those potential blessings and curses—with heavy emphasis, not surprisingly, on the curses. In Chapter 30 it is assumed that Israel will indeed choose the dark side, as Yahweh explains how He will take them back after their rebellion (vv1-10).

Even so, this will require repentance on their part.

...[I will do this] when you listen to the voice of Yahweh your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, when you return to Yahweh your God with all your heart and soul. (Deuteronomy 30:10)

He concludes Chapter 30, using language similar to the situation in Genesis Two, by imploring them to “choose life.”

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

Throughout history God has tested the devotion of His people and their leaders. Abraham passed the test on Mt. Moriah; Job passed the test and remained true through tortuous tribulation; King Saul failed his tests repeatedly; Christ Jesus did not waver for a moment through His trials.

Yahweh God planted two trees in the garden, two options for Adam and Eve: life or death.

Paul Kretzmann (1921): This tree was placed there for the exercise of man's obedience toward God, and the transgression of God's command would result in man's becoming mortal, becoming subject to death. From the day that he would eat of this forbidden fruit, the germ of death would enter his body, and his final dissolution would be inevitable. If man had stood this test, he would have been confirmed in his possession of Paradise, and through his eating of the tree of life he would finally have been enabled, without pain and death, to enter into the life of eternity. Death is the consequence of disobedience, of sin.

Adam, with Eve, failed the test miserably, with cataclysmic consequences for both humanity and the earth on which it dwells.

It is unthinkable, but what if the Son of God had failed *His* test? What if He had been persuaded by Satan in the wilderness? What if He had snuck away from Gethsemane, and avoided the cross?

It is unthinkable, but if Jesus had failed His test, then the consequences of the first Adam's failure would have remained without remedy for all eternity.

There is no better reason than that—that Jesus *did* remain true, to ensure *our* devotion and obedience to Him.

SESSION 19: A COMPARABLE MATE

Genesis 2:18-20 (2:21-25)

Because I wanted to spread out our examination of the Fall, I have purposely addressed it at “stations” along the way, rather than holding off until the actual event, recorded in Genesis 3. It being a monumental event that will forever change man and the world in which he lives, I did not want to reserve it, cramming it all into one session.

So we have discussed it in Chapter One, at v1:26 and vv29-30; Chapter Two, v7 and, just last week, vv15-17.

The downside of this is that we might prematurely think of Adam and Eve as fallen before they really are in the narrative. As we approach v18 in Chapter Two Adam is still alone, and remains in his created pristine state—as Leupold states it, “a moral being standing on a very high plane of perfection.”

Read Genesis 2:18-20.

v18

Then Yahweh God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”¹

Once again it is necessary for us to be reminded of the narrative timeline. Some might read this verse and think they see a contradiction: How can God now identify something that is not good? Didn’t He declare *all* of His Creation “very good” at the end of Chapter One? Indeed He did, but the creation of woman was accomplished within the sixth day, which is where this passage (vv18-25) resides in the narrative. It was in v1:31, *after* the creation of the woman that God declared that all was “very good.” Once again, Chapter Two expands upon Chapter One; it does not compete with it.²

I can only speak from personal experience, but from that, over the last fifty-three years, I have seen and lived the wisdom behind God’s genius in stating that man is incomplete without woman. And God’s genius works both ways: both husband and wife complete each other—in fact, as Paul writes, both own each other.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-4.

Perhaps you, like me, have read this passage in the past thinking that God parades all the “beasts of the field” past Adam, and only then decides that none of them are what He is looking for, and so proceeds to create one that is more “suitable” for the man. But if one reads carefully one sees that cannot be the case.

¹ K&D

“a help of his like: i.e., a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognise himself”

² **God’s Method**

It is easy to have a skewed perception of this episode. We could read it as the Almighty discovering, to His surprise, that something is missing in the man’s life and then trying out a number of possible solutions before finally discovering the correct one. That is not at all what is happening in vv18-25. There is, as we will see, a purposeful method to God’s actions here.

³ **had formed**

Except for the NASB and KJVs (see K&D below).

These were created during the fifth and early sixth days of Creation, prior to the Creation of man and woman (1:20-25).

K&D

“The circumstance that in Genesis 2:19 the formation of the beasts and birds is connected with the creation of Adam by the imperf. c. 1 consec., constitutes to objection to the plan of creation given in Gen 1. The arrangement may be explained on the supposition, that the writer, who was about to describe the relation of man to the beasts, went back to their creation, in the simple method of the early Semitic historians, and placed this first instead of making it subordinate; so that our modern style of expressing the same thought would be simply this: “God brought to Adam the beasts which He had formed.”

God says that He “*will* make” a suitable helper for the man—that is, He hasn’t done it yet. Verse 19 states that God “*had* formed”³ the beasts, et al—that is, he had done that in the past, so obviously none of them were suitable for the man.

David Guzik makes a good point regarding the word translated “helper” (*ezer*).

We only see “helping” as a position of inferiority when we think like the world thinks. God considers positions of service as most important in His sight (Matthew 20:25-28).

Read Matthew 20:25-28.

Out of all the ways this phrase “helper suitable” is translated, I favor the NKJV, which reads “a helper *comparable* to him.” Leupold writes, “Her position is further defined by the expression ‘like him,’ *keneghdô*, literally, ‘as agreeing to him,’ or ‘his counterpart.’ She is the kind of help man needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually. She is not an inferior being.”

Guzik adds, “She should be considered and honored as such. A woman or wife cannot be regarded as a mere tool or worker, but as an equal partner in God’s grace and an equal human being.” And not to put too fine a point on it, in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the apostle Paul includes “helps”—the role the woman will be filling—in that list of spiritual gifts.

v19

And out of the ground Yahweh God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and He brought each to the man to see what he would call it; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

As we discussed in class last week, Adam was assuredly no slouch in the intellect department. And note that God did not *command* the man to name the beasts and birds, but just waited to see what he would call them.

I don’t know about you, but every time I read v19 and the beginning of v20 I wonder, *Why are you telling me this here, God? What does this have to do with creating a partner for the man?*

Before I suggest some possible answers to this, let me first energetically declare what is assuredly *not* happening in this scene. Yahweh Himself is *not* searching through these beasts in an attempt to find a mate for Adam; that would be entirely out of character for our omnipotent, omniscient God.⁴ Let me offer some reasons for this being included in the account here.

First, it mirrors the pattern and sequence of Chapter One, vv24-27, in which the “beasts of the earth” are created during the sixth day of Creation just before God makes man.

⁴ Utterly ridiculous—as well as breaking the pattern of God’s creative process itself, with its emphasis on grouping together beings with others of the same kind.

Second, one must keep in mind that in this scene Yahweh God is the teacher, and Adam the student. In this, the parade of animals before the man becomes a visual aid and object lesson to illustrate a fundamental truth for the human.

Third, we should not imagine that Adam is viewing and naming every last animal that has been created. Verse 19 specifies just the wild, non-domestic beasts and birds; v20, curiously, adds domestic beasts (“cattle,” “livestock”) to the parade. There is every reason to believe that this would encompass a subset of animals—for example, fish and “sea monsters,” and “creeping things” are excluded. So this seems to suggest that he assigns names only to those animals and birds he lives with regularly.

Fourth, there is the “curriculum,” as it were, that Yahweh is teaching the man. First He shows a *contrast*: God is demonstrating how the animals are *different* from Adam. Second He shows a *similarity*: God shows Adam that all the animals have corresponding mates—which Adam lacks; *he* needs one too. All the animals and birds can propagate; he cannot. As Leupold states it, in this “a realization of man’s loneliness was to be aroused in him.”

Finally, there is something that the naming of these animals teaches us.

Leupold: At once we are made aware of the high intelligence level of the father of the human race. For the expression to give names, in the Hebrew usage of the word “name,” involves giving a designation expressive of the nature or character of the one named.

This was not a crude fable, where, according to a Hebrew notion, the accidental [utterance] at the sight of new and strange creatures were retained as names for the future. Here was a man in deeper sympathy with nature than any have been ever since. That these names were appropriate and significant names for the various creatures appears also from the confirmatory statement of the author: “whatever man called each living creature, that was its name.” Such a statement, imbedded in so marvellous an account, could hardly be made, unless the names given had been appropriate and worthy of man’s intelligence.⁵

We will make just a start at the next passage, then complete it in our next session.

Read Genesis 2:21-25.

v21

So Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

⁵ K&D

“God does not order him to name them; but by bringing the beasts He gives him an opportunity of developing that intellectual capacity which constitutes his superiority to the animal world.”

God does some of His best work after putting someone to sleep.

- In Genesis 15 God causes a “deep sleep” to come upon Abram before establishing with him His covenant and promise for the Promised Land.
- In Genesis 28, Yahweh declares Himself to a sleeping Jacob: “I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed” (Genesis 28:13).

Here we have Adam being put to sleep so that Yahweh God can perform the first recorded surgery during the first anesthetic. This was not a trance or a state of ecstasy, as some suggest; the Hebrew *tardemah* means a sound, insensible sleep. After the Fall, God will not hesitate to inflict pain upon man, but here he intends a painless surgery. I doubt He even left a scar.

As to what this surgery and its location represent, practically every commentator—especially older ones—expresses something similar, but David Guzik shares *this* version from Donald Barnhouse:

There is a beautiful Jewish tradition saying God made woman, not out of man’s foot to be under him, nor out of his head to be over him, but “She was taken from under his arm that he might protect her and from next to his heart that he might love her.”

Consider, for a moment, the genius of our God. Imagine the profound difference if He had made the first woman in the same way He made the first man:

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

If Yahweh had repeated the same process in His making of the first woman, where would be the unity, where would be the intimate association? If that had been the process we might imagine the first words from Adam’s mouth as, *Who are you? What are you? Are you here to supplant me, to take my place here in the garden? Am I to compete with you?*

Instead we have, in v23, Adam’s immediate and exquisite realization that

“This one finally is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called Woman,
Because this one was taken out of Man.”

She was not drawn from the dust, but from the bone and flesh of the man; she was not given breath from Yahweh God (we can only assume, for it is not stated), but received the breath of life from the body of the man.

This passage, vv21-25, is one of my favorites, for it beautifully—even poetically—encapsulates the genius of the marriage union between man and woman. And I recommend that, especially in these dark times in which there are those doing their best to corrupt and destroy the beauty and love of that union—even going so far as to reconfigure and redefine the very concept of the two sexes—that we take the time to dwell on, to savor, to reinforce in our own minds how lovingly, how sweetly God planned it from the beginning.

There are those in our society hell-bent—and I mean that literally—hell-bent on destroying the beauty of God’s Creation, the beauty that exists within the union of husband and wife. Let us take the time—and we will in our next session—to remember how our God always meant for it to be.

SESSION 20: A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

Genesis 2:21-25

Read Genesis 2:21-25.

We began our look at this passage in our last session, with a brief look at v21.

v21

So Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

Adam is put to sleep so that Yahweh God can perform the first recorded surgery during the first anesthetic. This was not a trance or a state of ecstasy, as some suggest; the Hebrew *tardemah* means a sound, insensible sleep. After the Fall, God will not hesitate to inflict pain upon man, but here he intends a painless surgery.

I suggested we imagine the profound difference if Yahweh God had made the first woman in the same way He made the first man:

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

If Yahweh had repeated the same process in His making of the first woman, where would be the unity, where would be the intimate association?

Instead we have, in v23, Adam's immediate and exquisite realization that

"This one finally is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called Woman,
Because this one was taken out of Man."

She was not drawn from the dust, but from the bone and flesh of the man; she was not given breath from Yahweh God, but received the breath of life from the body of the man. Thus they were, by the manner of the woman's creation, effectively conjoined.

K&D: The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage.

The woman's manner of creation also means that we cannot derive from this "two beginnings to the human race, one in Adam and one in Eve. There was [only] one beginning of the human race in Adam" (Guzik).

v22

And Yahweh God fashioned the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman...

God not only used different materials for His creation of the woman, but He also used a different *process*. Adam had been "formed" he had been "molded," as a potter will form damp clay into a utilitarian vessel or a work of art—the Hebrew verb is *yatsar*.

For God's creation of the woman the verb changes. None of our common versions translate it literally; I could only find it in *Young's Literal Translation* and the *Tree of Life* version. The latter reads,

Adonai Elohim built the rib, which He had taken from the man,
into a woman.

Different from the "molding" that was used for the man, the Hebrew verb is *wayyi'bhen* (vay-bah-NAH), and means to build, develop, construct, such as a permanent residence or temple. According to Leupold, "it applies to the fashioning of a structure of some importance; it involves constructive effort." It is a picture of Yahweh constructing, fashioning the woman piece by piece.

We should also make note that the biblical order for husband and wife, her subordinate position under the familial and spiritual head that we read from the apostle Paul (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 11-12) has its foundation *prior* to the Fall—not after it. This means it was God who ordained this relationship—not sin (cf., Matthew 19:8).

...and He brought her to the man.

I love how this verse closes. It is a beautiful antecedent to the tradition of the bride's father formally offering his daughter to the groom.

I was unable to find evidence that our traditional marriage ceremony was purposely *modeled* after Genesis 2:22-25, but we clearly see the parallels in the text. Verse 22 ends with the picture of the bride's father walking his daughter down the aisle.

He represents not just her dad and the *paterfamilias*, but at least in the traditional (some would say, old fashioned) picture of the young, virginal bride, heretofore he has been the only man in her life. So here is a "changing of the guard," so to speak, a handing over from one man to another. And I can imagine that it is no small thing for a loving father to give his daughter to a younger man.

In the Creation text, Yahweh God is truly the "father"—literal Creator—of the woman. He alone is the one to hand her over (to me it is a picture of a gracious gift from father to groom); He hands her over to the man. He brings, He

presents the first woman to the first man. Then, the exultation expressed by Adam in v23 conjures up what I felt in my heart as I watched my beautiful bride being conducted down the aisle toward me.

v23

*Then the man said,
"This one finally is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh..."*

To succinctly translate this into modern vernacular, "Finally, here's the woman for me!"

Here we have the first recorded words from the lips of the first man. Some claim that what he says reveals that the transfer from his body to Eve's involved more than just a bone. Perhaps. But it also can be just an expression, such as it was used by Laban to declare his familial tie to Jacob.

Read Genesis 29:13-14.*

Of course, if it became a figurative expression later, it had to begin with Adam, so knowing what he meant by it is hard to determine. Martin Luther concludes that Adam knew exactly what he was saying.

Luther: It is worthy of our greatest wonder and admiration, that Adam, the moment he glanced his eye on Eve, knew her to be a building formed out of himself. He immediately said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." These are not the words of an ignorant one, nor of one who was a sinner; nor of one who was ignorant of the works and of the creation of God. They are the words of one righteous and wise, and full of the Holy Spirit...

Perhaps. But I also appreciate a comment from David Guzik:

Guzik: What exactly did God take from Adam's side to make Eve? We don't really know, and it doesn't really matter. Modern research into cloning and genetic replication shows every cell in our body contains the body's entire genetic blueprint. God took some of Adam's cells and changed their genetic blueprint in the creation of Eve.

It doesn't matter the specific part Yahweh extracted from Adam. Far more important is the fact that God did it, that God chose the man as the source, and that these two facts combined ensured a unique bond between the man and woman.

* see also: Judges 9:2; 2 Samuel 5:1; 2 Samuel 19:12-13

*This one shall be called Woman,
Because this one was taken out of Man."*

The etymology¹ behind the words "Woman" and "Man" is more complicated and convoluted than the text and the traditional explanation make it. For example, the margin notes in my Bible explain that the Hebrew for "Woman" is *Ishsha*, while the Hebrew for "Man" is just *Ish*. Luther writes, "Hence it is that Adam gave the name, 'woman,' *Ischa*, or 'man-formed female,' *virago* or *vira*, [in the Latin] to Eve."

Albert Barnes: "To this" counterpart of myself "shall be called woman;" the word in the original being a feminine form of "man," to which we have no exact equivalent, though the word "woman" (womb-man, or wife-man), proves our word "man" to have been originally of the common gender. "Because out of a man was she taken;" being taken out of a man, she is human; and being a perfect individual, she is a female man.

The idea here is that if we think of the word "Man" in the sense of *mankind*, the "Woman," as the various etymologies reveal, is different, yet of the same genus. She came *from* man, so she is man, but she is a different sex (through the miraculous transformation by God the surgeon), so she is a *Wo-man*—not *Ish*, but *Ischa*. The feminine of *Ish*.²

v24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Here is the root and essence of biblical marriage. This verse is often assumed to be a continuation of Adam's statement in v23. But all of our common translations close the quotes at the end of v23, and do not place v24 in quotes. This decision by the translators is probably based, at least in part, on what Jesus says in Matthew 19.

Read Matthew 19:4-6.

There Jesus credits the statement to "He who created them"—i.e., Yahweh God. I would add to this that at this point in Creation Adam would surely know nothing of fathers and mothers, so it makes sense to credit this to the writer, Moses. Of course, no matter who spoke or wrote it, it is all by the inspiration of God's Spirit, so ultimately, even if Adam uttered the words, it was of God.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife;

I have long seen the practical wisdom in this statement; and its truth was played out in our marriage. Just days after we were wed in Marshalltown upon my return from Vietnam, we packed up all our earthly belongings and headed

¹ etymology

The study of the origin and history of words, or a study of this type relating to one particular word.

² She (literally, to this) shall be called Woman (*isha*, i.e. maness, from *ish*, man. Cf. Greek, ἀνδρῖς (*Symmachus*), from ἀνήμρ; Latin, *virago*, *virae* (old Latin), from *vir*; English, woman (womb-man, Anglo-Saxon), from man; German, manninn, from mann; Sanscrit, hart, from nara; Ethiopic, beesith, from beesi), because she (this) was taken from Man. *Ish*, the name given by Adam to himself in contradistinction to his spouse, is interpreted as significant of man's authority (Gesenius), or of his social nature (Meier); but its exact etymology is involved in obscurity. Its relation to Adam is the same as that of *vir* to *homo* and ἀνήμρ to ἀνθρωπος. (*The Pulpit Commentary*)

down the road to return to California, where I was stationed in the navy. Linda and I were all of 18 and 19, respectively. Now, we can attest to making some pretty dumb mistakes in those early days at such a young age, but we addressed those mistakes together, as husband and wife—not by leaning on either of our parents. Dealing with situations that arose with *each other*, rather than with the counsel of our parents, accelerated the process of becoming one (not to mention the process of growing up); we met the vagaries and pitfalls of life by leaning on each other. In 1971 there was no internet, no e-mail, no smart phones, and it was too expensive to call across country at every turn. In that first year we were indeed *visited* by our parents, but otherwise we were on our own.

Some earlier translations made this, “a man shall *forsake* his father and his mother,” but that is too harsh. The commandment still stands to honor one’s parents, to respect their counsel and to ensure their well-being. But it is important, as Christ and the apostles attested, to see that marriage, while not breaking the familial tie, does recast, humanly speaking, one’s first allegiance, one’s first dependency, one’s primary bond. God always comes first, but one’s husband or wife comes next.

...and they shall become one flesh.

Note please the important tense of the verb. It is not “*are* one flesh” or even “*are made* one flesh,” but “shall become”: “they *shall become* one flesh.” Like sanctification, becoming “one flesh” is a *process*. This makes clear that it means far more than just the conjoining that occurs on the honeymoon. And, just as with sanctification, the manner in which this occurs and the length of time it takes varies from one marriage to another. For some couples this oneness begins maturing early on; for others, it may *never* occur; for most, I would guess, it takes many years, for it requires learning to take joy together, to share sorrows together, to trust and respect each other *together*.

Being of “one flesh” is difficult to describe; it is one of those things that falls into the category of “you have to be there.” Believe me, at nineteen years of age I had no idea what that would be like.

Again, if we liken it to sanctification, if you became a follower of Christ when you were young, could you possibly have realized *then* what your relationship with Christ and the Father would feel or look like thirty, forty, or fifty years later? I doubt that you could. I doubt that you could imagine the depth of understanding of His word and His ways that comes only by experience and inspiration over the years; I doubt that you could imagine the profound depth of faith and trust in your Lord, that has come only by living and walking with Him all these years. All this comes over the years, and is rather difficult to explain to a babe in Christ.

Just so the experience of being of “one flesh.” Like sanctification in Christ, it can only be realized—and appreciated—by those who give themselves over to it, who embrace the mystical union of husband and wife as something profound, fulfilling, and glorious.³

³ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18)

SESSION 21: THE FIRST TEMPTATION, PART ONE

Genesis 2:25-3:5

The other night Linda and I watched *Saving Private Ryan* again, and in the included extras both the film's director, Steven Spielberg, and the historian Stephen Ambrose described D-Day, the allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France, as "the turning point of the Twentieth Century"—the implication being that had D-Day not occurred, Hitler would not have been stopped, and thus the world would be entirely different as a result.

But Hitler's military efforts were in trouble *long* before D-Day. He and Nazi Germany would have eventually been defeated without that massive invasion—just not so soon.

Before us, however, in the third chapter of Genesis, is truly an epochal turning point—not just for any one century, but for the entire existence and history of mankind. In a manner of speaking it stands as the leading bookend, the "way in," as it were, for millennia of sin, depravity, corruption, deceit, and man's alienation from God. The *closing* bookend—not doing away with sin, but standing as the way out of man's alienation from God—occurred at the cross.

H. C. Leupold calls Chapter Three "the most tragic chapter in the Bible," and I would agree. There are other moments in God's word that are as tragic on a personal, or even national level—for example, King David's adultery and murder, that not only changed *his* life for the worse, but inflicted great pain and death on his extended family and ultimately Israel as a nation. But no other turning point in God's word comes close to the tragedy that occurred in the garden; it not only changed the course of human and animal kind—not least by the introduction of death—but inflicted turmoil and suffering even upon the very earth itself (Romans 8:22).

I am reminded of James' remark in his epistle regarding the awful wrong done by something as small as the human tongue.

Read James 3:5-6.

He concludes this in v8 by stating that "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison."

Eve took a bite out of a piece of fruit—something many of us do every day—then she offered it to her husband and he did the same. Such a small thing; where's the harm in *that*? But that small act of disobedience tore asunder the couple's communion with their Creator, Yahweh God, and, like King David's sin with Bathsheba, not only did they personally pay a price, but in Eden all of mankind forever after paid a price for their momentary rebellion.*

* See 2 Samuel 11 and following.

Some claim that the story in Chapter Three is myth or allegory, meant to communicate a point by creating a fictional setting. It is too fantastical, they say, to be real. But that would be news to the apostle Paul, for one, who wrote,

But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be corrupted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

and

For it was Adam who was first formed, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass. (1 Timothy 2:13–14)

Now, those verses are absent their context, but they make it clear that at least Paul did not consider Chapter Three of Genesis to be myth or allegory. And further, the last book in God's word, Revelation, describes Satan in ways identical to how the serpent is described in Chapter Three.

Read Revelation 12:9.

Later he is bound and rendered impotent during Christ's Millennial reign.

And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;
(Revelation 20:2)

Thus, as Leupold writes, "Things are recorded as they actually transpired; this is a strictly historical account fully approved by the New Testament."

Read Genesis 2:25 to 3:5.

Where do the events of Chapter Three fall in the *First Things* timeline? According to Luther, the Fall occurred on the sabbath, Day Seven. Perhaps—but I doubt it. All we can say with certainty is that it occurred after Day Six—days, weeks, months, years after? Who can say.

v2:25

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

I confess that v25 of Chapter Two was not included in our previous session initially as an oversight, but as I have prepared for *this* session and Chapter Three, I realized that that omission may have been a God-thing. I would say that the chapter break between Two and Three is not unfortunate (as it *is* between

One and Two), but v25 is so critical to the narrative of Chapter Three that it makes sense to include it in the same package with Chapter Three. For v25 dramatizes the depth of the moral Fall that takes place in the next chapter. While not expressing the totality of what we lost in the Fall, v25 represents, it *stands-in for* everything mankind has lost since Eden.

Luther: Universal experience indeed shows us all these calamities; but we never feel the real magnitude of them until we look back to that unintelligible but real state of innocence, in which there existed the perfection of will, the perfection of reason and that glorious dignity of the nakedness of the human body. When we truly contemplate our loss of all these gifts and contrast that privation with the original possession of them, then do we, in some measure, estimate the mighty evil of original sin.

The best way I can imagine to grasp the depth of what man lost—that is, voluntarily gave up—in Eden, is to study the existence of Christ’s followers in the Eternal State. In Eden’s Fall evil was unleashed on the earth, only to be thoroughly and unequivocally expunged from the earth after the Great White Throne Judgment during the Eschaton. Just *before* that judgment Satan will have been thrown into the eternal Lake of Fire; after the judgment he will be joined there by death and Hades. After that, there will be the Eternal State: the new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, and eternal paradise and communion with our Lord and our God (Revelation 20:7-22:5).

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, bright as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him; and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night, and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them, and they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

Chapter Three of Genesis can be organized in the following way:

1. Temptation: vv1-5
2. Fall: v6
3. Revelation: v7
4. Shame and Fear: vv8-11
5. Casting Blame: vv12-13
6. Consequences: vv14-20

- a. Serpent: vv14-15
 - b. Eve: v16
 - c. Adam: v17-19
7. Exile: vv21-24

v1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made.

The first thing we need to establish is just who (or what) is this “serpent.” The Hebrew is *nahas* (naw-KHAWSH), and means just that, a serpent or snake (“as biting, in spite of charm”). This first sentence tells us that, by category, it was a “beast of the field”—i.e., the nomenclature tells us the serpent was considered wild, as opposed to domestic (e.g., cattle), and, of course, had been created by God.

Since in v14 Yahweh God will henceforth consign the serpent to a life moving about on his belly in the dust of the earth, we might rightly assume it was not first created that way. In fact, in a rare example of Hollywood getting something close to correct from the Bible, John Huston in his 1966 movie, *The Bible*, portrays the tempting serpent (shown in the shadows atop a limb in the tree) as a blend of human and snake, with arms and legs, but then after God’s curse becomes the slithering snake more familiar to us.

The British have a common phrase, “too clever by half,” which refers to a person who is intelligent, clever, but perhaps *too* clever, rendering their too-complex notions unsuccessful, or annoying to others. I’m wondering if the serpent, as initially created, might fall into this category. He was created clever, crafty, not unintelligent, but this makes him an easy target for the fallen Satan to use for his purposes.

The word translated “crafty” in most of our versions is *arum*, which means clever, cunning, shrewd, even sensible and prudent; it does *not* mean in itself *wickedly* crafty. The serpent is not Satan; he was not created wicked but “good” like the other beasts of the field. He is just a willing candidate for being used by Satan to tempt the humans. As such I would place him in the same category as Antichrist and his false prophet of the end times, and Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

Read John 13:25-27.

And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”

Why the woman first? Why is she the one the serpent first tempts? I disagree with those who say it is because she is the weaker of the two (very often my wife will identify a ruse before I do). But what makes sense is that she had not heard the command and restriction firsthand, from Yahweh Himself, but (we can only assume) from Adam, secondhand. So it may not have had the same

impact on her. On the other hand, we know from v6 that hearing it from the mouth of God directly was not sufficient to prevent Adam from giving into the serpent's temptation.

From this second sentence we learn that not only is the serpent intelligent and clever, but he is a beast who can speak, who can communicate with humans—in whatever the first language is.

Here the more literal LSB and NASB let us down a little, making it more difficult to understand what the serpent is really getting at. Here it is in the ESV:

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Clever indeed; that's a leading question, isn't it. One way to hear the question would be for Eve to answer with a resounding *No! God did not say that we could not eat from any tree. He said we could eat from any tree except just this one.*

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

There is also another way to hear what the serpent is asking. Could he mean, *Did God say you cannot eat from all the trees—you can from all but this one?* The answer to this would have to be *Yes*. Either way, the wily serpent is choosing his words carefully, and they are meant to confuse.

Give credit to Eve that her response is, apparently, right on (but see the discussion on this in the next session):

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said, 'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.'"

We will continue with this in our next session, but right now I would like to close with an excellent point Leupold makes in answer to the proverbial question—and one that may be simmering in your own mind:

Leupold: "Why must there be a temptation?" or "Why does God permit His chief creature on earth to be tempted? Does He not desire man's supreme happiness? Why, then, does He permit a temptation which leads to death and all our woe?"

The answer must always be that God will have only that count as moral behaviour worthy of a being made in God's image, which is freely given and maintained even where the possibility of doing otherwise offers itself. To do what God desires merely because one cannot do otherwise, has no moral worth. It would be a morality like unto that of beams which uphold the house because they have been put in place and cannot but bear their load. To do the right where there has

never been an opportunity of doing wrong is not moral behaviour. The opportunity to do otherwise must present itself. This is temptation. A being who could not even suffer to be tempted would be a poor specimen of God's handiwork. But the true wisdom of God appears in this, that, though His creature falls, God is still able to achieve His original purpose through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, a redemption for which provisions are already beginning to be made in this chapter.

SESSION 22: THE FIRST TEMPTATION, PART TWO

Genesis 3:1-5

There is a character trait built into humans that we tend to assign to younger generations—perhaps only because their elders have learned how better to camouflage it in themselves. The young remain inartful in that regard.

Once again, Linda and I were watching a movie we hadn't for quite a while—this time the original *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, made in 1971. This trait I speak of was in full display in the character of one of the girls, Veruca Salt, a decidedly spoiled brat, whose favorite phrase was, “I want it *now!*” She didn't just demand everything from her rich daddy, she demanded it *right now!*

Not only is there nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9), but this unsavory character trait was displayed even in the earliest moments of humanity. As we see in the text before us, the serpent will hold out an irresistible carrot to the first woman and man. That carrot is revealed in v5; if the woman would just eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil their “eyes would be opened, and [they] will *be like God...*” Because that was indeed her heart's desire, she could not resist.

And it was perfectly natural for the indwelt serpent to offer this particular carrot, for it was precisely the fatal flaw in the character of his puppet master. Satan, like Adam and Eve, was one of God's creations. He began “good,” beautiful, one of the supreme archangels of heaven.

Read Ezekiel 28:14-15.

We discover the root of his downfall in this dual prophecy of both the King of Tyre and Satan in v1-2:

The word of Yahweh came again to me, saying, “Son of man,
say to the ruler of Tyre, ‘Thus says Lord Yahweh, “Because your
heart is lofty
And you have said, ‘I am a god;
I sit enthroned in the seat of gods
In the heart of the seas’;
Yet you are a man and not God,
Although you make your heart like the heart of God—””

Many today still suffer from that inherited desire. They want to “be like God,” but they do not want to wait for the lengthy and sometimes arduous process of sanctification—they want it *now*. Some want to be like God without bothering to do it through Christ; even some believers grow impatient with the process that will take their entire lives and *still* not be accomplished until they

see the Lord face to face. Why can't they be like Christ *now*? It is hard work doing it a bit at a time. Yet that is how we are to become like Christ, as the apostle Peter put it.

Read 1 Peter 1:13-16.*

I take it that Eve knew none of the backstory; she certainly knew nothing of sanctification in Christ Jesus. But Satan knew which button to push.

We can rightly find fault with Eve and Adam for their behavior, for their rebellion against God. But we should never permit that criticism to blind us to this fact: There is not a person in this room—there is not a person on this earth—who could not do the very same thing. Every person on earth has the very same rebellion simmering within their flesh. Adam and Eve are guilty of being the first—and guilty of setting stage for the rest of us—but every one of us could have done the same thing—indeed do, in smaller ways, every day. It is only by God's grace, and the lengthy sanctification process we are all part of, that we do not do it more often than we do.

Read Genesis 3:1-5.

vv2-3

In our last session I said, with regard to Eve's initial response to the serpent in vv2-3, "Give credit to Eve that her response is right on." Well, one must never stop studying God's word, for one will always discover additional nuances, new depths, that one may have missed before.

Let me put a question to you: **In verses 1-6, precisely when did The Fall occur? What was the initiating moment?**

What we are looking for is the "tipping point"—the precise moment when there would be no going back—or the moment of the first germ of rebellion and disobedience flowering in the first woman—she has not yet received her name; that will come later. Verses 2-3 reveal clues that that moment takes place earlier than we may have thought. And discovering this moment in the text may just reveal something about ourselves.

The scene begins with the serpent speaking to the woman. After reading this verse many, *many* times, I have concluded that the serpent is not meaning to trick the woman by splitting hairs, but is setting her up by making an obviously erroneous statement. He says, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" That is, *Did God make all the trees of the garden off-limits?*¹

I would contend that the serpent does this so that the woman will drop her guard, imagining him to just be misinformed, and offering her the opportunity to set him straight. In other words, he instills in her a false sense of security—

¹ The serpent/Satan cannot yet know the personal name of God (*Yahweh*), which reveals His covenant grace and fidelity to Israel and will first be revealed to Israel (and Moses the author of Genesis) as such in Exodus 3:14-15—although prior to that it will be used as just another title for God. Thus the serpent uses the only designation he has available: "God" (*elohim*).

* See also Philippians 2:12-13.

as well as a false sense of the serpent's dependency on her—not realizing the full force of what she is up against in this beast who is, in reality, the voice of Satan.

Alexander MacLaren: For it [temptation] begins with casting a doubt on the reality of the prohibition. 'Hath God said?' is the first parallel opened by the besieger. The fascinations of the forbidden fruit are not dangled at first before Eve, but an apparently innocent doubt is filtered into her ear. And is not that the way in which we are still snared? The reality of moral distinctions, the essential wrongness of the sin, is obscured by a mist of sophistication. "There is no harm in it" steals into some young man's or woman's mind about things that were forbidden at home, and they are half conquered before they know that they have been attacked.

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat"

At first glance what the woman says in reply seems right, but there are subtle, tell-tale differences between what she says and what God said. Here is what Yahweh God had said earlier to the first man in 2:16:

And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may surely eat."

So far, I would say this is a minor discrepancy, but she does leave out the all-encompassing "any." Even so, where is the immediate and emphatic defense of the gracious God who has surrounded His first couple with paradise, withholding nothing good from them? Could this reflect a subtle diminution within her of honor and respect for her Maker?

How many of *us* have "diplomatically" held our tongue when faced with disparagement of our God and Savior by unbelievers? How many of us have failed to energetically rise to His defense?²

...but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden..."

Satan's purpose, through the serpent, is what it always has been and remains today: to pull the believer away from his or her faith and trust in a holy and gracious God. He does this by placing doubt in the believer's mind. And he has already set the hook in the woman; by v3 she is already lying about what God said—at least twice, perhaps three times.

First, there are *two* special trees in "the midst" of the garden, the designations of which she leaves out.

And out of the ground Yahweh God caused to grow every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9)

² Leupold: "As soon as one does not wholeheartedly and unreservedly trust God, mistrust is gaining ground, and sin has entered."

God said, 'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it...'

Next she rightly (if she is referring to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) states that “they shall not eat from it.” What follows, however, is a blatant lie; nowhere does Yahweh God say “you shall not touch it.”

Read Revelation 22:18-19.

We can debate until the cows come home about whether or not the first man and woman ultimately make their way to eternity in heaven with God, but in this moment, the woman has turned away from Him. She is embellishing and lying about what God said—and on her way over to Satan’s side.

K&D: She added, “neither shall ye touch it,” and proved by this very exaggeration that it appeared too stringent even to her, and therefore that her love and confidence towards God were already beginning to waver. Here was the beginning of her fall: “for doubt is the father of sin, and [skepticism] the mother of all transgression; and in this father and this mother, all our present knowledge has a common origin with sin” (Ziegler).

...lest you die.”

Finally, now, the woman is truly off the rails. Note the difference between this and the original command in Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

“...you will surely die.”

The Hebrew in v2:17 (*mot tamut*; literally, “dying you will die”) makes it clear that Yahweh is saying, “you will certainly die” (as the NIV2011 has it). Just before, the woman exaggerated the restriction; now she diminishes the penalty by claiming that God said “lest you die.” Instead of *mot tamut*, now it is *pen tamutun*. Our various common versions are a mixed bag on this verse, some showing the difference, others making it sound as if the woman is simply repeating what God said (even in the NASB95!). But there is a big difference between the two. God said, “you will *surely* die,” while the woman says, essentially, “you *might* die.” The Hebrew *pen* means “otherwise you might, perhaps” (the archaic but accurate word is “perchance”).

By this point the woman need not take a bite from the fruit to prove she has gone over to the dark side. Thus we can conclude that she, by the end of v3, is already disobedient and false to what Yahweh God said, and she has fallen into the serpent’s (Satan’s) trap by questioning her trust in God’s veracity. In so doing, she is, even in these early moments of Creation, either forgetting or blatantly disregarding the generosity and grace Yahweh God has shown the first

couple in providing a bountiful paradise for them—not least, regular, face-to-face communion with the Creator of the universe. It is astonishing, coming so soon, but the same behavior (and timing) will be repeated—and repeatedly—with Israel in its Exodus from Egypt.

What we have here is a perfect picture of how evil, orchestrated by Satan, is insinuated into a believer's life. Satan is not God, but he is supernatural, once in the highest angelic echelon. He is an exquisite liar, casting into shade every politician, every dishonest used-car salesman, every door-to-door purveyor of Kirby Vacuums. He has been doing it for a very, *very* long time, and is rather good at it.

Satan begins quietly, seemingly innocent enough. In our mind he whispers, *Is that really what God's word says? Did He really mean you can't do even that sensible thing?*

We read God's word again, and maybe it sounds different this time—or maybe we just exchange one little word for another, a word more compatible with our desires and needs. *That sounds better now, doesn't it.* So we edge into disobedience, seemingly with the Lord's permission. And as a result, if even for just a moment, or an hour, or a day, we have shifted God out of our consciousness. Instead of being in the front of our mind, He has now been shoved into the background.

It occurs to me that when this happens in our life, along with seeking counsel from the New Testament it just might be profitable to read again the third chapter of Genesis. There is indeed nothing new under the sun. The desire to “be like God,” to claim total control over our lives, to answer to no one and change the rules more to our liking, was in the first woman and man, and it lives on today as strong and persistent as ever.

Then when we combine with that the additional human proclivity for wanting what we want now, rather than later, it makes for a toxic brew that works in our lives to exalt self over God, and the priorities of a fallen earth over the throne of grace.

When faced with these tensions, the advantage we have over the first woman, is that we have a Redeemer, a Savior, an Advocate—someone who stands *between* our transgressions and a holy God.

SESSION 23: THE FIRST TEMPTATION, PART THREE

Genesis 3:1-6

A CAUTIONARY NOTE

We ended class last week with many of us sharing a number of different thoughts on motives, on supposed communication between God and man, communication between man and woman in the garden, in an attempt for us to understand the written record of this first temptation.

There is nothing *inherently* wrong with such supposition; we probably do it, in our minds at least, every time we read God's word. But I want to raise a cautionary note—to *all* of us.

Let us be circumspect in our imaginings. Our God has graciously given us His written word, but beyond that He has determined what is *in* it—and *not* in it. He hasn't told us everything, and He has His reasons for that.¹

Let us be diligent to hold to what God has told us—not to what He hasn't. Now let's return to that text.

Read Genesis 3:1-6.

I am fascinated by the rhythm of this conversation between the serpent and the woman—especially regarding one point, even one word. In v2:17 God said, "...for in the day that you eat from it you will **surely** die." In v3:3 the woman claims that God said, "lest [**otherwise you might**] die." Then, remarkably, in v3:4 the serpent, speaking for Satan, retorts, "You **surely** will not die!" The serpent uses God's very word—*mot tamut*—this time in the negative (*not* surely die) to refute His very command. To employ a Yiddish term, that, my friends, is real *chutzpah*.

I have found, in my experience, that there is a reliable, almost textbook pattern to sinning by temptation—and we see it established right here in our text.

1. *God lays down His ruling:*

in v2:17 Yahweh God said, "...for in the day that you eat from it **you will surely die.**"

2. *The tempter introduces doubt:*

in v3:1 the serpent said, "Indeed, **has God said**, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

3. *The one being tempted hedges his or her bet:*

in v3:3 the woman answers, "...[God said,] 'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, lest [**otherwise you might**] die.'"

4. *The tempter declares God absolutely wrong:*

in v3:4 the serpent says to the woman, "You **surely will not die!**"

5. *The one being tempted is convinced by the tempter:*

in v3:6 the woman "took from [the tree's] fruit and ate."

¹ We all can probably recall instances in our experience of someone—perhaps even ourselves—citing "scripture" that is not really Scripture. My favorite is when a believer who had just lost his job sat in our living room and said to me, "Well, you know what the Bible says, 'God helps those who help themselves.'"

No, the Bible doesn't say that at all—in fact it says quite the opposite in a number of places.

vv4-5

And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die!
For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be
opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Before we go any further we need to establish what is meant by “in the day,” used both here in v5 by the serpent and back in v2:17 by God Himself. It can be confusing because God said, “for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Yet Adam lived for 930 years (Genesis 5:5). How do we reconcile this? Leupold explains it well.

Leupold (on v2:17): In this instance the expression *beyôm*, “in the day,” is to be taken very literally and not in the sense “at the time,” a meaning that would not fit here. For the thought actually to be expressed is the instantaneous occurrence of the penalty threatened... This at once raises the question, “Why was this penalty not carried out as threatened?” We answer: “It was, if the Biblical concept of dying is kept in mind, as it unfolds itself ever more clearly from age to age.” Dying is separation from God. That separation occurred the very moment, when man by his disobedience broke the bond of love. If physical death ultimately closes the experience, that is not the most serious aspect of the whole affair. The more serious is the inner spiritual separation.

The experience of humanity since Eden is actually the *reverse* of what happened to the first man and woman—but, of course, *because of* the choice they made and the consequences of that choice. Different from Adam and Eve, all human beings today are born “dying”; we are born corrupt and separated from God. We are dead. Only in Christ is that process reversed, transferred from the path of death to life in Him. Yet throughout it all, believer or no, we remain physically “alive” and breathing.

For what it’s worth, note the contrast between the woman’s feeble rejoinder to the serpent in vv2-3 and his energetic, vehement response in v4: “You surely will not die!” She does not rise to a strong defense of her Lord, but the serpent certainly does to his.

“You surely will not die!”

Only the LSB and NASB of our common versions word it this way, and more than one commentator explains how this is preferred. There is a subtle but important difference between “You surely will not die!” and “You will not surely die.” The latter seems to suggest, *You will not die completely*, while the former says, *You absolutely will not die*. And no matter how the words are arranged, it is this that the serpent is saying: *God has lied to you. You will absolutely not die if you eat from the tree.*

“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

In v4 the serpent lies through his teeth—if the serpent even has teeth. But in v5 he offers a mixed bag of truths and vague half-truths.

Note the irony in v5: As created, the man and woman were as close to being “God-like” as they could possibly be. They were without sin, in close communion with their Maker, and, since “death” will be introduced later with their fall, we can only assume they were created immortal—or at least, like Elijah, would not die but be “translated” into heaven while alive (2 Kings 2:11). But believing the serpent’s tempting words—“you will be like God”—they were instantly reduced to mere humans: *with* sin, having lost their regular communion with God, and destined to suffer and age and die like every human since.

The power of temptation is that there can be at least a glimmer of truth in it. Even in his disparaging of God’s motives the serpent is somewhat correct.

Read Genesis 3:22-24.

Their eyes *were* opened, as v7 attests: “And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked...” And they were suddenly aware that they were naked because they now knew good and evil. But it was in God’s *motives* that the serpent was wrong. As he paints it, God was being greedy, zealous to retain sole possession of such knowledge and godliness. Leupold says it well, “Such a charge attributes envy to God and makes Him appear as one who withholds good from His creatures lest they mount to heights reserved for Himself.”

Being evil, the serpent speaking for Satan does not recognize God’s true motive of love and protection. He doesn’t want the man and woman to be introduced to evil for *their* good, just as the reason parents will shield their small children from things evil and profane, for they know that then—even if the child is initially repulsed by what he has seen or heard—the demonic seed will have been planted: the knowledge of evil will have been implanted where it had not been before.

But also being evil, Satan wants humanity to experience the precipitous fall he experienced because of his own desire to “be like God.”

Read Isaiah 14:12-15.

Yet even acknowledging Satan’s supernatural power, we must not forget that temptation does not *force* us to sin; it simply *entices* us to sin. Boy, did James ever nail it:

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully matured, it brings forth death.
(James 1:14–15)

Satan through the serpent may have opened the door, but the woman and the man walked *through* that door because of their own unholy desires. We may wonder where that perverse desire came from, since they were created “good,” but then we can just as well wonder where and how that same desire came into the archangel Satan. We just do not know, other than it somehow percolated up from within themselves for, as James says in his v13,

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Luther: It was an awful step into sin for Eve to turn from God and his Word and to lend her ears to Satan. But this her next step is more awful; for she now agrees with Satan, while he charges God with falsehood, and as it were smites him in the face. Eve therefore now is no longer the woman merely turned away from God, as in the first stage of her temptation. She now begins to join Satan in his contempt of God and in his denial of the truth of his Word. She now believes the father of lies, directly contrary to the Word of God.

v6

Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, so she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Do we not see the evidence here that the woman has already fallen from the presence and influence of God even before she takes the first bite? Here is the description of someone who is seeing something “as if for the first time.” This is not a picture of someone in the early, entrancing moments of sin, but one in whom sin is fully developed, one entirely engrossed in its contemplation (Leupold).

Look at the words used to describe the tree: it “was good for food,” “a delight to the eyes,” it “was desirable to make one wise.” *What could be wrong about this? I want this. I need this. It’s right for me. My wife doesn’t understand me. My husband no longer loves me. It’s not stealing if I truly need it.*

It all began right here, right in these early moments of Creation. It is not a sin to be tempted; the sin is in *believing* the lie and acting upon it.

...so she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

We don’t know how much time passed between vv21-24 of Chapter Two and v6 of Chapter Three, but the impression we get from Moses’ narrative is that it was not much. We are told nothing of their daily lives, their conversations, their discoveries in the natural world, their joys and sorrows, their frustrations and victories.

If this were a novel or a play we would say that the characters are poorly developed. This happens, then this happens, then they are booted out of the scene. But this is not a novel or play; it is God's word setting the stage for the need for the Law, and later, redemption in Christ. We don't need to know what they ate for breakfast; we only need to know that they were created "good" and sinless, but in very little time they believed the serpent over against the goodness and generosity of Yahweh God.

That is sufficiently tragic in itself, but what is especially tragic is that there seems to be very little time between that wondrous moment when God presents the woman to the man—

And Yahweh God fashioned the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman, and He brought her to the man.
(Genesis 2:22)

—and their mutual descent into corruption and rebellion against their Maker and Father as the woman proffers the forbidden fruit to her husband—and he takes it.

K&D: Doubt, unbelief, and pride were the roots of the sin of our first parents, as they have been of all the sins of their posterity. The more trifling the object of their sin seems to have been, the greater and more difficult does the sin itself appear; especially when we consider that the first men "stood in a more direct relation to God, their Creator, than any other man has ever done, that their hearts were pure, their discernment clear, their intercourse with God direct, that they were surrounded by gifts just bestowed by Him, and could not excuse themselves on the ground of any misunderstanding of the divine prohibition, which threatened them with the loss of life in the event of disobedience" (Delitzsch). Yet not only did the woman yield to the seductive wiles of the serpent, but even the man allowed himself to be tempted by the woman.

SESSION 24: AND THEN, SHAME

Genesis 3:6-7

Read Genesis 3:6.

Let us step back from the minute details of the passage before us, to consider for a moment its simplicity. Though Yahweh God knows His future plans for humanity, the two *first* humans are ignorant of all that. As yet there is no (Mosaic) Law, no Ten Commandments, no details about Levitical regulations for sacrifice and atonement; there is no Messiah to be the once and final sacrifice for sin, but who will also bring His own commandments for righteous behavior (John 14). This scene is pre-Law and pre-gospel; there is no written word of God to be dissected and argued by man.

Here we have just two, solitary human beings given verbal instructions by their Maker. It is a very simple and direct relationship, without the clutter of scholarship and interpretation. The first man is told by the One who has just created him, along with everything else he sees around him, that if he eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he “will surely die.” Subsequently the woman, unaware that he speaks for Satan, is told by just another of the created creatures that if she eats from the tree she “surely will not die.”

We can debate what the *woman* knew of Yahweh’s command, but we cannot do the same for the man; he had full knowledge of what the Creator had said. So the man made a clear, informed choice to disobey the God of his creation—his Father, as it were—and obey the created serpent.

...she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

There were not yet any moral grays in the world—only blacks and whites. The man and woman chose black. When we digest this fateful scene, along with others such as the fall of Satan himself, we can only recognize the evidence that all created beings—humans, angels, beasts of the field, et al—do indeed have instilled in them from their moment of creation *hekousios*, free will (Philemon 1:14). They are God-created good—“very good” (Genesis 1:31)—yet with the inherent ability to make wrong—even evil—decisions.

“with her”

Before we move on to v7 I would like to draw our attention to two small words near the end of v6. My guess is that most of us have typically pictured the scene roughly this way: The woman is one day out wandering about the garden by herself and comes across a serpent who opens a dialogue with her. They converse for a while, and the result is that Eve takes fruit from the tree and bites into it. Just about then the man happens by, and the woman offers some of the fruit to him, which he eats.

It is possible that most of us, after the apostle Paul, have understood that the man bears the guilt for this sin because he was the woman's corporate head.

Read Romans 5:12-14.

Our text says, simply, "she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." The ESV and NIVs add, "who was with her" (emphasis added), which hints at a different arrangement of the scene.

Matthew Henry: She gave also to her husband with her. It is probable that he was not with her when she was tempted (*surely, if he had, he would have interposed to prevent the sin*), but came to her when she had eaten, and was prevailed upon by her to eat likewise. (emphasis added)

What evidence do we have that Henry's supposition might be true? None whatsoever. In fact, we have considerable evidence to the contrary. If the first man, being there, would have "prevent[ed] the sin," he surely would have refused the offer of the fruit from his mate!

There is nothing in the text to preclude the man being there all along—"with her" as the ESV and NIVs suggest. And if so, this would make a rather powerful statement about Adam (2:20). I have long marveled at the humility, faith, and trust in God exhibited by another "husband"—Joseph the betrothed of Mary. What a guy, what a beautiful example for every husband, willingly giving of himself to protect his "wife." But if Adam was with the first woman all along, during the temptation of the serpent, he exhibited just the opposite.

- If he was there, why didn't he stop her?
- Why didn't he speak up for the law of his Lord and Maker?
- Why didn't he protect his wife from suffering the consequences of such a betrayal?
- And why did he silently—*silently*—go along with it?

What a wimp.

Something Paul wrote to Timothy leads some to think that Adam was held to account *solely* because he was the woman's corporate head. That it was all the woman's fault.

Read 1 Timothy 2:12-14.

Verse 14 says only that "it was not Adam who was deceived"; that not only does not mean he was blameless, it suggests a deeper level of culpability in him. *He wasn't deceived*; when he took a bite from the fruit he knew *exactly* what he was doing. The woman may have ignorantly bought into the serpent's lie, but Adam's act was one of naked rebellion against Yahweh God.¹

¹ I freely confess that my suggestions—I would not call them "positions"—regarding how long Adam accompanied Eve at the tree, and the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:14 are not necessarily mainstream. Most commentators posit different interpretations. However, I am convinced the text allows for my interpretations.

Read Genesis 3:7.

Leupold considers this “one of the saddest anticlimaxes of history,” then quotes a commentator, “they eat, they expect marvelous results, they wait—and there grows on them the sense of shame” (Procksch).

Note the contrast between vv1-6 and v7: The first six verses—and especially v6 itself—focus on the woman exclusively until the very end of v6. Verse 6 has “Then the woman,” “so she took from its fruit,” and “she gave also to her husband.” But then in v7 suddenly—but naturally, since both have now sinned—they are united in the result of their mutual sin, in their actions following, and in their mutual shame.²

How are we to define this sudden sense of shame? Where does it come from? Where stems the impetus for their need to cover themselves—and to specifically cover their sexual organs? We need to be careful with this, since too many commentators make assumptions that the text does not seem to support.

² I must admit that the contrast between vv1-6, with its focus on the woman, and v7 can easily lead one to conclude that the man is nowhere to be found in the scene until the end of v6.

And the eyes of both of them were opened,

The Hebrew for eyes, *ene* (eyene), is the word for the physical eyes, but I think we can safely take this to mean something more expansive than simply that the man and woman’s eyesight was improved. Remember what the serpent told the woman in v5: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Alexander MacLaren: The promise of knowing good and evil was indeed kept, but instead of its making the sinners ‘like gods,’ it showed them that they were like beasts, and brought the first sense of shame. To know evil was, no doubt, a forward step intellectually; but to know it by experience, and as part of themselves, necessarily changed their ignorant innocence into bitter knowledge, and conscience awoke to rebuke them. The first thing that their opened eyes saw was themselves, and the immediate result of the sight was the first blush of shame. Before, they had walked in innocent unconsciousness, like angels or infants; now they had knowledge of good and evil, because their sin had made evil a part of themselves, and the knowledge was bitter.

What the serpent held out as a carrot was intellectual enlightenment; what the man and woman got instead was an injection of moral degeneracy. Now they knew that they had once been innocent—“good”—but were now evil. A poor bargain.

...and they knew that they were naked;

What has just happened here? What is the nature of this change in the first man and woman? We must answer this question, for Adam and his wife

³ Bless Yahweh, O my soul!
O Yahweh my God,
You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor
and majesty,
Wrapping Yourself with light
as with a cloak,
Stretching out the heavens like
a tent curtain.

were created with a nature utterly different from our own, from the nature with which we were born.

Citing passages such as Psalm 104:1-2,³ some, such as Donald Barnhouse, contend that prior to the Fall, the man and woman were actually clothed in light: “It is more than probable that they were clothed in light before the fall, and when they sinned the light went out.” I reject this utterly. There is little difference between one’s nakedness being covered by light and by fig leaves; both are coverings, and the point of the scene is destroyed. Prior to the Fall a covering was not necessary:

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not
ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)

The man and woman were created righteous, sublimely innocent—the very opposite of how man and woman will be born after them. They knew no other way, unabashedly walking the paths of the garden with God, who likewise was not offended by their naked state. There was nothing in their naked state to produce shame, thus nothing that required a covering—even of light.

No, the point of this verse is that physically nothing had changed. One moment they were naked and *unashamed*, the next (after consuming the fruit), they were naked and ashamed. What changed in that fatal instant was their *nature*, and hence, their apprehension of their own bodies.

While it is true that the fallen Adam and Eve are closer to us than they were before the Fall, we must constantly restrain ourselves from interpreting this scene in the garden by our contemporary standards. Just as the first man and woman in their created innocence knew nothing of shame, we know nothing *but* shame. Barnhouse wants to claim that, of course, they had to have some sort of covering before the Fall. Well, no, they didn’t. They were as physically naked as we would be—even before holy God!—and everybody was fine with that. They knew nothing else.

Verses 6 and 7 are the turning point for all that—a turning point that will change not only Adam and Eve, but all creation.

...and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Some commentators, wondering *why* the man and woman now specifically cover their sexual organs, rather than some other region of their bodies, once again interpret from *our* perspective and experience instead of theirs. For example, Leupold writes,

That the sense of shame should concentrate itself around that portion of the body which is marked by the organs of generation, no doubt has its deeper reason in this that man instinctively feels that the very fountain and source of human life is contaminated by sin. The very act of generation is tainted by sin.

But whether or not the man and woman have heretofore engaged in sexual relations, there has been no issue. We have no basis to conclude that they, at this point, would associate the sexual act with childbearing—unless, of course, they had observed it in the animals about them.

Others, such as Keil and Delitzsch, disagree with that, and assign the action to a more spiritual or psychological impetus.

K&D: It was here that the consciousness of nakedness first suggested the need of covering, not because the fruit had poisoned the fountain of human life, and through some inherent quality had immediately corrupted the reproductive powers of the body... nor because any physical change ensued in consequence of the fall; but because, with the destruction of the normal connection between soul and body through sin, the body ceased to be the pure abode of a spirit in fellowship with God, and in the purely natural state of the body the consciousness was produced not merely of the distinction of the sexes, but still more of the worthlessness of the flesh; so that the man and woman stood ashamed in each other's presence, and endeavoured to hide the disgrace of their spiritual nakedness, by covering those parts of the body through which the impurities of nature are removed.

This seems like a better approach. And at first I discounted that last line about "... covering those parts of the body through which the impurities of nature are removed," but in our conversation about this Linda reminded me of the passages that contain two dictates set down by Yahweh to Israel regarding the clothing for the priesthood and the location of camp latrines.

Read Exodus 28:42-43.

Similarly He states in Exodus 20:26 that "You shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it." Finally, the camp of the Israelites was to be kept holy since Yahweh walked there.

Read Deuteronomy 23:12-14.

With the introduction of sin into the lives of the first man and woman, their shame may have been informed by their new, tortured relationship with Yahweh God. K&D may be correct about that.

Most commentators I read want to associate their making of coverings with a newfound shame *between the man and woman*—but I disagree. I am not convinced that their ultimate motivation is to cover themselves *from each other*, but that something within them—spiritual, psychological, an emergence of the conscience—now drove them to cover themselves *before God*. That is, in their

sin, they were now cognizant of a change in their relationship with Him—as we see played out more tangibly in v8. I wonder if it might have been, in their now-fallen state, an impetus similar to what occurs within me on very hot and humid days in the summer, when my articles of clothing at home might be at a minimum. While I am without shame in the environment of our own home, if I am going to go into my prayer closet to commune with God, I am compelled to add more covering. For me in that moment it feels presumptuous and disrespectful to sit there in my skivvies before my God.

So as pertains to Adam and Eve, I interpret v7 as a preamble to v8.

Whatever the details of their newly realized sense of shame, what is clearly evident is that the man and woman are now changed—and not at all for the better.

SESSION 25: FEAR

Genesis 3:7-10

We are now past the moment of “the Fall.” In our previous session we examined the actions of the first couple, and the immediate, tragic results of their rebellion against Yahweh God. In the passage before us these two individuals were learn the cosmic consequences of their misguided choice: believing the lies of the serpent over the commands of their Creator.

At the end of our last session I concluded that the seemingly reflex decision of the man and woman to cover their genitals was *not* because of a new-found shame *between the man and woman*, but that something within them—spiritual, psychological, an emergence of the conscience—now drove them to cover themselves before *God*. That is, in their new experience of sin, they were now cognizant of a change in their relationship with their Maker—as we see played out more tangibly in v8.

I concluded, as well, that as pertains to Adam and Eve, I interpret v7 as a preamble to—a glide-slope into, as it were—v8.

Read Genesis 3:7.

Read Genesis 3:8-13.

v8

We stand amazed at the sudden reversal of fortune that has occurred in the garden. It seems just mere moments before that the man and woman were in close fellowship with Yahweh God; now they flee from His presence.

I have no doubt that Moses, like any chronicler, compresses time for the sake of the narrative. This does not mean he presents a false picture with his Eden narrative; much as other writers in God’s word, he just does not include every last detail of every event that transpires during those early days. So it is incumbent upon us to realize that the time span may be broader than is suggested by the text.

Even with that in mind, it has been an abrupt reversal, and we are left saddened by the tragedy of it all. Everything so far in Chapter Three has transpired before the first couple have any children, and before the first woman is even given a name!¹

So I doubt we are talking about decades here—or even many years.

¹ The man is first named “Adam” (which is synonymous with the word “man”) in 2:20. The woman is given her name, by her husband, in 3:20. “Eve” means literally living, life—hence, “because she was the mother of all the living.”

Then they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,

The words in this first portion of the verse are a bit tricky, leading to a variety of subtle interpretations—although our common versions are in general agreement: “they heard the sound of...,” and “in the cool of the day.”

The word translated “sound” (“voice” in the KJV) is the Hebrew *qol*, which is commonly used for not just the sound of the human voice, but the sound made by just about any creature, from birds to water buffaloes. But it can also be used for the sound of inanimate objects, such as the high priest’s robe in Exodus 28:35.

“You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet material, all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe. “It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its **sound*** shall be heard when he comes into the holy place before Yahweh and when he goes out, so that he will not die.”
(Exodus 28:33–35)

The word translated “cool” of the day is a familiar word we have seen before, *ruach*, literally breeze, wind, breath—the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *pneuma*. Most take this to be a reference to the late afternoon of the day in the Middle East, when the wind kicks up. Others, however, say this is not a reference to a time of day, but a reference to the nature, or *presentation* of Yahweh in this moment—akin to Job 38:1.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
“Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?” (Job 38:1–2)

Whether it is the Lord God’s voice or the sound of his footsteps on the garden path, whether it occurs during the breezy, cooler portion of the day or is another reference to God’s manifestation to them, the more important take-away is that v8 makes clear that this is how the man and woman have been communing with Yahweh.

Leupold: The almost casual way in which this is remarked indicates that this did not occur for the first time just then. The assumption that God had repeatedly done this is quite feasible.

Let us take a few moments to consider what is happening here (and, presumably, had occurred before)—specifically, *How is Yahweh God (Yahweh Elohim) presenting Himself to the man and woman?* If God is manifesting Himself to them in physical form, then we call this a *theophany*, a physical appearance of

* NASB: “tinkling”

God—or even *a* god—to man. Thus the various appearances of the preincarnate Son of God in the OT were theophanies.

This phenomenon is not without its mysteries. Moses writes, in Exodus 33:11, that “Yahweh used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” Yet, even though the apostle John references Moses in v17 of his epistle’s first chapter, he goes on to state in v18, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” Ronald B. Allen† addresses this in his commentary on Numbers 12:8.

Allen: To other prophets God may speak in a variety of ways... But to Moses there is a one-on-one relationship. Only Moses could approach the holy mountain and gaze on the Divine Person. What we are to make of these words is somewhat uncertain, given the language of mystery in the Hebrew Bible and the denial in the NT that anyone ever saw God at any time (John 1:18). At the very least, these words speak of an unprecedented level of intimacy between God and Moses.

John 1:18 states, “No one has seen God at any time.” In reference to that statement, D. A. Carson writes, “Apparent exceptions are always qualified in some way.” The few “apparent exceptions” in Scripture never state plainly that a human being has seen Yahweh God *in His native state*.

I conclude that what we have in Genesis 1-3 is either the preincarnate second member of the Godhead, or a manifestation of Father God peculiar (i.e., unique) to these early days of Creation. Whether that be a flesh and blood person or a glowing orb, who can say. Remember, this is not His first appearance; they would include (but not necessarily be limited to)

- God creating and speaking to the first humans (1:27-30);
- The detailed, “hands-on” creation of Adam (2:7);
- His setting of man in the garden and issuing His commands about the trees (2:15-17);
- His bringing the animals to Adam for naming (2:19-20);
- and when He presented the woman to Adam (2:22).

Whatever shape Yahweh God took for this fellowship, we can also place this in the category of worship: subservient man meeting, in humility, with God. And thus, in this precise moment, that fellowship—that worship—has been broken.

Adam Clarke: The time for this solemn worship is again come, and God is in his place; but Adam and Eve have sinned, and therefore, instead of being found in the place of worship, are hidden among the trees!
Reader, how often has this been thy case! (emphasis added)

† (as of 1990) Professor of Hebrew Scripture, Western Baptist Seminary.

We will return to Clarke's last line in a few minutes.

...and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God in the midst of the trees of the garden.

Clarke speaks as well to the dramatic change that has just come over the first man.

Clarke: A short time before Adam was so wise that he could name all the creatures brought before him, according to their respective natures and qualities; now he does not know the first principle concerning the Divine nature, that it knows all things, and that it is omnipresent, therefore he endeavors to hide himself among the trees from the eye of the all-seeing God! How astonishing is this! When the creatures were brought to him he could name them, because he could discern their respective natures and properties; when Eve was brought to him he could immediately tell what she was, who she was, and for what end made, though he was in a deep sleep when God formed her; and this seems to be particularly noted, merely to show the depth of his wisdom, and the perfection of his discernment. But alas! how are the mighty fallen! Compare his present with his past state, his state before the transgression with his state after it; and say, is this the same creature? the creature of whom God said, as he said of all his works, He is very good—just what he should be, a living image of the living God; but now lower than the beasts of the field?

It is astonishingly easy to read this account—just as we read the accounts of the temperamental Israelites constantly whining and complaining to Moses—and for us to cluck our tongues at the first man and woman. *Of course you're cowering in fear; you disobeyed Yahweh's explicit command! What do you expect? Why did you listen to the serpent?*

But we return to Clarke's line: "*Reader, how often has this been thy case!*" My guess is that no one reading this should throw stones.

How many times have we sinned against God and shunned His presence? How many times have we avoided prayer, set aside the reading of God's word, because our hearts have been darkened by some form of rebellion against Him? Would not we too, sensing His presence near, have cowered in fear behind the trees?

For years I have kept near my chair in my prayer closet a small piece of paper containing words of rebuke and consolation for times such as this—those times we feel too dirty to approach our God. The counsel is from our local pastor, probably written for an early Pastor's Pen article. Let me pass along just a few lines I have highlighted—although every word of the article is precious to me.

Pastor Jeremy: These fears not only keep me from the throne of grace, they are rooted in a deep slander of the person and character of God. When I find myself feeling this way, like a dog cowering in the corner with its tail between its legs, it is because I do not believe this wonderful truth about my Savior... [that He] suffered and was tempted (in part) to fully enable Him to sympathize with us in our weakness, and to offer us help when we most need it... Never, no never, will the one who trusts in Christ ever be turned away from Him when He comes in faith and repentance... When we least deserve to be in His presence, let us boldly draw near by faith to our sympathetic Savior and High Priest—not because of who we are but because of who He is and what He has done for those who trust Him.

It is true, of course, that Adam and his wife did not have that advantage of a “sympathetic Savior and High Priest,” an Advocate who had shed His own blood so that we would be forgiven our transgressions. Because they do not, these two will experience immediate judgment for their sin; they do not have what even Job cried out for, an “adjudicator between us” (Job 9:32-33).

To wrap up our discussion of v8, we might answer Clarke’s ruminations about the change in Adam with this: *Sin* made Adam stupid.

v9

Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Not for one moment do we imagine that God is literally searching for the absent man, as in, *Where, oh where are you, Adam?* I tend to think a more accurate paraphrase of this verse would be, *What have you done that you are hiding from Me, Adam?* or even the more succinct, *Show yourself, Adam.*

Leupold: God is not seeking information. God’s questions are pedagogic. Man is to be made to realize that something must be radically wrong when the creature, who hitherto had his chief delight in associating with the good and loving Father, slinks away in hiding under the trees deep in the garden.

v10

And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

Even though I appreciate (and favor) the more generic “sound” over “voice” in verses 8 and 10, I also appreciate that “Thy voice” has the first emphasis in v10, and just sounds silly when rendered, as in *Young’s Literal Translation*, “Thy sound I have heard in the garden...” Nonetheless I favor the translation

² I also like the NIVs' simple "I heard you in the garden..." for the same reason.

"sound" for it leaves it open to either interpretation: a voice can utter a sound, and a footfall or one brushing past tree limbs can produce a sound.² But, again, this is not the most important takeaway from this verse.

To Yahweh's rhetorical query Adam replies, "...I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Which doesn't answer the question, does it, but reinforces the idea that what Yahweh is actually asking is, *Why are you hiding from me?*

Adam's response is "a compound of half-truth, evasion, and attempted deception" (Leupold). He had never before been afraid to be naked before his God; what has changed?

Sin.³

³ Leupold: "One cannot but marvel at what a wreck of his former good self man has become. The damage wrought by sin is almost incomprehensibly great. The tongue of man can hardly describe it, except where inspired utterances like those of this chapter lie before us. Here is one of the most telling indictments, of the viciousness and supreme sinfulness of sin."

SESSION 26: EXCUSES

Genesis 3:9-13

It is very often a good idea to include in one's study of a passage in God's word at least a moment where one backs away, squints a little, and considers the passage in a larger context. Monday morning, as I read once again the passage before us, I was struck by how perfectly—in concert with the Creation narrative thus far—it illustrates the folly of this fallen world, even today, to turn its back on its Creator.¹

The passage before us exquisitely illustrates the contrast between living in harmony and peace with God—and rejecting Him for the world's system. Just imagine the difference for the first man, and later, first woman: dwelling in exquisite harmony not just with their environment—the verdant garden, and the creatures that shared it with them—but with Yahweh God, their Creator and Lord of *all* Creation. Beyond this, they were at peace with—indeed we might safely assume *reveled* in—*each other*. It was a perfect, happy, peaceable existence in a paradise.

But they were not satisfied with this. They thought they should have more. And the beguiling serpent, in service to his master Satan, held out to them the tempting promise of that which they desired: to be like God. Consider the paradox here:

- They were *already*, in their created state, closer to “god-like” than any human being that would follow;
- they were created pleasantly ignorant of sin, but would now, being like God, know all about it (as does He)—and now practice it;
- they surely imagined that this newfound knowledge would be layered on top of everything else they possessed, but instead, it was an *exchange*: they lost all they had—peace with God, peace with their environment (3:17-19), even peace with each other—all in exchange for a new knowledge that would explain and reinforce their rebellion: the knowledge of good and evil (2:17).

Here is an epic, Shakespearean tragedy writ large. And in the passage before us we see being played out the fresh loss of peace between the man and woman.

Read Genesis 3:9-13.

vv9-10

Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹ If it did not have such dire, eternal consequences, it would be almost laughable: our society and culture today spend an inordinate amount of time denying and railing against a God who they claim has no relevance for their lives—if He even exists at all! Then, who is it you are constantly fighting against?

Here we have the first recorded words of the first man—and it is a lie, or, at best, a half-truth. I have no doubt that his nakedness did indeed present a new-found discomfort in the presence of his Maker. But that's not the half of it—and certainly not the root of his shame. Adam's shame and fear are the result of his *disobedience*—not the absence of pants. (Besides, by v8 they *do* have “pants” [loin coverings] on.)

In another sense, however, his fear *does* stem from his nakedness—a *spiritual* nakedness he has never known before. Hearing Yahweh in the garden instantly reveals to Adam all that has now been stripped off him: sweet fellowship with Yahweh, His counsel, His Spirit. Having lost all that he has been reduced to mere flesh—sinful flesh—without any covering of holiness.

As Adam should know by now, *hiding* from God is as futile as lying to God; both are of no value, and a waste of time. He always knows where we are and what is in our heart.

v11

And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Once again, Yahweh is not asking a question so as to discover the answer, but He is giving the first man and woman an opportunity to do the right thing. In the OT especially there is a connection between confession and “giving glory to God,” to the point that they become synonymous. Perhaps the best example of this is found in the book of Joshua, and the story about the cause of Israel's defeat at Ai: the sin of Achan. When it was discovered by casting lots that Achan's disobedience was the cause of Israel's defeat, Joshua confronted him.

Read Joshua 7:19-21.

Achan and his family were executed for this sin, but God received glory and praise because of Achan's forthright confession.

In v11 Adam and his wife are given the opportunity to “give glory to God,” to honor Him by confessing their disobedience; in fact, God prompts them with the actual sin, but once again they fail miserably. Yahweh's first question—“Who told you that you were naked?”—is not answered. Adam does answer the second—sort of.

v12

And the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.”

Wow. It is apparent from the start that we do *not* have another Achan here—someone willing to confess his wrong and accept his punishment. Adam is not about to take responsibility for anything that has brought the first couple

before the court of Yahweh. There is no humility, no sorrow, no shame, no sense of guilt. There is not even a hint of a husband manly taking the hit for his wife—quite the opposite: the first man turns on *her*, as we would say today, throwing her under the bus. But that is actually not the worst of his response.

“The woman whom You gave to be with me...”

The most egregious aspect of Adam’s response is that he first blames Yahweh God! It is *His* fault because He is the one who gave Adam the wrong woman!

Leupold: It is a reply that offers further evidence of the complete corruption and contamination of all of man’s nature by his sin. It is a reply that in cowardly fashion refuses to admit plain guilt and in an entirely loveless fashion lays the blame for it all first on his wife and then by a wicked charge upon God Himself.

As we noted in our previous session, sin makes one stupid, and often makes us, like Adam, hide from God instead of rushing toward Him. Martin Luther agrees: “The very nature of sin is that it will not suffer the mind to flee unto God, but instead compels it to flee from God.”

Once again, however, we can see the benefit (a rather sad and inadequate noun) of having Christ Jesus in our life. Although there are rare exceptions in the OT of confession answered by grace—King David, for one (Psalm 32:5)—it is with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that we are told, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Adam did not have that promise, so his first reaction is to hide and deny any responsibility for his actions. Absent a holy Advocate, the best he can hope for is to improve his chances by casting blame upon others—*holy God*, no less! And Yahweh does not waste time bandying words with a fool;² God will deal with him when comes time for the verdict. For now, however, He moves on to the woman.

² Or as La Boeuf says to Mattie Ross in the original *True Grit*, “You’ve done nothing when you’ve bested a fool.”

v13

Then Yahweh God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The contagion of blame-passing spreads as Yahweh interrogates the woman. She can’t point upward to Adam, so she points downward to the serpent. I suppose she could have, like Adam, pointed upward to Yahweh, saying something like, *The serpent You created deceived me...*, but she doesn’t. (Maybe she is really the smarter of the two.) Nonetheless she shirks responsibility, as if the serpent force-fed her the fruit.

As we have discussed before, 1 Timothy 2:14, which reads, “And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass,” does not heap all blame on the woman; it suggests a deeper level of culpability in the man. The man wasn’t deceived; when he took a bite from the fruit he knew *exactly* what he was doing. The woman may have ignorantly bought into the serpent’s lie, but Adam’s act was one of naked rebellion against Yahweh God. Leupold’s wise remark applies to both the man and woman:

Man can never bring a good case into God’s presence as long as his own works are being considered.

Yet, Eve’s statement is correct: She was indeed deceived by the serpent. Does this let her off the hook? Hardly—no more than it would us.

It can rightly be said that it is not sin to be tempted, only to give *in to* the temptation. But that is a simplistic way of looking at it—akin to saying “once saved always saved.” On the face of it, neither aphorism is untrue, but there is more to it than that. Either may be sufficient for the babe in Christ, but for the maturing adult, there is a much deeper context that needs to be known.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:2-4.

On one level, Eve was beguiled by the serpent’s (Satan’s) temptation for the same reason we often are. Like the Corinthians, we live in a time and place where it is considered laudable to be open-minded, to be tolerant of a vast parade of philosophies and beliefs. We can’t know for sure about Eve, but she may have thought, *Well now, this sounds reasonable. Let’s hear what this guy has to say.* And there is the first mistake. As Paul told the church, we are “betrothed to one husband,” and should not be sampling—or even considering—the merits of others. When we do this, we have just taken on some of the responsibility for the ensuing temptation. We have invited it.

If we send our teenager to Berkeley, we cannot claim innocence if she comes back a Marxist; if we send our teenager to Columbia, we cannot be surprised if he comes back a supporter of Islamic terrorism. If we voluntarily listen to or read heresy—i.e., a “different spirit,” a “different gospel”—we cannot claim innocence when our faith is then corrupted.

Eve listened. She kept listening. She indulged in a dialogue with the tempter. In the language of 2 Corinthians 11:4, she *bore the serpent’s words beautifully*.

The apostle John tells us to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). His injunction is that we not “believe” them. True enough, but the prophet Jeremiah takes it a step further, words which Eve, had she been created at a time to have known them, would have done well to heed.

Let's close with the words of Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 29:8-9.

Don't listen to the deceiver. Don't even give his words the time of day. Paul told the Corinthians and Timothy to "flee" from such things.* James turns it around and tells us to "Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and *he* will *flee from you*"† (emphasis added).

What are we to do?

First, *know* God—know His word, know His ways, know Him. Know Him so well that we can instantly spot a fake and a deceiver.

Second, don't listen, don't graciously give them a respectful hearing.

Third, flee.

* 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14.

† James 4:7

SESSION 27: JUDGMENT, PART ONE

Genesis 3:14-19

PREFACE

On the surface of the text, Yahweh God has been interrogating the participants in this tragic drama. In truth His purpose has not been to gather information heretofore unknown to Him, but to see how each actor will respond—to arouse a sense of guilt by a series of pedagogic questions” (Leupold). Would God’s judgment upon them, which we will see in the text before us, have softened if they had crumbled in humility before Him, confessing their sin and pleading His forgiveness? We’ll never know, since their response to His questioning was quite the opposite: prideful, even blasphemous blame-shifting, and denial of any personal responsibility.

So we are now ready to hear God’s individual verdicts for their behavior in this sad affair.

The serpent: vv14-15

The woman: v16

The man: v17-19

Read Genesis 3:14-19.

Several questions can be raised by the respective judgments:

- Does “on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat” mean that prior to this the serpent did *not* move about on his belly?
- Would childbirth have been painless absent Eve’s transgression?
- Would the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife have been different without Adam and the woman’s sin?
- Would “thorns and thistles”—i.e., weeds—have not been an issue for farmers and gardeners absent the curse of v17?

We will see if we can find answers for some of these in the text before us.

I take it that there is an ascending order to Yahweh’s three verdicts. The man Adam bears the greatest responsibility—both personal and corporate—so he will be addressed third and last, and the longest. The woman comes second. The serpent is addressed first, and almost dismissively; note that Yahweh did not even bother to question him.

The order of the narrative reflects the order of the individual’s actions, but the ascending order and assigned weight of responsibility, seems to reflect, first, man’s rule over the animal kingdom.

Read Genesis 1:26.

Second, here is laid the foundation for the God-ordained family structure the apostle Paul speaks of.

Read Ephesians 5:22-24.

Paul then balances this with instructions for the husband.

Read Ephesians 5:25-28a.

Thus the earth-bound relationship between husband and wife is to reflect the universal relationship between Christ and His church. And we see the beginnings of this in Yahweh's verdict cast upon this trio of sinners. John Sailhamer makes what I believe to be an excellent point.

Sailhamer: The thoughts of the snake, if there were such, or the thoughts of the man and woman are left completely out of the picture. The narrative gives nothing to help understand their plight as individuals. The snake, the woman, and the man are not depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather they are representatives. We are left with the impression that this is not their story so much as it is *our* story, the story of mankind. With great skill the author presents these three participants as the “heads” of their race. The snake, on the one hand, and the man and the woman, on the other, are as two great nations embarking on a great struggle, a struggle that will find its conclusion only by an act of some distant “seed” or “offspring.”

As Sailhamer points out, it doesn't really matter that we know so little about these three individuals:

- What was the serpent's means of locomotion prior to this?
- What color was the woman's hair?
- What age did Adam appear to be?
- What “race” were the humans? What was the color of their skin?

None of that matters, for in the scope of God's biblical narrative—Genesis to The Revelation—each of these three are representing something—indeed, many things—larger than themselves.

Here we have the establishment of “the curse”—the condition and environment under which every one of us was brought into this world. Often the words “fall” and “curse” are used interchangeably for the events of Chapter Three, but they are separate. Man's *fall* from grace occurred at the moment of their disobedience: the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here in this passage, vv14-19, is when God pronounces His *curse* upon the serpent, man and woman, and the earth itself, as the *result* of their fall.

v14: THE SERPENT

*And Yahweh God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than any of the cattle,
And more than every beast of the field...”*

¹ For some inexplicable reason Leupold says the serpent is a “she,” but the verbs and pronouns are all masculine singular.

The first to be cursed—*arur* (ah-RAHR)—is the instigator of this tragedy, the serpent.¹ There is a bit of word-play going with that word translated “cursed”: in v1 the serpent was called “crafty,” or “clever” (*arum*) now he is cursed (*arur*), which means that God is reviling him, denouncing him, abhorring him, which is termed an *execration*. In one sense we might see this—the serpent’s now cursed state—as the polar opposite of holiness. He may have been created pure, sinless; now he is consigned to the bowels of evil.

But we must not forget that the serpent is simply the agent for Satan—not just in what he performs in his name, but as the immediate recipient of his lord’s punishment, which we will see more clearly in the next verse.

*On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;*

There are a couple of ways to interpret this second part of v14, the difference between them being the level of, shall we say, “cursedness.”

Some commentators say that the emphasis here is not on being on his belly; that may not be a part of the curse, as he may have been created that way. Instead, they say, the emphasis is on “dust you will eat all the days of your life.” And they rightly point to that being in God’s word a sign of total defeat, in a number of passages.

Read Micah 7:15-17.*

So the serpent eating dust is a visual reminder even now of the ultimate defeat of Satan in his war against Christ. Note, however, in that passage we just read, in v17:

*“They will lick the dust like a serpent,
Like crawling things of the earth.”* (emphasis added)

K&D add that the same curse of “on your belly you will go” should be included along with eating dust. That is, here is grounds for concluding that the serpent was indeed an either two- or four-footed beast prior to the curse, that slithering along the ground like today’s snakes was a change for him. For both conditions are used in God’s word for defeat and labeling something “detestable,” as in Leviticus 11:42.

[Yahweh spoke,] ‘Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, whatever has many feet, in respect to every

* also Isaiah 65:25.

swarming thing that swarms on the earth, you shall not eat them, for they are detestable.’

v15

Now let’s be honest: this verse, being a mix of prophecies, can be confusing. But God’s word is filled with prophecies that have more than one application, as we have seen repeatedly in prophecies that are “now—not yet.” Here, however, in addition to that, we have application to both individuals and groups, singular and plural, metaphorical and realistic.

Remember, these three individuals—the serpent, the woman, and the man—are more than just themselves: actual, historical beings. Each also represents either another individual or group.

The serpent being addressed by Yahweh God is the immediate recipient of God’s curse, but at the same time represents his master Satan, receiving his curse as well. Verse 14 speaks to the earthly being; v15 now speaks to the eternal, evil angel, Satan.

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Many refer to v15 as the “fifth gospel”—or, perhaps more accurately, the *first* gospel—for here we have the first mention of the Savior (“seed,” *zarah*, singular). Here we have the prophecy that sets up the cosmic battle (“enmity” (*eba*), hostility, hatred) between Satan and Christ Jesus.²

The operative verb here is more often than not translated “bruise,” which really doesn’t sound so bad. But the Hebrew word is *shuph*, which here means to break, smite in pieces, crush; to greatly injure or wound. More important than the verb is the location of each wound:

- The Son of God will receive His fatal blow at the cross, but since He will be raised from the grave, it will be as if He was only wounded “on the heel.”
- Satan, however, will have his “head” crushed, and there will be no recovery from that.

From the beginning days of Creation, Satan’s fate was sealed. Christ will have the ultimate victory over His ancient nemesis when Satan is destroyed forever, in the lake of fire, during the very Last Things (Revelation 20:10).

Satan, here represented by the serpent, would indeed bruise the seed of the woman (Messiah)—i.e., an injurious blow; but Messiah would ultimately “crush” the *head* of Satan—i.e., a fatal blow. As it was and will be played out, Christ Jesus (“the seed” of the woman) was indeed killed, but was raised to life,

² In response to those who take issue with this interpretation, claiming, no, the text just describes the common interaction between humans and snakes, Leupold writes, “Now enmity (*’ēbhah*) is a term not applicable to dumb beasts. Its scriptural use limits it, like its verb root, to enmity between persons or morally responsible agents. This fact alone, as well as the sequel, rules out the idea of mere hostility, which is not enmity, between man and serpents.”

and ultimately will reign over all things in an eternal kingdom, while Christ's adversary will go down to defeat, and an eternal life in fire.

*"And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;*

As I said, although Yahweh's words in v15 are being addressed to the physical serpent, they are really being directed toward his master, Satan. Don't miss that Yahweh God is directing this; this is not just a prophecy, but represents God's intentional design. God states the "I will put" this enmity in place between Satan and the woman, between evil sin and Messiah, and, in a broader sense, between Satan's evil and all the human race.

God is not the author of the evil in Satan, but it is righteous that he creates and sustains in humans an enmity—personal hostility—against evil.

*He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."*

To be fair, we do not—and cannot—reach these conclusions from this text alone;³ this verse establishes the very foundation of God's program of salvation for the human race, which finds its dramatic, cataclysmic finale recorded in The Revelation (specifically Revelation 11:15-22:21)—the final battles between good and evil, with evil being vanquished forever and an eternal righteousness and holiness with Christ enjoyed by His followers for all eternity.

³ In the past I have heard and read some definitions of the "inductive Bible study method" that restrict your study of any verse or passage to that text alone, a method with which I energetically disagree. And this verse is a perfect example of how that method cannot always work: one cannot glean the deep substance of this verse and passage without referencing and citing the events of the Apocalypse, and even vast portions of Scripture as a whole.

SESSION 28: JUDGMENT, PART TWO

Genesis 3:15

Verse 15 is easily subdivided into four parts, and we will be looking at each in-turn, but with one alteration: We will consider them in *chronological order*, which—if we bypass the incremental events—reverses the order of the third and fourth part. For example, there are a number of steps along the way that are part of Satan being fatally crushed, beginning with his pre-Creation fall from heaven, but we will not be itemizing them here. Hence, chronologically, the third portion of the verse occurs fourth and last.

Before we do that, however, I would like to share an additional perspective on v15—one not mentioned in our last session—one expressed by Martin Luther, and perhaps easily missed by us today. To wit, the first man and woman, standing in the hot seat before a holy and incensed God, should have (and indeed may have) seen the verdict of v15 as *good news* for them.

Just think of this from their perspective: after their great offense against their Maker by listening to and giving into the serpent's temptation, they would rightly expect to henceforth be assigned to *his* camp. They had chosen the wrong side, and Yahweh God could have righteously responded with, *You made your bed; now you can sleep in it. You have chosen the serpent to be your master and god—and from now on he will be. You are now one with him.* God's verdict for the man and woman will be harsh, but it will not be that. In fact, instead it will be an expression of His *grace*. In his verdict for Satan in v15, He signals that instead of being aligned with him, Adam and Eve and their seed will be *against* him—at “enmity” with him. That is *good news* for them—and us.

Read Genesis 3:14-15.

1. PERSONAL ENMITY

And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman,

Because of part two, I take it that part one refers to two individuals: Satan and Eve. Whereas just a few moments before they were chatting away with each other, they are now blood enemies.

While I could not find anyone else who would speak to this, I wonder if perhaps this could refer to the nation of Israel, as well. Please turn to Revelation 12. This chapter is fascinating in that it conveniently explains itself; we need not look elsewhere to identify its actors. In the Apocalypse the enemy has several names or descriptions, all of which refer to Satan. Note in Chapter Twelve,

v3: “a great red dragon”

v4: “the dragon”

v7: “the dragon. The dragon and his angels”

Then in v9 this dragon is clearly identified, linking him to our text in Genesis.

And **the great dragon** was thrown down, **the serpent of old** who is called **the devil and Satan**, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (emphasis added)

¹ Just like v15 in Genesis, the fantastical imagery in Revelation 12 has multiple explanations and prophetic values. For the sake of clarity I am restricting our discussion here to those pertinent to Genesis Three.

² To be kind to those who faithfully attended or downloaded the sessions for my previous class on the *Last Things*—and to move this along—I’ll not go into all the background that brings us to that conclusion. If you are curious about that, go to my web site and grab the PDF file for the complete *Last Things* study and go to Session 29 on page 163.

So we have established that “the dragon” is Satan.¹ Now, back up to v1.

Read vv1-2.

We can identify the woman in this sign as Israel, since the sun is Jacob (i.e., Israel), the moon is Rachel, and the twelve stars their sons—the twelve tribes of Israel. Interestingly, the “crown” is *stephanos*, not the crown of kingship, but the crown given to victors. Ultimately Israel will be victorious through God’s defeat of their enemy.²

Read vv3-4.

Naturally we wonder who the child is; v5 tells us, removing any doubt.

Read v5.

Here we have “the serpent of old” trying to devour Israel’s child—Christ—at the moment of His “birth.” Talk about enmity.

2. EXTENDED (EVEN UNIVERSAL) ENMITY

And between your seed and her seed;

I think it is almost impossible to limit “seed” here to *just* the Messiah. It does mean that, as all seem to agree, but it also means more.

The woman’s very name, given her by her husband in v20, speaks of her human seed, for “Eve” means living, or life.

Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

Before we leave Revelation 12 let’s see how this extended enmity is revealed in this prophetic passage.

Read Revelation 12:15-17.

And we can see how this was played out in real, historical life in the psalms of David. We’ll look at just one.

Read Psalm 139:19-22.

This is why it makes sense that v15 is ultimately *good* news for the first couple and for believers today. There is a God-orchestrated and -ordained hatred between the followers of Christ and the father of evil. One cannot love both; if one is “in Christ,” one hates evil—and that is a good thing. Since the earth is Satan’s domain for the time being (2 Corinthians 4:4), the things of God and the things of this world’s system are incompatible—as we read in the apostle John’s first epistle.

Read 1 John 2:15–17.

We now take the next two parts out of order, taking first the prophecy which speaks of Christ’s wound.

3. A RECOVERABLE WOUND

And you shall bruise him on the heel.

Where better would a snake, slithering in the dust, wound a person than on the heel. But we must remind ourselves that this imagery is metaphorical, illustrative of Christ’s ultimate victory.

Had anyone else been the recipient of His “wound,” it would have been a fatal blow. Even in the apocalyptic imagery of the opening of the first seals, Christ is portrayed as “a Lamb standing, as if slain” (Revelation 5:6). Historically, Jesus Son of God was killed. Dead. Had He not been literally killed, the sacrifice would not have been effectual. And had He not died, His resurrection would have meant nothing—and hence there would be no future resurrection for the saints.

We say He received a “recoverable wound” not because of the nature of the strike, but because of who it was that was so struck.

Earlier Satan had personally attempted to destroy Jesus by spiritual, positional means. If Jesus had given into the Devil’s three-fold temptation, he may have remained physically alive, but positionally Jesus would have suffered a fatal blow. He may have retained the earth, but He would have lost everything else.

By dying for the salvation of man, the Son of God was raised to life, retaining the fullness of His glory and throne (Philippians 2:9-11). By His dying we—at it were, His “seed”—are given some of His glory and throne and, not least, eternal life with Him.

Read Isaiah 53:10.

We *all* live because of His “recoverable wound.”

4. A FATAL BLOW

He shall bruise you on the head,

This part of the verse contains the most encouraging news for those of us who daily wage war against the flesh, and against the culture of this earth. The good news is that the one in charge of all that will one day have His head crushed: a decidedly *fatal* blow.

Yet, the truth is that even this is metaphorical; just as the woman's "seed"—the Messiah—will die but recover, the serpent (Satan) will be "crushed" by the Messiah—"He"—but will not die. There will one day be a fatal blow to Satan's *program*, but he himself is destined for his own eternity.

He just won't enjoy it.

We will not visit all the references, but the "bruising/crushing" of Satan (Romans 16:20) was and will be incremental. It is not as if he is blithely going about his business when, one day, God destroys him and his work entirely. That is not how it is being played out.³

³ You may wish to follow along using the chart on the next page, which is Chart 16 from our *Last Things* study. The PDF containing all charts from the study is available at the Bible Studies page at our web site (separate from the PDF of the *Last Things* session notes).

- Satan "fell" either before Creation began or shortly thereafter, yet even as he was granted rule over the earth he retained access to the throne room of heaven (Job 1).
- Subsequently, during the eschaton, he with his angels will be physically banished to the earth.
- During Christ's Millennial reign on earth Satan will be bound in the abyss for those one-thousand years.
- At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Satan will be released for a very short time to gather his forces for one last battle—which they lose when God sends down fire from heaven to consume them before the battle is even engaged.
- Immediately after his forces are consumed by fire, Satan will be "thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

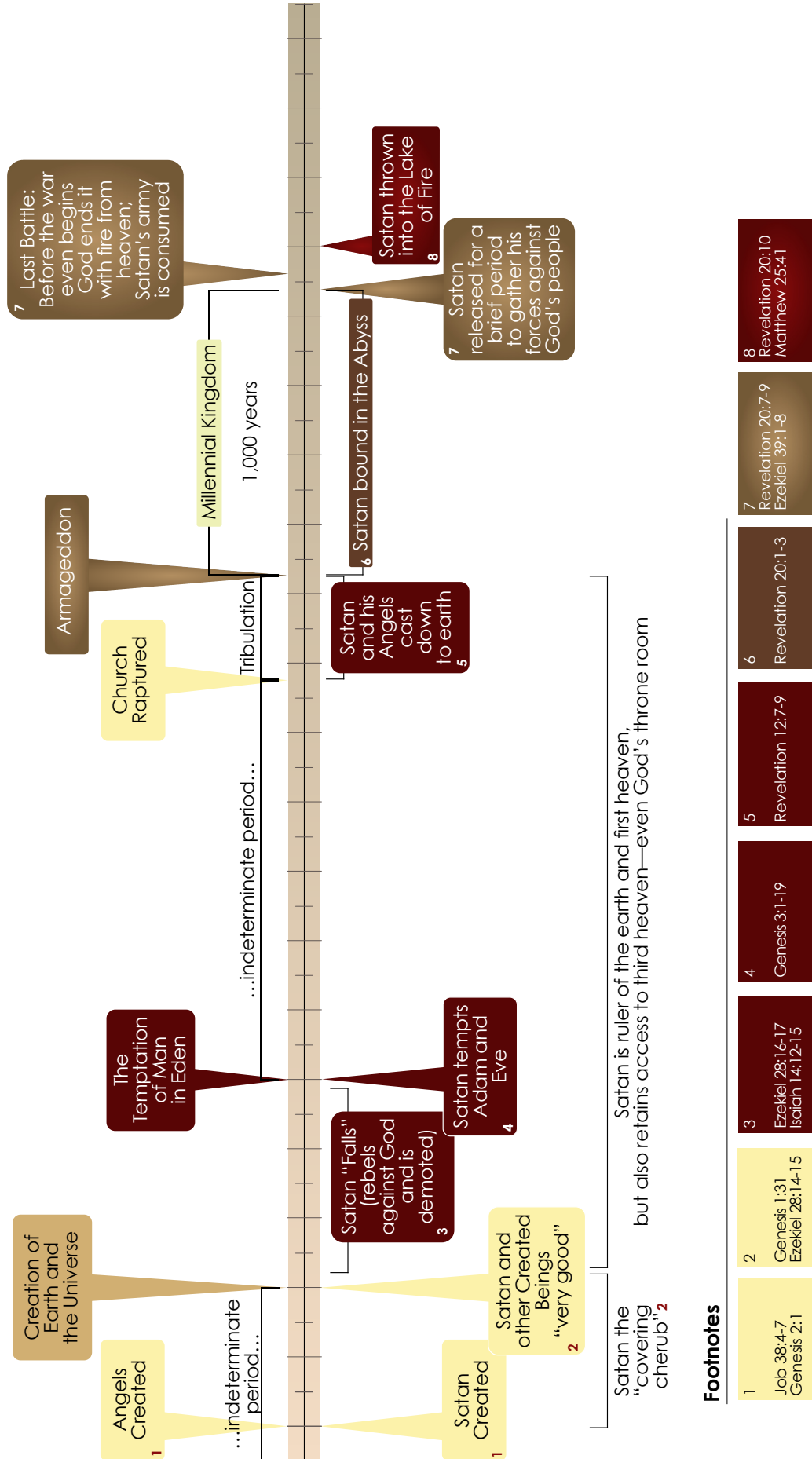
Thus Satan will be "crushed" but not die; he will spend eternity being burned in the lake of fire.

From the perspective of the saints, however, who will then be enjoying *their* eternal state in blissful communion with the Godhead in a new Jerusalem on a new earth, Satan may as well be utterly dead: for the first time since the earliest days of Eden, Satan and his evil will exert no influence whatsoever over the earth.⁴

⁴ It is important that I point out that while I have reordered the four parts of v15 for this discussion, it is right that they are in the order they are in God's word. For Messiah, Christ Jesus will indeed have the last word in this epoch struggle. The last part of v15 speaks of the utter futility of Satan's attack on the Christ. It won't work—and that is the good news for all of us who have placed our trust in this Messiah.

TRACKING SATAN

The Rise and Fall of The Dragon



SESSION 29: JUDGMENT, PART THREE

Genesis 3:16

Perhaps the most powerful and long-lasting lesson to take away from Chapter Three of Genesis is the realization that everything we know and are—everything around and about us: about our environment and about ourselves, how we think and act, how we perceive everything around us—is at odds with what it *should* be, and was intended from the start.

We easily grasp that the first man and woman were utterly changed by their fall from grace because of rebellion against Yahweh God. We understand, too, from this passage and Romans 8:22, that the earth itself was altered that fateful day. But the result of the curse goes far beyond that: *Everything* in this life is not what it was supposed to be; everything is skewed away from true north. What we believe to be normal, is really not; it may be “typical,” but if “normal” is seen as God’s intention for this world, everything is *abnormal*.

Thus most everything we do that is an echo from early Creation—loving, marriage, family, raising children, working, farming—all are made more difficult than they were intended because of the Fall and the resulting Curse. In fact, every aspect of just *living* is made more difficult since that day in Eden. Need proof? Just go back and review all our many prayer requests.

It is a little like comparing our “good” to God’s good; our very best is like filthy rags compared to His (Isaiah 64:6). The very best our life can be, though seemingly wonderful to us, is little more than a shadow of what it could have been absent the Fall.

On that uplifting note, it is now time to examine what Yahweh God had to say to the woman.

Read Genesis 3:14-19.

v16

*To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply
Your pain and conception,
In pain you will bear children;*

There is a depth to this verse that is easily missed—especially in the first portion, and especially because of how it has been translated in most of our versions. The NASB, ESV, and NIVs all have “pain **in** childbirth” or “**in** childbearing”—that is, the interpretation is that the pain God is inflicting on the woman is specific to giving birth. That is not entirely incorrect, but it is an insufficient translation of the text. To the editor’s credit, the NASB, as is so often the case, includes a footnote that points to the literal text, which is reflected in the LSB and KJVs: “I will greatly multiply your pain [KJVs: “sorrow”] **and** conception.”

That one small change in the conjunction makes a big difference to the scope of the curse set upon the woman.

The first interpretation limits the pain or sorrow (*itstebhon*, pain, toil, travail) to *heron*, a word that pretty much includes all components of childbearing, from conception, pregnancy, to the birth itself. This particular pain is indeed included, but is only one category among countless.

Leupold: What is done is that woman from this time onward has numerous forms of pain laid to her lot. Physical infirmities of a painful kind are in a great measure her portion. Because of her more [sensitive] makeup many things besides cause her a greater measure of mental and spiritual pain. The just retaliation lies in this that she who sought sweet delights in the eating of the forbidden fruit, finds not delights but pain—not joy but sorrow. For *'itstsebhon* includes both “pain” and “sorrow,” in fact, everything that is hard to bear.

The “and” in the text means “and in particular”—i.e., “I will greatly multiply your pain **and [in particular, your pain in]** conception.” There are exceptions, of course, but generally, since the Curse, the female of the species suffers more, and more deeply, than the male—not at all limited to physical pain, but spiritual, mental, emotional sorrow, along with the pain and sorrow that comes with bearing and rearing children. This in no way diminishes the concomitant joy, nor does it diminish the pain and sorrow experienced by the male. But women, from this moment forward, are to bear an extra helping of that.

This is illustrated throughout history, but the scene is telling when the baby Jesus is presented in the temple and seen by Simeon.

Read Luke 2:27-35.

Simeon did not address his remark to Joseph, the supposed father, but to Mary, the mother: “...and a sword will pierce through your own soul as well.”

It is also possible that this verse in Genesis 3 implies that without the woman’s rebellion against Yahweh God, childbirth itself would have been less painful. Everything in human life descends from that fateful moment; because of one woman’s desirous sin, all women henceforth would suffer—and especially where the birthing and rearing of children is involved.

But let us pause here and appreciate the good news in this curse.

Martin Luther: This is the punishment which was inflicted on the woman; but a punishment full indeed of joy and gladness, because it varied not in the least from the sentence just before pronounced on Satan. For seeing that the glorious promise still remained that the head of the serpent should be crushed, there was a sure hope of a res-

urrection from death. And whatever is imposed on man as the punishment of his sin is possible to be borne, because this hope remains to him firm and sure. And this is the reason the Holy Scriptures are so very careful not to say anything in the punishment of the woman, which should be contrary to or at all militate against the sentence just before pronounced against the serpent. God did indeed impose a punishment on the woman, but he still left her the hope of a resurrection and of a life eternal. The death which she had deserved by her sin God transferred on the other and less honorable part of man, namely, on the flesh; that the spirit might live, because of righteousness through faith as the apostle says, Romans 8:10, “The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Just as I pointed out in our discussion of God’s judgment on the serpent, there is good news woven throughout this passage of multiple curses inflicted on the players in this drama. Luther concludes,

All these evils and sorrows however pertain to the animal life or to the flesh itself only. But there remains to her all the while the hope here given her of a spiritual and eternal life after this present life.

Your desire will be for your husband,

I would divide this verse—the curse, the judgment pronounced against the woman—into two parts. The first we have just looked at: pain, sorrow (one commentator justifiably uses the word “misery”), and particularly as pertains to childbearing and childbirth. So the first part focuses upon the woman as mother.

The second part, which focuses on the woman as wife, is broken into two parts: the first part speaks of what the woman may now attempt to do in the marriage, while the second part speaks of the man’s role as a result. “Your desire will be for your husband,” on the surface, doesn’t sound like such a bad thing. But this is referring to something darker than simply love and affection, or sexual desire. Before we dig into that, let’s remind ourselves how the marriage relationship was first created by Yahweh God.

Read Genesis 2:23-25.

As conceived by their Maker, the man and woman would enjoy an almost supernatural bond: they would be “one flesh,” the man himself declared, that this one created from the raw material of his own body was “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”

Read Genesis 1:27-28.

There is a subtext of joy and anticipation in that passage, and an abundance not just of children, but of happy mastery over *all* things. The two were intended to work together harmoniously; the woman was to be “a helper suitable for” the man.

We might at first imagine this line in v16 to indicate that the woman will henceforth have an emotional or sexual desire for her husband alone. But most agree that the Hebrew *teshuqah* (tesh-oo-KAW) refers to a darker—some say even violent—stretching out after; its root means to run after, or to run over. This will be God’s judgment against her for daring to independently listen to and obey the serpent.

K&D: The woman had also broken through her divinely appointed subordination to the man; she had not only emancipated herself from the man to listen to the serpent, but had led the man into sin. For that, she was punished with a desire bordering upon disease (*teshuqah* from *shuq*, to run, to have a violent craving for a thing), and with subjection to the man.

We get a picture of what this sort of “desire” looks like in the next chapter, when Yahweh addresses Cain about his anger at his offering being rejected.

Read Genesis 4:6-7.*

In v16 this is a picture of the ideal union of husband and wife breaking down. The woman’s sin was not limited to her falling for the serpent’s temptation, *but for doing it on her own*, to supplanting the role of the man.

Albert Barnes: The woman had taken the lead in the transgression. In the fallen state, she is to be subject to the will of her husband. “Desire” does not refer to sexual desire in particular. It means, in general, “turn,” determination of the will (Genesis 4:7). “The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee”... Under fallen man, woman has been more or less a slave. In fact, under the rule of selfishness, the weaker must serve the stronger. Only a spiritual resurrection will restore her to her true place, as the help-meet for man.

Under earlier dispensations this was true; in most ancient societies women were little more than chattel. By specifying “*spiritual* resurrection” I take it that Barnes refers to our transformation in Christ—with which I heartily agree. Although we still battle with our fallen flesh, in Christ man and woman in a Spirit-led union are at least partially restored to Creation’s ideal: one flesh working together for family good.

* Same word for “desire.”

But the first man and woman are not there yet; the Son of God will not be incarnated for thousands of years. Creation is still raw, in its infancy, and in *this* dispensation the rules—and consequences—are different.

According to John Sailhamer, “the sense of ‘desiring’ in v16 should be understood as the wife’s desire to overcome or gain the upper hand over her husband.” In other words, in this second part Yahweh is not so much addressing the woman, than He is the marriage as a whole, the relationship between man and woman. What was once harmonious—as Yahweh intended—now will be combative, contentious. Because of the woman’s transgressions a battle will be engaged between the two for supremacy in the marriage, in the family.

And he will rule over you.”

I take it from this that prior to the Fall the man and woman were on a more level playing field. Think of it this way: Prior to the Fall the man was the dominant character in the pair; he was created first, and the woman was created from his raw materials. But the man did not *dominate* the woman; prior to the Fall he was dominant; now he will dominate. There was heretofore a natural and companionable hierarchy in the marriage bond; now the woman will contest for supremacy, while the man will be required to dominate her to hold his God-ordained position.

Again, historically, culturally, spiritually this is not a black and white issue, but one painted in shades of gray. There have been periods—especially those closest to Creation itself, when this was literally the case. The man dominated the entire family, could do as he wished to wife and children with no moral or legal penalties involved. In some cultures this was not the case, yet even in relatively recent history, such as the nineteenth century, women even in the Western world (e.g., Great Britain, United States) had few rights and were entirely under the thumb of their husbands.

Today women have more rights, but we see this combative tension still being played out—especially in the culture of the left. The relationship between married individuals and between those just living together can be—and often are—combative, with the man and woman constantly jousting with each other in their struggle for supremacy. Women demand power, while quite often the men become emasculated—and no one seems happy, or even content. The marriage is certainly not a picture of the harmonious, mutually supportive union as first created.

And we can’t kid ourselves that this never occurs in Christian marriages. The cancer of Eden can seep into those relationships as well.

Nonetheless, in Christ marriages have their only hope to regain at least some of what was lost at the Fall. So if we step back and look at this through a wide-angled lens we see that

- the woman sought to act independent of man by taking the fruit;
- as a result, Yahweh God's penalty cast upon her would be that this same yearning would continue in and become a disruptive component of her marriage;
- to counter this, the man would become the God-ordained *ruler* over the marriage and family;
- the introduction of sin and death upon the earth at the Fall would mean that over the centuries and millennia of human civilization this unhappy arrangement would become even more corrupt and perverse;
- with the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the subsequent Christian way of life introduced into the world, some of this would be ameliorated, repaired, but not expunged;
- only in heaven, and ultimately the Eternal State on a new earth, will relationship between the sexes be returned to their pristine, perfect condition—as God had intended from the start.

Until that glad day we have the counsel of the NT teaching to strike the proper balance in a marriage.

But because of sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:2–4)

There is the proper balance in a healthy, God-honoring marriage.

SESSION 30: JUDGMENT, PART FOUR

Genesis 3:17-19

Patterns in Scripture can often be fascinating. In the judgment passage in Chapter Three, Yahweh God inflicts a direct curse (arur) upon the serpent—“Cursed are you...”

Read Genesis 3:14-15.

He does not use that word when addressing the woman. Oh, to be sure, He does curse her, but God does not invoke that specific word.

Read Genesis 3:16.

As for the man, Yahweh does not curse him specifically, but curses the ground instead—“Cursed is the ground because of you...”

Read Genesis 3:17-19.¹

One more comparison: For the woman Yahweh God curses her domestic, family life, while for the man he curses his work environment; in a broad sense, of course, we could say that God curses both their respective work environments. Eve will give birth and take care of the children and home, so God curses the components of that work. Adam will work the land to provide for his family, so God curses the land to make Adam’s work more arduous. And central to all of the above is the relationship between the two; that will be cursed as well (v16b).

Finally, there is one important similarity between the curses for the man and the woman: they will both be inflicted with the same kind of “pain.” In v16 Yahweh said, “I will greatly multiply your pain and conception...” and in v17, to the man Yahweh said, “In pain you will eat of it...” Same word for both: *itstebhon*.

Now, we understand that the man, as corporate head, takes the responsibility for the Fall, even though it was initiated by the woman. This is why the apostle Paul can write to the Corinthians, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

But what precisely did he do to merit this judgment?

Read Genesis 3:6.

There are quite a few men in God’s word for whom I have respect—for example, Joseph (Mary’s husband); King David; Joseph, son of Jacob; Barnabas; Nathan, who had the courage to tell King David, “You are the man!”—but Adam is not included. We haven’t the merest hint that he objected to what his wife

¹ In all the component parts of God’s judgment of Adam (vv17-19), which do you think would have been the worst for the man to hear? What part of that was Adam’s worst news? I would contend, “Till you return to the ground.” There is a reference to ultimate death—which did not exist for Adam prior to the Fall. More on this later.

had done, or was even reluctant to participate himself. The woman breaks the cardinal rule of her Maker, offers the fruit to her husband, and his response is, *Oh, uh-OK*—“and he ate.”

v17

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In pain you will eat of it All the days of your life.²

It is always worthwhile in God’s word to note repetition. What word is repeated in v17?

- and have **eaten** from the tree
- ‘You shall not **eat** from it’
- In pain you will **eat** of it

What was Adam’s sin? He ate forbidden fruit from the hand of the woman. What will be his job, his work, in the ensuing years? Producing the food that will sustain them. So what will God curse? The ground from which that food will come. The judgment against the man—the price he will pay for his sin—will be that his work will be made all the more difficult.

In pain you will eat of it...

Turn back to Chapter One, where God describes the role of man and woman in this new world. In vv26-28 God gives man dominion over all living things. Then in v29 God gives man his food.

Then God said, “Behold, I have given to you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has the fruit of the tree yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

We may have a picture in our mind that before the Fall man just wandered about the garden and lazily plucked his food from the plants and trees whenever he was hungry. But from the beginning man was given work to do; look at Chapter Two, v15.

Then Yahweh God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

In fact, the word translated “cultivate” in the LSB and NASB (*obda*, *oh-VAD*) means to “work,” and is so translated in the ESV and NIVs. The easiest way to understand the meaning of this phrase in v17 is to replace “of” with “from”: “In pain you will eat [from] it.” That is, what was once relatively easy work, will now be hard. It will be a painful process to plant, cultivate, and har-

² There is a certain part of spring planting that represents for me the truth of this verse, especially “In pain you will eat of it.”

Linda’s garden is on a bit of a slope, not an extreme slope at all—that is, until you have to till it. Wrestling that heavy tiller back and forth and around that garden, especially uphill, is just about the most back-breaking, exhausting work I have to do outside—and that includes felling trees and working them up for firewood! All for a few fresh veggies and flowers.

vest your food from the soil—because now the soil is cursed. It will no longer cooperate so willingly. We hear the result of this in one of Job’s laments.

Read Job 7:1-2.

Verses 18-19 expand on this predicament in which the man now finds himself, adding some details.

v18

“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;

Ask any gardener, “What grows the easiest and fastest in any garden?” and they will immediately answer, “Weeds.” It is typically more work to get rid of what you *don’t* want to grow, than it is to grow what you want.

It was in Chapter Two, verse 5, that we first encountered the reference in the second part of this verse.

Read Genesis 2:5.

In Chapter Two this wording—“of the field”—differentiated between non-cultivated (i.e., wild) plants and cultivated (crops planted and tended by man). Thus God waited until man was there before He created the plants that would require regular attention.

So in v18 of Chapter Three we see that the reference is to plants Adam will plant and manage himself—these will be his food. And because of the introduction of weeds, he will have to work harder for it than before.³

Yet God’s grace is still in evidence. The ground will be cursed; thorns and thistles will make cultivation and harvesting more difficult; pain and sorrow will be a necessary component—yet, there *will* be food; they *will* survive: “you will eat of it,” “you will eat the plants of the field,” “You will eat bread.”

Martin Luther adds an intriguing thought. He pictures these judgments upon the earth that will vex man’s labor hereafter as just the mere beginnings, the seedlings of corruption, which will grow and spread and intensify as man’s rebellion against God does the same.

Here Yahweh God introduces “pain” and “thorns and thistles”; He makes no mention of agricultural disease, invading pests, drought and flood, tornadoes and straight-line winds that flatten crops—all so familiar to us today throughout the world. Luther posits that “as the sins of men increased, the punishments of those sins increased also; and that all such punishments and evils were added to the original curse of the earth.”

Today there is a segment of the population that blames man for every climatic variance, every period of sustained drought, every flood that wipes out small villages, every fierce winter. Perhaps they are more correct than they

³ This may also be an unofficial foreshadowing of the expulsion which is about to descend on the ill-fated pair. Verse 23: “therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.”

know. It *may be* man's fault—but not as they think. It's not our use of oil, our belching smokestacks, or our consumption of beef; it's not flatulent cattle, or our use of gas stoves, or diesel trucks—but our sin. It is this world's rejection of God and His ways that have compounded and intensified His curse upon the earth.

For the anxious longing of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19–21)

Ironically, it may be the very scolds preaching the doctrine of “man-made climate change” who are most responsible for the periodic calamities, as they are many times the ones who refuse to bow in submission to a holy God.

v19

“By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

We have seen God's grace woven throughout this passage; now we see the most troublesome, stern judgment of all. But in its first two lines the verse continues along the same line as the previous two verses: what will be new labors of agriculture.

“By the sweat of your face You will eat bread...”

From time immemorial (which is the period of our text) bread in its various forms—which includes beer—has been the staple diet of peasants and royalty alike. This implies that the toil from the cultivation and harvesting of the grain will be so constant that the man will still have sweat pouring down his face when he comes in for supper. Whether that be the implication or not, this reiterates the end of v17: “In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.” The man's daily work is now going to be much harder than before.

*“Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”*

I have spoken about how the Fall and resulting Curses changed everything in Creation. And here we have the most dramatic change of all, and it is fitting

that it comprises God's final words of judgment on the serpent, woman, and man.

I do not believe I have ever found a "proof-text" in God's word that states unequivocally that *Man was created immortal, but the Fall made him mortal*. We reach that conclusion, instead, by pasting together various clues scattered about in the text.

My personal opinion is that absent the Fall, the individuals of Mankind would have met a fate similar to that of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). That is, at some point in each one's life he or she would be translated from the earth into the presence of God for eternity. We will never know for sure.

Let me close with a couple of quotations from scholars wiser than I.

JFB: Man became mortal; although he did not die the moment he ate the forbidden fruit, his body underwent a change, and that would lead to dissolution; the union subsisting between his soul and God having already been dissolved, he had become liable to all the miseries of this life and to the pains of hell for ever. What a mournful chapter this is in the history of man! It gives the only true account of the origin of all the physical and moral evils that are in the world; upholds the moral character of God; shows that man, made upright, fell from not being able to resist a slight temptation; and becoming guilty and miserable, plunged all his posterity into the same abyss (Romans 5:12). How astonishing the grace which at that moment gave promise of a Savior and conferred on her who had the disgrace of introducing sin the future honor of introducing that Deliverer (1Timothy 2:15).

K&D: Formed out of the dust, he shall return to dust again. This was the fulfilment of the threat, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," which began to take effect immediately after the breach of the divine command; for not only did man then become mortal, but he also actually came under the power of death, received into his nature the germ of death, the maturity of which produced its eventual dissolution into dust. The reason why the life of the man did not come to an end immediately after the eating of the forbidden fruit was...that the mercy and long-suffering of God afforded space for repentance, and so controlled and ordered the sin of men and the punishment of sin, as to render them subservient to the accomplishment of His original purpose and the glorification of His name.

SESSION 31: AN ALTERED EXISTENCE, PART ONE

Genesis 3:20-22

PREFACE

In the theater—predominantly in the writing of plays and in the actor embracing his or her character—there is something referred to as *subtext*. The subtext for a character is not so much written into the dialogue, or even directions, but is worked out by the individual actor to bring background and depth to the character.

- Where was he born?
- What was his upbringing like?
- What events in his life formed the person he is now?
- What tragedies did he experience that added depth and maturity to his personality today?

Subtext—however it is established by playwright, actor, or director—is critical for bringing to life on stage (or on-screen) a fully formed, believable character in the story.

The first two verses of our text today are fairly straightforward and understandable from the printed page: In v20 “the man” gives his wife a second name; in v21 Yahweh God makes “garments of skin” for the man and woman to replace their inadequate “fig leaves” for covering their nakedness. We require little commentary for us to understand the events described by these two verses.

Both, however, are replete with meaningful *subtext*, information—even supposition—that adds meaning and depth to the straightforward narrative.

Read Genesis 3:20-21.

Before we examine the text I want to add a cautionary note. As we move into this passage we will discover opportunities with which commentators have run riot with their ideas about Adam and Eve’s level of faith—in my opinion assuming far, *far* too much about what was in the minds of the first couple. For example, here is what David Guzik concludes from v21 (“God... clothed them.”): “This indicates that Adam and Eve were saved. Adam had faith in God’s promise of a Savior, and God provided a covering for them through a sacrifice. We will see Adam and Eve in heaven.”

That’s quite a step—and for me a step too far. We can draw analogy or illustration or foreshadowing from this account that *points* to salvation in Christ, but let us not dare to declare with such assurance *that* level of faith and understanding—even prescience—in this primal couple.

Guzik *may* be correct, and we will discover even better possibilities in our passage, but let us be cautious about chiseling those possibilities in granite—e. g., “We will see Adam and Eve in heaven.”

v20

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

We have already learned that the word “man” and the name “Adam” are virtually the same word in Hebrew: *adahm*. Here, because the original text includes the definite article—“*the* man” (*ha adahm*)—it should be translated as such, and not with his proper name “Adam.”

As I said, this is the second “name” given to the woman. The first we find in Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 2:23.

(From Session 20)

The etymology behind the words “Woman” and “Man” is more complicated and convoluted than the text and the traditional explanation make it. For example, the margin notes in my Bible explain that the Hebrew for “Woman” is *Ishsha*, while the Hebrew for “Man” is just *Ish*. Luther writes, “Hence it is that Adam gave the name, ‘woman,’ *Ischa*, or ‘man-formed female,’ *virago* or *vira*, [in the Latin] to Eve.”

The idea here is that if we think of the word “Man” in the sense of *mankind*, the “Woman,” as the various etymologies reveal, is different, yet of the same genus. She came from man, so she is man, but she is a different sex (through the miraculous transformation by God the surgeon), so she is a Wo-man—not *Ish*, but *Ischa*. The feminine of *Ish*.

Now the man gives his wife a second name: “Eve.” Most of our Bible versions will include a footnote that explains that Eve means “living,” or “life,” but, again, there is more to it than that.

If I may be permitted to invent a word, there is a “forewardlookingness” to this name Eve. It does not mean “the living one,” or even the “life-receiving one”; the name is not about her, as a person, as much as it is about what she is for humanity itself, mankind—as the verse itself explains: “...because she was the mother of all the living.”

Yet even though the name anticipates the future, it is rendered in the Hebrew perfect tense, which means it refers to *an action that is already completed*. All our common versions render this “was”—the closest we can come in English to the Hebrew perfect tense—all except the NIVs, which read “would become.” No, here I believe there *are* grounds for assigning a measure of faith to Adam—much as we will see in Abraham on Mt. Moriah. The writer to the Hebrews explains for us that even without understanding how, the patriarch could obedi-

ently sacrifice his only son, because he trusted in God's promise of generations through Isaac.

Then behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, "This one [Ishmael] will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He brought him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your seed be." Then he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness.
(Genesis 15:4–6)

Read Hebrews 11:17-19.

Adam took Yahweh God at His word, that his wife would bear seed that will be victorious over the serpent's seed (v15), and that even though her pain will be now amplified, she "will bear children" (v16). Hence the woman is *right now* "the mother of all the living."¹

Even if this be an act of faith and trust in Yahweh on the man's part, I cannot subscribe to the exalted level of understanding and prescience in Adam that some commentators express. Taking God at His word can still be an infantile level of faith—in fact, it is *more* eloquent when it does *not* understand everything that will follow, for that is the very definition of faith (Hebrews 11:1).

¹ Adam Clarke takes issue even with the name "Eve," claiming that a more accurate and literal translation would be "Life," as the Septuagint does indeed render it: "And Adam called the name of his wife Life, because she was the mother of all living."

v21

Then Yahweh God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

Of these two verses, v21 seems to be the one where the commentators throw off all restraint (and good sense) to see in the fact that Yahweh God killed an animal or two to clothe the man and woman not just the future Mosaic covenant with its blood sacrifices, but the sacrifice of Christ for the atonement of believers' sins. Again, for us today we can heartily see this anticipating or illustrating God's future sacrificial system, but to place all this in the mind of Adam is a bridge too far in my estimation—in the mind of its author, Moses, of course; but not in the mind of the first man.

Everything going on in v21 is the result of sin—the result of the man and woman's disobedience—yet with a measure of grace mixed in.

Their original, hastily man-made coverings had been fig leaves (v7), which were not just inadequate, and would have to be often replaced, but some have pointed out that these fig leaves would have had a prickly quality—not conducive as a covering for one of the more tender portions of the anatomy. These, too, were bare loin coverings (the word means a girdle), so Yahweh God made

for them something more long-wearing and substantial. The Hebrew is *kuttonet* (koot TOH net), which refers to a larger shirt-like tunic, rather than a smaller loin covering.

Just as pain can be a good thing, warning us off from harm, shame can be a good thing wherever sin is present. Yahweh affirms their sense of shame by giving the couple more substantial coverings. But I cannot go along with those who draw from this that a sense of shame that required covering the body was part of God's original ideal. There is no indication at all that earlier He was bothered by their nakedness; it was not a barrier to their communion with Him. No, it was only after sin was introduced into the equation that shame was introduced. Once shame was present, appropriate covering became necessary.

As we have discussed, with sin came death where it had not existed before. And the first instance of death on the earth was of the animal(s) killed to supply the skins the couple would now wear to cover their shame.

It is possible that, as Adam Clarke writes, "It is very likely that the skins out of which their clothing was made were taken off animals whose blood had been poured out as a sin-offering to God; for as we find Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to God, we may fairly presume that God had given them instructions on this..." That is possible, but we have no word to that effect in the first three chapters.

I favor the more balanced approach to this verse by Keil & Delitzsch.

K&D: By selecting the skins of beasts for the clothing of the first men, and therefore causing the death or slaughter of beasts for that purpose, He showed them how they might use the sovereignty they possessed over the animals for their own good, and even sacrifice animal life for the preservation of human; so that this act of God laid the foundation for the sacrifices, even if the first clothing did not prefigure our ultimate "clothing upon" (2Co_5:4), nor the coats of skins the robe of righteousness. (emphasis added)

Though man would remain vegetarian until after the Flood, his rebellion against God gave entrance to death—first of the beasts, and second of his own.

v22

We'll just begin our discussion of the rest of Chapter Three in this session, finishing it in our next session.

Then Yahweh God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us to know good and evil; and now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever—"

I confess that this verse has always troubled me. Every time I read it it seems that Yahweh God comes off sounding whiny and petulant—even ex-

traordinarily defensive against mere humans. Upon closer examination, however, that is not the case; in fact, as we will see, the second part of v22 represents an act bathed in mercy.

Then Yahweh God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us to know good and evil...”

The motive of Yahweh and the Godhead behind this statement is a matter of debate; it is one of those passages where, because it seems to be so curiously out of character for the One speaking, some have gone to extravagant lengths to explain it away as sarcasm or irony. But that, too, seems grossly out of character for Yahweh God—and especially in this dramatic, earth-changing moment.

Read Genesis 3:2-5.

The serpent did not say that by eating of the tree they would become gods, but *like* God, they would then know good and evil. And v22 proves that the serpent did not lie. He wanted the woman to infer from his words that this new knowledge would be a perfectly splendid new attribute, that the man and woman would in the eating obtain a precious quality otherwise inaccessible. Again, he was partially correct: it was otherwise inaccessible, but it would decidedly not be a good thing.

Based on the common—and quite sensible—interpretation of the *second* part of this verse, I agree with Leupold, who alone (at least in my reading) hears not sarcasm or irony in the words of the first part, but instead, *sadness*. It *grieves* their Maker that His children are no longer innocently good, but now, in an instant, are already well versed in both good and evil. Obtaining the knowledge of both, they immediately chose evil, and this brings profound sadness to the Godhead.

“and now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever—”

But this sadness (on the part of the Godhead) produces not more wrath, but mercy. God has poured out His justice, His punishment on the man and woman and serpent for their decisions and actions—all sprinkled with grace—but now He dispenses mercy.

They have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that is done, and cannot be reversed. But they have not yet eaten from the tree of life—a tree the eating from which would grant them immortal life. Considering their present condition, just imagine what that immortal life would be like. It would not be eternal bliss, but eternal misery.

We will continue our discussion of this verse and the remaining verses in Chapter Three in our next session.

SESSION 32: AN ALTERED EXISTENCE, PART TWO

Genesis 3:22-24

PREFACE

In our last session we began our look at the last three verses of Chapter Three, vv22-24. I'd like to begin *this* session with a quick review of our initial discussion of v22. First, however, let's read these three verses.

Read Genesis 3:22-24.

v22

Then Yahweh God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us to know good and evil..."

Based on the common—and sensible—interpretation of the second part of this verse, I agree with Leupold, who alone (at least in my reading) hears not sarcasm or irony or fear in the words of the first part, but instead, *sadness*. It grieves their Maker that His children are no longer innocently good, but now, in an instant, are already well versed in both good and evil. Obtaining the knowledge of both, they immediately chose evil, and this brings profound sadness to the Godhead.

"and now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever—"

This sadness (on the part of the Godhead) produces not more wrath, but mercy. God has poured out His justice, His punishment on the man and woman and serpent for their decisions and actions—all sprinkled with grace—but now He dispenses mercy.

They have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; that is done, and cannot be reversed. But, as far as it is recorded in the text, they have not yet eaten from the tree of life—a tree the eating from which would grant them immortal life. Considering their present condition—a fallen, sinful, depraved state—just imagine what that immortal life would be like. It would not be eternal bliss, but eternal misery.

Let's spend some more time on this "tree of life."

The tree of life is mentioned only in two books of the Bible: Genesis and the Revelation. "A tree of life" is used metaphorically four times in Proverbs to refer to righteous qualities, but has no connection to "*the* tree of life." In the Revelation the tree of life is mentioned in 2:7, by Christ Jesus Himself, and in 22:2, 14, and 19. Let's read the first few verses of Revelation 22.

Read Revelation 22:1-3.

Much has been made of this river and its accompanying tree by expositors and commentators. The river seems to hearken back to the prophecy about a river flowing out of Jerusalem after the world has been reshaped and Christ returns to rule in the Millennium (Zechariah 14:7-8)—which is why not a few interpreters say this moment in the Revelation is the Millennium. The imagery is, of course, similar, but this is a different sort of “river.” And the tree reminds us of the “tree of life” mentioned in the Eden narrative as situated in the center of the garden in Eden. Some say this is the heavenly version of that same tree.

It is possible that both of these—the river and the tree—can be interpreted literally: an actual crystalline river running down the center of the street in the new Jerusalem from the thrones of “God and the Lamb,” and a literal tree bearing year-round fruit. But I believe the better interpretation is that both of these—the river and the tree—are visions representing timeless truths—both of which pertain to redemption and eternal life in Christ, spoken of throughout Scripture.

In Scripture the idea of “living water” moves from obedience to Yahweh to faith in Christ Jesus, both associated with a good life in the present and, in Christ, a good life for all eternity. In the gospel of John, Jesus speaks to the woman at the well of “living water.” She thinks He is speaking of water to drink, but Jesus goes on to explain that

Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst—ever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13–14)

Perhaps the most clarifying statement from the Lord about this is found in Revelation 21:6.

Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.”

Those last two words set the context: this “water of life” is not obtained by obeying the Law, nor is it obtained by good works, but is given by grace, freely, to those who thirst for it—referring clearly to salvation in Christ, resulting in eternal life with Him.

The pattern set in God’s word is that “water of life” or “living water” is a picture of eternal life, flowing from the throne of God, as John Walvoord writes,

This future river which is in the new Jerusalem...speaks of the power, purity, and eternal life manifest in the heavenly city. This river corresponds to the present believer’s experience of the outflow of the Spirit and eternal life.

And the tree has a similar lineage. The qualities of the “tree of life” in the garden are explained in v22 of our text:

Then Yahweh God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”

That is, the tree of life, like the “river of the water of life,” is all about eternal life—an immortal life with Christ and Father God. It may be that these are literal elements in Eden’s garden and in the new Jerusalem come down out of heaven; but especially in John’s vision, they both serve to represent the unending life in God for those residing there.

“and now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever—”

K&D: From the [the Hebrew] *gam* (also, as well) it follows that the man had not yet eaten of the tree of life. Had he continued in fellowship with God by obedience to the command of God, he might have eaten of it, for he was created for eternal life. But after he had fallen through sin into the power of death, the fruit which produced immortality could only do him harm. For immortality in a state of sin is not [what] God designed for man, but [would be] endless misery, which the Scriptures call “the second death” (Rev 2:11; 20:6, 14; Rev 21:8).

v23

therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden,
to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

While it is clear from Chapter Four that “his wife Eve” was sent out from the garden along with “the man,” the actions of Yahweh God in vv23-24 refer to the man alone, because he is the corporate head of the first family—indeed, of mankind itself.

There is a difference between being in an establishment—say, a retail store or saloon—and having the manager say to you, “You are not welcome here. Please leave.” And having the bouncer pick you up bodily and literally throw you out the door. I think we see that difference between v23 and v24.

All of our common versions agree on the two verbs: In v23 it is “Yahweh God **sent**” the man out (only the original NIV has, instead, “banished,” but this shares the same meaning); while in v24 it is “He **drove** the man out.” The first, in v23 (Hebrew *shalach*) has almost a judicial or legal tone to it—the equivalent of the manager asking one to leave the premises. It has a detached feeling to it, almost as if one received a notice in the mail. In contrast, the second, in v24 (Hebrew *garash*) has a more physical, hands-on feeling to it. Back in the nine-

teenth century one did not *ask* cattle to move from Colorado to the Kansas City stockyards—one *drove* them, one had to physically force them to make the journey.

There is one more difference between the two verses: The *reason* the man is sent from the garden in v23 is for him “to cultivate the ground,” whereas the reason in v24 is clearly to banish him from the garden and prevent his eating from the tree of life.

Now, specific to v23, the man is sent out from the garden “to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.” And someone might say, “Wait a minute. I thought the man was created in the garden.” Well, no. Look at Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 2:7, 15.

Verse 15 confirms that the first man was made either outside the garden—or, more likely the garden was created after the man, since it is created in v8, after the man in v7.

v24

So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

One more time let me add a word of caution about imagining thoughts and circumstances that are questionable under the light of Scripture. And, one more time, sadly, my illustration is David Guzik.

Guzik: Though Adam and Eve and their descendants were prevented from eating the fruit of the tree of life (by God’s mercy), they could still come there to meet God. This was their “holy of holies.”

Guzik bases this presumptuous statement on the presence of the cherubim (multiple cherubs), which, in his words, “are always associated with the presence and glory of God (Eze 10:1-22, Isa 6:1-13, Rev 4:1-11). When cherubim are represented on earth (such as in the tabernacle, Exo 25:10-22), they mark a meeting place with God.” Guzik is not incorrect in stating that they are typically associated with the presence of God, but he doesn’t mention that they also serve to guard and protect. Guzik sees them as beings inviting or conducting one into the presence of God, whereas I believe a more fitting way to describe them is as frightful supernatural beings that serve as a “palace guard” so to speak around the throne of God.

In any case, Yahweh God places a number of cherubs on the east side of the garden—they could also have been the ones who “drove the man [and woman] out”—and He gives a flaming sword as a visible weapon; it is typical to see this flaming sword as representing the glory and/or angel of God (Exodus 13:21; 14:19-20).

Once again for this passage I find balance and common sense in the commentary of K&D.

K&D: The Cherubim are creatures of a higher world, which are represented as surrounding the throne of God... as occupying the highest place as living beings in the realm of spirits, standing by the side of God as the heavenly King when He comes to judgment, and proclaiming the majesty of the Judge of the world. In this character God stationed them on the eastern side of paradise... “to keep the way of the tree of life,” i.e., to render it impossible for man to return to paradise, and eat of the tree of life.

Hence there appeared by their side the flame of a sword, apparently in constant motion, cutting hither and thither, representing the devouring fire of the divine wrath, and showing the cherubim to be ministers of judgment. With the expulsion of man from the garden of Eden, paradise itself vanished from the earth. God did not withdraw from the tree of life its supernatural power, nor did He destroy the garden before their eyes, but simply prevented their return, to show that it should be preserved until the time of the end, when sin should be rooted out by the judgment, and death abolished by the Conqueror of the serpent (1Cor 15:26), and when upon the new earth the tree of life should flourish again in the heavenly Jerusalem, and bear fruit for the redeemed (Rev 20:1-15, 21).

One final thought: There is sad irony hidden away in this last verse of Chapter Three. Verse 24 ends with the cherubim and the flaming sword there “to **guard** the way to the tree of life.” The word translated “guard” is the Hebrew *shawmar*. This is the same word used in 2:15 when Yahweh God “set the man in the garden of Eden to cultivate and **keep** it.”

So in Chapter Two the word “keep” represents work, but also a trust; Adam is granted custodial rights over the flora in the garden. Yahweh entrusts Paradise to him.

But, sadly, by the end of Chapter Three this trust has not just been revoked, but Adam is designated a “bad actor” who has lost all rights to the garden. He is now kicked *out of* the Paradise once entrusted to him.

A sad chapter indeed.

SESSION 33: TWO BROTHERS, TWO OFFERINGS

Genesis 4:1-5

PREFACE

Chapter One of Genesis records the basic sequences, in bullet-point form, of the Creation: the universe as a whole, earth, vegetation, the earth's sun and moon, living creatures in the water and in the air, living creatures on the land, then the first man and woman—all in that order.

Chapter Two adds more detail to the Creation process, especially regarding humankind, laying the foundation for the tragic third chapter.

Chapter Three records the terrible downfall of man and the introduction of sin into the world, initiated by Satan through his servant the serpent, resulting in Yahweh God's stern judgment upon all three parties, and even the earth itself. The chapter closes with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, summarily ejected from Paradise, consigned to work the more challenging, less-fertile and weed-infested land outside the Garden.

We now come to Chapter Four, which serves—with the introduction of the supposed first children—as a portal into the subsequent generations, itemized in Chapter Five.

Read Genesis 4:1-8.

As we have experienced before in this study, a cursory reading of this passage seemingly leaves us with more questions than answers.

- Does v1 document the *first* time Adam and Eve had sexual relations, just the first time their relations bore fruit, or were their other children before Cain?
- What was happening between these two births and when the two (young?) men were old enough to tend the flocks and the fields?
- What knowledge or commands about offerings to Yahweh were understood by them, and how did they receive them?
- Why is there no mention in the account—even going all the way back to Genesis 1:1—of Yahweh explaining His preference for blood sacrifice? Or is that what is going on here? What *was* it about Cain's offering that made it unacceptable to Yahweh?
- Did Cain knowingly make an inferior offering? Did Abel knowingly make a proper offering? Or were they just offering from their respective materials at hand? That is, did Cain know better?

We look forward to discovering answers to at least some of these questions as we proceed.

And as we move forward we are reminded once again of the standard confusing, even *frustrating* dichotomy: On the one hand, these events—an illicit

offering, deceit, murder, another banishment—do not represent Yahweh God’s ideal for the earth and its people; it is not how He would have it. On the other hand, however, we believe the eternal Godhead had mapped all this out—including the need for a Savior, a Redeemer to atone for these sins—from well before Creation was even initiated.

v1

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.”

Let us not pass too quickly over the familiar, and perhaps archaic euphemism “knew,” a reference to the man having conjugal relations with his wife. If one burrows down into that word one finds that it is utterly appropriate, as well as more polite. It speaks of that supernatural union, the *oneness*, “one flesh” of God’s ideal for man and woman in marriage (Genesis 2:24). In that oneness man and woman “know” their mate with a depth and intimate understanding that can be attained no other way. But, of course, here it speaks as well of the physical act necessary to produce offspring, in this case the first male child.

As with the possible eating of the fruit from the tree of life, one can only conclude from the way this is phrased that either this was the first time the couple had had relations—or prior to this there had been no issue from the act.

...and she said, “I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh.”

There is a loose connection between the name “Cain,”—Hebrew *qayin* (kine)—and the verb translated “I have gotten”—Hebrew *qanah*. We won’t dwell on that etymology,¹ as it can be rather confusing and, ultimately, less important than what Eve says about it and what she means.

The interpretation of the Hebrew phrase, rendered in the LSB, “with the help of Yahweh” or in the KJVs “from the Lord,” is accepted by all our common versions. That is, Eve is declaring openly that Yahweh has graciously been a part of this first birth—not an inconsequential credit, since it wasn’t that long ago that Yahweh had kicked them out of Paradise to fend for themselves in the wild. Apparently she is not holding a grudge. She even puts it in the terminology of a gift, of having acquired something from someone else—i.e., the Lord.

The Hebrew text in this portion of the verse is challenging, leading a few scholars to translate it something like, “I have the man, the Lord,” as did Luther, or “I have created a man equally with the Lord”—i.e., “a boast that just as the Lord had created a man, so now she had created a man” (Sailhamer)—which could mean either *she* is equal to the Lord as a creator, or that the child himself is divine.

To be fair to Eve, one can imagine that she might in ignorance draw a similarity between God’s fashioning of man and her body doing the same, espe-

¹ *Albert Barnes*: Cain occurs only once as a common noun, and is rendered by the Septuagint *doru*, “spear-shaft.” The primitive meaning of the root is to set up, or to erect, as a cane, a word which comes from the root; then it means to create, make one’s own. Hence, the word here seems to denote a thing gained or achieved, a figurative expression for a child born.

cially if there had been only nominal communication on this from Yahweh God to the man and woman. And remember what we know Yahweh *did* say to the serpent, presumably in the hearing of Eve:

Read Genesis 3:15.

Well, here is her “seed,” her first seed; it would seem a natural conclusion drawn by her that this firstborn was the prophesied “seed” that would have victory over the serpent, and perhaps even divine.

That being said, one can readily see how the vast majority of translators went with the more pious and reverential translation common to our versions.

v2

And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground.

In this verse we see a dramatic compression of time. How long was it between the two births? We are not told. And Moses deems it unnecessary to offer even a glimpse of the upbringing of the two lads; they are born and immediately they are out conducting their respective work-a-day occupations—either as adults or, at least, older youth. Both are farmers, like their dad: Cain tends the crops, while his younger brother tends the beasts.

Guzik: We see agriculture and the domestication of animals were practiced among the earliest humans. Adam and his descendants did not spend tens of thousands of years living as hunter-gatherer cave dwellers.

A number of different conclusions have been drawn over the meaning of Abel’s name (Hebrew *hebel*), which means vapor, breath, vanity, emptiness, futility. All these conclusions focus on what may have been in the mind of Eve—a resource which, frankly, remains closed to us. Neither can we conclude, as some do, that Eve herself named the child; we are told nothing about the source of the names of either child.

vv3-5

So it happened in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part, also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell.

Moses makes one more leap in time in v3.

So it happened in the course of time...

The KJVs have it “in the process of time.” The phrase means (as YLT has it) “at the end of days.” The implication from this is that this represents a considerable span of time—and there is no reason to think this was the first such offering. Neither need we assume this was performed after a dictate laid down by Yahweh. Leupold, for one, makes a solid case (as does history itself) for such sacrifices rising out of an inherent impulse in human nature.²

² Many years ago, having written a musical that had enjoyed a successful run, one day it occurred to me, in a fit of joy and thanksgiving to God, to take a copy of the script out onto the patio and offer it as a burnt sacrifice of devotion to God.

Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part, also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.

Read Hebrews 11:4.

If you are like me you have grown up with the idea that Abel’s sacrifice was more acceptable to Yahweh because it was a blood, a fleshly sacrifice, whereas Cain’s was not accepted because it was *not* a blood sacrifice. But that is not correct.

First, if we compare these to the Mosaic Law, both of these would have a resemblance closest to the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Ingathering or Booths, when the harvest was celebrated and the very first and best of the harvest was offered to God in thanksgiving and praise for another bountiful harvest.

Read Exodus 34:21-22, 26.

In the text these are called “offerings,” not sacrifices, although in a broad, general sense the word “sacrifice” used in the Hebrews passage (Greek *thysia*) can include non-bloody offerings.

But, of course, these covenantal feasts were only in the mind of the chronicler—not the characters in Genesis. Both brothers were simply conducting a simple, traditional ceremony giving thanks to Yahweh for their food, each offering from the fruits of their respective areas of labor. As the Mosaic Law reveals, there is nothing substandard about offering produce when the practice has nothing to do with atonement (to expiate sin) or salvation, such as Passover or the Day of Atonement, where the shedding of blood is explicitly called for. The Hebrew word here translated “offering” is *minhah*, which covers “any type of gift man may bring” (Leupold).

Leupold: Neither of the two sacrifices is made specifically for sin. Nothing in the account points in this direction. Consequently, the merit of the one over against the other does not lie in the fact that it was a bloody offering. The nature of the sacrifice as to its material is determined entirely by the occupation of him who brings it.

In fact, throughout the narrative one should carefully guard against imputing to these sacrifices things that we cannot prove to have been part of them. We are not even sure that an altar was built for the purpose. The first altar is mentioned after the Flood. We cannot prove that fire was employed to consume the sacrifice. That the animal sacrifice was killed is made apparent by the use of the term "fat pieces."

That reference to "fat portions" may offer us one clue as to why Yahweh had regard for Abel's offering; Leviticus 3:16-17 reads,

And the priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire for a soothing aroma; all fat is Yahweh's. It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your places of habitation: you shall not eat any fat or any blood.

Moses tells us specifically that Abel included the beast's fat portions, and we take that to be an expression, on Abel's part, of obedience and devotion to Yahweh. But Hebrews 11:4 gives us probably the finest clue for why God favored Abel's offering:

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he was approved as being righteous—

It was the condition of Abel's *heart* that made the difference—not the composition of his offering. It was his faith in Yahweh that warranted not just Yahweh's acceptance of his offering, but a declaration that he was declared by God to be righteous.

Note one more comparison:

v4: "Abel...brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions."

That is, Abel made a righteous offering by giving to God the first and the best of what he had to offer. We are not to give to our God from that which is left over, but right off the top. As for Cain,

v3: "Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground."

Absent any descriptive terms, such as the text includes for Abel's offering, we are left to conclude that Cain's offering was simply *pro forma*, just going through the motions because it was the time of the year when one did such things. And as such, because of the apparent coldness of Cain's heart, Yahweh "had no regard" for his offering. Was he contrite, repentant? No, Cain burned with anger (*yiharah*) toward God, and the desire for vengeance against his brother (v8).

SESSION 34: AN UNREPENTANT ANGER

Genesis 4:6-8

PREFACE

Before we move into our next passage, I'd like to add just a few more thoughts about how v5 ends: "So Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell."

There can be any number of reasons why someone's "face [would] fall" (ESV): sadness, embarrassment, unease, depression, shame. But the text tells us why Cain's "face was downcast" (NIVs): "Cain became very angry."

If one is angry at an equal, or especially a subordinate, one will probably glare directly at them, directly into their eyes in an attempt to intimidate. But if one is angry at a *superior*, one will probably try to swallow or hide that anger by staring at the floor. And that's what is going on here: Cain is not sad or humbled; he is *infuriated* with Yahweh for refusing his offering, but even he knows he is impotent against God, so can only stare at the ground.

Read Genesis 4:4-8.

Is it not our habit, when faced with a spiritual or moral dilemma, to instinctively go to the epistles or the words of Christ Jesus in the gospels for the counsel we seek? Do we not naturally assume that the NT will be the best or most relevant—the most "Christian"—source for help with our problem? Who would have guessed that such timely counsel would be found within the earliest chapters of Genesis.

Once in a while a portion of God's word will lift off the page and grab us by the throat. Verses 6 and 7 of this passage did that for me. And I would be so bold as to suggest it should for all of us. But let's back up and come into this. How did we get to this moment of confrontation between the first son of Adam and Eve, and Yahweh?

Cain is the couple's firstborn; Eve may even have thought he was *the* son—her first "seed"—who would "bruise [the serpent] on the head."

When they are old enough Cain and his younger brother Abel do what just about every farmer's sons have done since: they are put to work in the family business, Cain to work the crops and Abel to work the livestock. Regardless their respective areas of work, we have seen that of the two, Abel is the one with a heart more sensitive to and devoted to God. Unlike his older brother, he offered to Yahweh the best of what he had.

Yahweh is not fooled. He reads not just the *quality* of each offering, but the condition of each man's heart. Cain's heart is left wanting, and his subsequent behavior when God has "no regard" for his offering—as well as when he is called out by God—reveal his heart's poor condition.

v6

Then Yahweh said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?”

We cannot say with certainty that this scene includes a visible, in-person (as it were) visitation of Yahweh with Cain. Typically the text will make it clear that God is visible to the person, such as earlier in Genesis 3:8, just after the Fall.

Read Genesis 3:8-9.

It is clear from that passage that when Yahweh God hands down his judgment on the three, he is present—in whatever form—in their midst. But we do not have that same assurance in Chapter Four. It could be an audible voice, or even an inaudible communication. In either case it is doubtful that God is physically standing before Cain—even as a vision.

I suppose one can interpret Yahweh’s tone in a variety of ways, as He speaks to Cain. Personally, I hear a tone of feigned disbelief in Yahweh’s voice—as if he is saying, *This is self-evident; even you should know this, Cain*. I don’t hear a scolding tone, but more of a pedagogic voice, surprised that he doesn’t grasp this basic tenet of a spiritual life. Here is the voice of Someone who knows the darkness, the anger, the *homicide* that dwells within the man’s heart, and this is His attempt to gently steer him into a different direction.

We also hear in these words God’s patience and grace—just as we typically hear from Him when we go astray. How many times have we shuddered in abject humiliation, even fear, before Him, knowing we were deserving of His wrath for our willful transgression—only to be answered by His grace, His forgiveness, His love. That same grace is at work here with Cain.

Even so, v6 is also Yahweh’s preamble to making it clear in v7 that the reason for his foul attitude is all on Cain himself. It’s not his brother’s fault, and it certainly isn’t Yahweh’s fault. If there is anger in him, it should be anger at himself.¹

v7

“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

At a glance the question that begins this verse is translated differently in our various versions—but not really. The literal Hebrew text is bare bones; reading it as is would be meaningless to us, even in English. The NASB and LSB have, “will not your countenance be lifted up,” while the rest have “will you not be accepted.” The venerable William Wilson (1782-1873) in his classic *Old Testament Word Studies* helps us out.

¹ countenance

There is a good reason why the translators of most of our versions have chosen the word “countenance” in these verses. Using “face,” as do the ESV and NIVs, while not inaccurate doesn’t quite capture the full meaning of the Hebrew *paneh*. The word “countenance” includes not just the facial expression, but the entire physical attitude of the person. one’s bearing, how one holds oneself.

Cain’s entire physical attitude, his bearing, telegraphed to Yahweh anger and a rebellious, self-focused, petulant spirit.

Wilson: [The Hebrew *seeth* (sey-yet) means] to lift up; to accept the person of any one; to be gracious to him. The expression arises from an Eastern custom of prostrating themselves in making a request, which being granted, the prince orders the suppliant to rise, i.e., to lift up his face.

So with that explanation we see that both translations are essentially the same: to be accepted is to be lifted up; to be physically lifted up is to be accepted. But what does Yahweh mean by “If you do well”? I suggest two answers to this.

1. Dispensational/Practical Obedience: To “do well” is to live obediently to the Lord God according to the context of one’s dispensation. That is, under the Law one was to live in accordance to that Law, to keep the commandments, to observe the prescribed feasts and sacrifices. Under the dispensation of Grace, the church age, to “do well” is to live in obedience to Christ and *His* commandments, to obey Him as one’s Lord and Master.

Under the dispensation of the Law, this obedience would sound like Yahweh’s word through the prophet Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 7:5-7.

Under the dispensation of Grace, like this in the gospel of John from the lips of Christ Himself.

Read John 14:15, 21.

Jesus follows this up in the next chapter with

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:10–11)

Here we see clearly the picture of when we do well by obeying Christ’s commandments we are “accepted” by Him, and are “lifted up” by finding our joy in Him.

2. By Faith: Beyond the effort of practical obedience, however, is the giving of oneself over to living by the Spirit, living by faith; to dwelling on things that are good and righteous; to filling one’s mind and heart on the things of Christ, rather than the things of this world. This, too, is a form of obedience, but less an action than an attitude; less physical than spiritual.

Read Colossians 3:1-3.

A few pages back, in his letter to the Philippians, the apostle writes, Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your considerate spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, consider these things. (Philippians 4:4–8)

And if you do not do well, sin is lying at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

Taken as a whole, the picture of evil/Satan in the Bible is of an unrelenting, voracious beast out to claim as many lives as it/he can before its/his predetermined end.² One cannot negotiate with evil, no bargain can be struck; one either gives in to it or runs screaming from it. We’re all familiar with the NT passage that echoes perfectly this OT verse.

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.³

Back to our text, although most of the other modern translations go with “crouching at the door,” which does indeed paint a colorful picture of how we perceive sin and temptation, I agree with the LSB, which reverts back to its King James roots from the NASB, and translates this “lying at the door.” For that is what the word *robes* (rabats) means: “to stretch oneself out in repose; to rest, be at ease.”

If you will permit me, I believe both translations represent essentially the same thing—but using two different word pictures. No explanation is necessary for today’s Christian with the picture of sin as a ravenous beast crouched right outside one’s door, ready to pounce the moment one emerges from the safety of one’s domicile. But consider the other picture, sin as a comfortably reclined beast, perfectly at ease on one’s doorstep. Is that not just as disturbing? just as much a threat? Here is a picture of sin so confident and self-assured within arm’s reach of the believer; he need not crouch in anticipation of ambushing the unwitting Christian. No, he is right at home being so near—even on the believer’s property, just outside “the door.” Like a favored pet reclining in his favorite spot, he has no fear because the owner of the house knows he is there—and permits it.

But Yahweh says that we are *not* to permit it. We are to “rule over,” have dominion over, sin. And how does the follower of Christ “rule over” sin? The armor of God.

² Interestingly, the 1900 KJV personifies sin in this verse: “and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

³ I stand in awe of the harmony of God’s word. From one of the earliest chapters in the Bible to one of the last; from Moses to the apostle Peter, penned more than one and a half millennia from each other, and it all fits together perfectly.

Read Ephesians 6:10-13.

To this counsel from Yahweh Himself, Cain is silent—which does not surprise. He is not repentant, he is not ashamed. The impression left to the reader is that Cain remains sullen and bitter, and the following verse reveals that he has shed none of his anger and vengeance.

v8

Then Cain spoke to Abel his brother; and it happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Here we have the cold consequence of the Fall, his parents' rebellion against their Maker: murder. Sin and evil did not crouch or even lie down outside their door, but looked them square in the face—and they bought it hook, line, and sinker. The result? Creation's first homicide.

It seems pretty obvious to most expositors that *what* Cain said to his brother—not included in our text, but *is* included in the Septuagint—was an invitation to go out into the field:

LXX: "And Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out into the plain.'"

YLT: "And Cain saith unto Abel his brother, 'Let us go into the field.'"⁴

Note that the writer, Moses, repeats "his brother" in the verse, emphasizing the fratricide that is taking place: not just a murder, but the horrific murder of a *blood brother*. John in his first epistle informs us that Cain in this act did not just sin, but, like Judas, like the Antichrist in the Eschaton, was "of the evil one"—of Satan. He writes,

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. (1 John 3:11–12)

And in this heinous act we have a profound irony, which K&D points out. I close with this:

K&D: In [Cain] the seed of the woman had already become the seed of the serpent; and in his deed the real nature of the wicked one, as "a murderer from the beginning," had come openly to light: so that already there had sprung up that contrast of two distinct seeds within the human race, which runs through the entire history of humanity.

⁴ This verse is similar to 3:22–23, where the words of Yahweh God drift off, moving directly into His subsequent actions rather than finishing what He said.

SESSION 35: THE WAILING VOICE OF INNOCENT BLOOD, PART ONE

Genesis 4:9-16

PREFACE

As the story of Creation's first family draws closer to its conclusion, we are presented with little to commend its members. The one bright spot in the family was Abel—and he now lies dead out in the field.

Before we move ahead to examine Cain's behavior before his Inquisitor, however, let us all breathe a collective sigh of relief that each of our lives are not so chronicled for all posterity. Just as we have few stones we can throw at the rebellious and ungrateful Hebrews coming out of Egypt—or even after they are settled in the Promised Land—we must confess that there have been times in our own lives when we have behaved as, or almost as badly as the members of this family. And the reason for this is that the depravity introduced by their disobedience remains alive and well, not just in the world, but within our flesh.

This fact does not excuse Cain's offense and subsequent attitude, but it does mean that our response should be tempered, knowing that that same impulse dwells within us.

Read Genesis 4:8-16.

v9

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Even after what I have just proposed, Cain's insolence before Almighty God is breathtaking. More than one commentator sees a contrast between Cain's response and those of his mom and dad; Leupold offers one example:

Here is the second cross-examination found in the Scriptures. The contrast with the first is apparent. The first found Adam and Eve humble, though given to evasion and excuses. The second finds Cain impudent and hardened, at least at the beginning of the interview.

Sorry, but I don't see it. Read again Genesis 3; I see the evasion and excuses Leupold mentions, but not a trace of humility, much less, contrition or confession in Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve seem to accept Yahweh God's verdict, but they do so mute, so how can we know there is humility in their hearts? No, again with the exception of Abel, they are all of a piece: blaming others, denying their own complicity, and at least in Cain's instance, whining about the verdict.

Then Yahweh said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?”

Just as when He earlier called out to Adam, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9), Yahweh isn’t seeking information of which He is ignorant. He is giving Cain the opportunity to come clean and confess what he did.

And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Big mistake, lying to God. Cain’s response betrays how small and unimportant God is in his eyes; we have a rather low opinion of those we think are foolish enough to believe our lies.

Alexander MacLaren: Cain’s defiant answer teaches us how a man hardens himself against God’s voice. It also shows us how intensely selfish all sin is, and how weakly foolish its excuses are. It is sin which has rent men apart from men, and made them deny the very idea that they have duties to all men. The first sin was only against God; the second was against God and man. The first sin did not break, though it saddened, human love; the second kindled the flames of infernal hatred, and caused the first drops to flow of the torrents of blood which have soaked the earth. When men break away from God, they will soon murder one another.

v10-11

Question: Look again at vv10-12. Does something jump out at you?

And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to Me from the **ground**. “And now, cursed are you from the **ground**, which has opened **its mouth** to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. “When you cultivate the **ground**, it will no longer yield **its strength** to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”
(emphasis added)

Thus far in this narrative—from Chapter One through Chapter Four—Yahweh has had an extraordinary focus on the ground, earth, soil.

In the Creation epoch of Chapter One the word that stands out for its repetition is “earth” (*eres*); in our study of that chapter we realized that even His creation of the celestial objects was for the benefit of the earth: “And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth” (Genesis 1:17 [cf. v15]).

The word “man” translates the Hebrew *adam* or *adahm*, which later will become the proper name of the first man, Adam. The Hebrew means ruddy—either, as some say, ruddy in color, or as others say, ruddy as from the reddish earth from which he was formed (which is the interpretation I favor). Thus Yah-

weh called this first man—both as a species and as a proper name—from the ground, the soil from whence he came. For whatever His reason, God wanted human beings to be of the earth, of the soil—not just *residing* on this planet, but *of* it. And this sets up the perfect contrast between the first and second “Adam,” as Paul puts it in his first letter to the church in Corinth.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45-47.

The verdict Yahweh God announced upon Adam in Chapter Three was all about “the ground,” finishing with the promise that,

“By the sweat of your face You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)

Now here in the passage before us Yahweh once again emphasizes “the ground,” interestingly with the Hebrew variant that immediately takes us back to Chapter One and the first man: *adamah*. There is not only this connection, but Yahweh actually *personifies* the ground (along with the victim’s blood), speaking of it as an audible witness to the horrendous murder.

v10

And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to Me from the ground.”

In this context I read Yahweh’s question as more an astonished exclamation, as well as one of incredulity: *What have you done! You murder your brother and then you lie to Me about it! Don’t you realize that even now I hear the sound of his blood crying out to Me?*

The words of this verse paint a vivid picture of the horror of death. “Blood” here is plural—that is, an abundance of blood—and the Hebrew *damim* speaks of that which when shed causes death; that is, not a simple cut or sore, but a grievous wound resulting in death. The “crying out” is not just a single shout, but persistent and continual, a wailing of pain. The depth of feeling behind the words of this verse illustrate what Leupold writes: “Men may esteem souls or blood lightly. Not so God.”

From v10 we might surmise that Abel’s body still lies there with his blood soaking into the soil, but v11 seems to indicate that Cain may have tried to hide his crime by burying his brother.

v11

“And now, cursed are you from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”

Adam Clarke assumes a burial.

Clarke: It is probable that Cain, having killed his brother, dug a hole and buried him in the earth, hoping thereby to prevent the murder from being known; and that this is what is designed in the words, Thy brother's blood crieth unto me From The Ground—which hath opened her mouth to receive it from thy hand.¹

¹ It would be a mistake to conclude from this that the blood spilled into the ground is what renders it infertile for Cain, or that, as some say, by drinking the innocent blood the ground becomes an accomplice in the sin of murder. In the Law God said that this is what Israel was to do with the blood of the flesh instead of eating it: "Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water." (Deuteronomy 12:16)

The phrase "cursed are you from the ground," while accurate and literal for the Hebrew, can be a little confusing. The NIVs do a good job rendering the proper meaning of the phrase for modern ears: "Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground..." Cain is cursed *min-ha'adhamah*, "away from the ground." This means that Cain's curse is worse than we might think at first; the phrase means "so that there is no ground for you"—which sets up what will be stated in the next verse.

But let us think about that for a moment. Recall the last time you felt truly homesick. You were far from home in a location alien to you and suffered an almost nauseating feeling in the pit of your stomach. You wanted nothing more than to just return *home*. Well, henceforth Cain will not have a home to return to. For the remainder of his time on earth he will be a homeless vagrant, a perpetual alien no matter where he is.

v12

"When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."²

Verse 12 makes it clear that God's judgment on Cain goes one step further from that inflicted on his parents. Cain is not to be moved to a new setting, but is consigned to be a wandering nomad.

"When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you..."

It's difficult to know how far to press this and the second part of the verse. The commentators mostly prefer to make this as dramatic and dark as possible—and they may be correct. But just looking at the definitions of the Hebrew words doesn't immediately reveal the depth of this curse. Does this just mean that his farming would be made even more difficult than that given to Adam—or that the earth would yield *nothing* for his efforts? As I said, the commentators mostly go with the latter.

David Guzik: The curse upon Cain was that Adam's curse would be amplified in regard to him. If bringing forth food from the earth would be hard for Adam (Gen 3:17-18), it would be **impossible** for Cain.

² God's judgment against Cain is almost identical to His judgment against his father Adam. In both instances they are thrown out of their present domicile, and the ground rendered inhospitable to their agricultural needs. But if you think about it, there is a progression—a worsening—from the first to the second. The ground to which Adam was exiled was outside of the Garden and cursed. It was here where Cain and Abel were born and raised. So from a cursed ground Cain is being exiled to a place even worse.

Adam Clarke: Thou shalt be expelled from the presence of God, and from thy family connections, and shalt have **no fixed secure residence in any place**. The Septuagint render this *στενων και τρεμων εση*, thou shalt be groaning and trembling upon the earth - the horror of thy crime shall ever haunt thee, and **thou shalt never have any well-grounded hope that God will remit the punishment thou deservest**. *No state out of endless perdition can be considered more awful than this.*

JFB: ...condemned to perpetual exile; a degraded outcast; the miserable victim of an accusing conscience. (emphasis added throughout)

“...you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

Leupold makes an interesting point, that “the second part of the curse may also quite properly be regarded as...producing the first. For if a man be continually ‘shifting and straying about in the earth,’ it will not be possible for him to settle down to any fixed occupation like agriculture.”

The KJV renders this “a fugitive and a vagabond.” Translating the Hebrew as “vagabond” was solid scholarship for the time, taken from the Latin *vagare*, which means “to stray about.” To our ears, however, “vagabond” has come to mean a hobo or tramp, so it is rightly translated now “wanderer” by most. The first word, translated “vagrant” in the LSB, means to quiver, waver, tremble, totter, to stagger like a drunkard. It is a picture of someone wandering about aimlessly, someone not applied diligently to anything.

No matter how dark our interpretation of the text in this verse, it is indeed a dismal and discouraging prospect for Cain. God’s judgment administered upon the man is harsh—but just. He has destroyed the life of his brother, murdering him in cold blood, out of jealousy. He is already a miserable human being; now, by Yahweh’s verdict, his life from here on out will be miserable.

Yet, even in this we see God’s grace extended—and we will see even more in the rest of this passage. In the future God’s Law will dictate what will happen to someone who does what Cain just did.

“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee. If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him by deceit, you shall take him even from My altar, that he may die.” (Exodus 21:12–14)

But God extends a merciful hand to Cain, *not* killing him, as he deserves, but instead banishing him to a life wandering aimlessly about the earth.

SESSION 36: THE WAILING VOICE OF INNOCENT BLOOD, PART TWO

Genesis 4:9-16

PREFACE

Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, has just committed the first homicide on earth and, when called out by Yahweh, displays an extraordinary level of deceit and arrogance to the Creator. He is asked by God, “Where is Abel your brother?” Instead of confessing, he lies. When he is scolded and cursed by God for his sin and crime, instead of bowing in humility before his Judge, he whines.

In our previous session we saw Yahweh’s grace, once again, in that when He later writes His Law for Moses, the infraction committed by Cain will be punished by immediate death; here, instead of that, he is banished and consigned to a life of a wanderer and vagrant. God extends a merciful hand to Cain, *not* killing him, as he deserves, but instead banishing him to a life wandering aimlessly about the earth.

That is how we left it last time, because that is what the text says. In this session, we will discover that Yahweh’s grace is extended even further, granting a *different* life for Cain.

Read Genesis 4:9-17.

wv13-14

In v12 Yahweh makes His judgment and curse very clear to Cain: “When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”¹

We find Cain’s response to this in the next two verses:

“My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will be that whoever finds me will kill me.”

We need to address several important aspects of this passage; here again is text that, on the surface, is easy to pass by, but to the serious student of God’s word is revealed far more information—or at least points to ponder and examine in greater depth.

“My punishment is too great to bear!”

In my reading the scholars are split about down the middle on how this is to be translated. On one side are those who, like Luther, make it “My **sin** is too great to be forgiven!” or “My **sin** is too great for me to bear!” (emphasis added). Either of those two exclamations express at least a measure of guilt and confession—not in full flower, but at least a bud.

¹ Note that throughout the account God is designated as Yahweh, to remind the reader of the gracious faithfulness which characterizes His dealings with sinners. Cain’s answer, however, gives no indication of a repentant spirit. There is no grief over sin in the words, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.”

On the other side are those who, like all our common translations (save for the *Tree of Life* Version) make it, as in the LSB, “My **punishment** is too great to bear!” or “My **punishment** is more than I can bear” (emphasis added).

It is true that the Hebrew *awoni* (ah-von-ee) can be translated either sin (or iniquity) or punishment. A good example of the former is found in Psalm 51.

Read Psalm 51:5.

Just as the context in David’s psalm requires that it be translated “iniquity” or “sin”—it would make no sense for him to have written, “Behold, I was brought forth in punishment...”—the context of vv13-14, and specifically v14, requires the word “punishment.” Verse 14 is all about what Yahweh is doing to him, His judgment, His curse—not what Cain did to merit that curse.

“Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground;”

I don’t know about you, but I hear more of Cain’s insolence in this remark. Doesn’t it smack of his parents’ responses when they were caught?

Read Genesis 3:11-13.

Implicit in “You are doing this to me” is a shirking of responsibility, a not-so-subtle pointing of the finger at someone else.²

Cain whines that Yahweh’s sentence does not fit the crime—yet we have established that, later, according to Mosaic Law, he would have been instantly put to death. Cain’s right; his sentence does *not* fit the crime—it’s too lenient.

Adding to his insolence is the way he sets up this remark with “Behold” (*hen*) which in this setting is probably similar to an accusatory “Hey look, You have driven me from...”

Donald Barnhouse: One of the consequences of sin is that it makes the sinner pity himself instead of causing him to turn to God. One of the first signs of new life is that the individual takes sides with God against himself.

“and from Your face I will be hidden,”

Cain is saying, essentially, *from Your presence I will be hidden* [as in the NIVs]. *I will have lost any privilege of communion with You.* Yet Yahweh never made this part of His curse upon the man, which raises a number of questions:

- Is Cain expressing a regretful longing on his part? or just a cold fact, a result of his banishment?
- Is he associating being “driven this day from the face of the ground” with the “face” of Yahweh—thereby expressing the concept (substantiated in v16) that by leaving the precincts of Eden he will be excommunicated from a holy place?

² I am reminded of the infamous crime of the California Menendez brothers who brutally killed their two parents in 1989. During their trial and subsequent sentencing in 1996, many bleeding heart liberals cried out for leniency based on the fact that these two “boys” (now 28 and 26, respectively) had lost their parents. To which those of sober mind responded, “Well, that’s because *they killed them!*”

It is hard to know precisely what had been transpiring between Yahweh and the people of His Creation, especially since their expulsion from the garden. They remain in the precincts of Eden—the Garden is not named Eden; it is a garden in Eden (Genesis 2:8). We can rightly assume that since the Fall and expulsion from the Garden that their communion with God had changed, but was it now nonexistent? We assume they worshiped Yahweh God, since Abel and Cain made offerings to Him (Genesis 4:3-4), but what other forms did that worship take? Even outside the Garden there had to be some form of communion, since that is what Cain would be losing by leaving Eden.

I do not agree with those who describe the Garden and/or Eden itself as a “temple” of sorts, as in a shrine where one would return to worship Yahweh God. Yes, there was the regular *presence* of God—especially prior to the Fall. But I reject that more formalized picture of it as a “temple.”

“...and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will be that whoever finds me will kill me.”

Alexander MacLaren (1826-1910), that poet of the pulpit, adds color to this for us.

MacLaren: All sin makes us homeless wanderers. There is but one home for the heart, one place of repose for a man, namely, in the heart of God, the secret place of the Most High; and he who, for his sin, durst not enter there, is driven forth into “a salt land and not inhabited,” and has to wander wearily there.

³ We must remember that in this narrative of the first family we are not granted access to the entire story. We are not privy to the time frame, the span of time between additional births, the departure of later family members, nor their histories in distant lands. As with other descendency lists in the Bible, not every last individual is included; these lists tend to pursue a distinct line, while ignoring others. When we add to this ignorance of time spans and gaps the stated information about lengthy life spans during this ancient period—e.g., Adam lived 930 years, his son Seth 912 years (Genesis 5:5-8), we can easily assume a vast uncounted population spread over the earth.

Then for a second time Cain states something that was not part of Yahweh’s curse upon him; he considers his very life as forfeit if he is made to leave Eden.

So once again we have to wonder from where this idea comes. Was there in place already the concept that a known murderer’s life was free for the taking—especially by kin, which at this point in history everyone would be? If so, how could someone in a distant land even *know* what he had done?³

I think one of our class members, last week, offered a reasonable possibility, that it would be apparent—if not immediately, then eventually—to everyone he encountered that Cain was a man cursed by Yahweh (e.g., Jonah on the ship, Jonah 1:7-12). He would be at least shunned, and quite possibly killed as a reject from decent society. Or it could be that a descendant of Abel himself—remember, we don’t know how old the two brothers were in Chapter Four, nor their marital status—some distant son or second cousin, might have learned of the murder through the grapevine and have taken it upon himself to exact an act of blood vengeance. After all, Cain’s great-great-great-great grandson, Lamech, will know what Yahweh is now to say to Cain (v24).

Yahweh now affirms this possibility of Cain being killed in the next verse.

v15

So Yahweh said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And Yahweh appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one who found him would strike him.

Second act of grace by Yahweh: Cain would not just be allowed to live, but he would carry with him some sort of protection. Don’t miss the irony here: *Cain is a cold-blooded murderer, who will henceforth be supernaturally protected—by God—from being murdered himself.*

We need not waste our time trying to figure out what form this “sign” or “mark” (Hebrew *ot* [OAT]) took. We might rationally assume that it was something recognizable to a stranger, but just what that might be, we have no clue—if it even *was* something visible on his person. John Sailhamer offers a tantalizing theory that is, again, another tie-in to the future Mosaic Covenant—specifically, the “cities of refuge” for any “manslayer.”

Read Numbers 35:6, 10-12.

Sailhamer posits that the city Cain will build for his family in Nod (vv16-17) will be in essence his “sign” protecting him from those desiring to take his life. It is an intriguing theory that has some aspects to commend it, but it falters on one critical point: Every reference in the Pentateuch to the cities of refuge specifies that they are only for “the manslayer who has struck down any person *unintentionally*...” (Numbers 35:11, emphasis added). Cain does not meet this requirement, as he set out to *intentionally* kill his brother Abel.⁴

Even so, the Law has not yet been handed down, so we see God’s grace during these early days in sparing the life of Cain. And I appreciate the K&D view of this.

K&D: God granted him continuance of life, not because banishment from the place of God’s presence was the greatest possible punishment, or because the preservation of the human race required at that time that the lives of individuals should be spared—for God afterwards destroyed the whole human race, with the exception of one family—but partly because the tares were to grow with the wheat [Matthew 13:24-30], and sin develop itself to its utmost extent...

Out of all the possible answers to the question, *Why did God spare Cain?* (and there are myriad), the two that track best for me are the “tares and wheat” principle mentioned by K&D, and that “God lengthened Cain’s days that he might repent” (Leupold), which the evidence seems to indicate that he did not.

⁴ “Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he would die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.” (Numbers 35:18-19)

v16

Then Cain went out from the presence of Yahweh and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Several things stand out in this brief verse that closes the Edenic narrative:

- Cain does indeed leave the presence of Yahweh; he is now alienated from his Maker, the Lord of heaven.
- After his being cursed by God to a life of “wandering,” we are a bit surprised to read that he “settled” (dwelt) somewhere—anywhere.
- We are told that he dwelt in “the land of Nod, east of Eden.”

The name of that land where Cain dwelt—capitalized in all our versions, implying that it was an established settlement—is simply the Hebrew for the “wandering of an aimless fugitive” (*node*).

Whether the region had a known name or not, it was simply a barren, probably desert region somewhere to the east of Eden.

YLT: And Cain goeth out from before Jehovah, and dwelleth in the land, moving about east of Eden;

TLV: Then Cain left Adonai's presence and dwelled in the Land of Wandering, east of Eden.

With the exception of v25 and its recording of another son born to Adam and Eve, we are now through with Eden and its Garden. Some of these early names will reappear elsewhere in God's word, but the narrative of Creation and its first family has come to an end.

We leave it with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, in its pages we have a picture of the paradise in which God intended his people, and the earth itself with its beasts and other living things, to dwell in sweet communion with Him. So from it we have an idea of how believers will be spending eternity future with our Lord.

On the other hand, however, these early pages describe the painful root of our own rebellion and depravity—the corruption we live with every day of our lives because of the decisions made by Adam and Eve. And even they would be firsthand witnesses to this, since the corruption would be born into their immediate offspring.

SESSION 37: AN UNHOLY FAMILY

Genesis 4:17-24

PREFACE

H. C. Leupold explains that with v16 in Genesis 4, we have now inaugurated a new chapter in the history of man—in fact, it is the chapter in which mankind still dwells.

Leupold: Not without reason the fathers saw in these first sons of Adam prototypes of the two divisions into which the human race is divided ever since: the church and the world. The antagonism between the two began at this point and is characteristic of all human history ever since. This is a point of view clearly maintained by the New Testament. There the opposition of Cain to Abel is traced to the fact that "his works were evil and his brother's were righteous," and at the same time it is stated that "Cain was of the evil one" (1Jo 3:11-12).

[For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. (1 John 3:11–12)]

Leupold: It was more than a momentary flash of anger that revealed itself in Cain's deed. A basic change of heart had taken place in him, a shift of allegiance to "the evil one." Since such opposition is fundamental, it is the beginning of the tragic division of the race that is in reality the explanation of a good bit of the history of the world.

Professor Leupold wrote that in 1942, and eighty-two years later it is a fundamental truth as evident now as then—even more so. The departure of Cain into the east, after his unrepentant killing of his brother, was the first footfall toward the societal, cultural, and spiritual divide that exists today:

- God's eternal system vs. Satan's temporal system;
- those who worship God, and those who worship other "gods";
- those pursuing righteousness, and those pursuing evil;
- those obeying God, and those obeying only self.

Read Genesis 4:16-22

v17

Then Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Verse 17 does not tell us

- when Cain married (presumably a sister),
- whether or not they had children before this, or
- when he began building a “city”—which could have been as modest as a mud brick wall around a couple of houses.

All we know for a time frame is that the conception and the building of the city occurred after Yahweh sent him away from Eden.

Regarding this “city,” frankly, I am astonished by the NIVs’ translations of late. I have made it no secret that I consider the NIV usually the *least* of our popular versions, but recently, repeatedly, it has come in as one of the more accurate translations of the text! And here is one more case in point: “Cain was then building a city...” This is more important than you might think at first. Most of our versions say that Cain “built” a city—implied, completed and lived there, which naturally raises questions about the fulfillment of God’s curse that he would be a “vagrant and wanderer.”

If Cain “built” a city, that sounds as if he is no longer a wanderer. But the Hebrew (*wayhiy boneh*) can also be translated “he was building,” indicating a process that was probably not completed (as K&D and Leupold interpret it). So the construction of the enclosure could be seen as Cain’s attempt to *thwart* Yahweh’s curse. And if he never completed it nor settled there, it could be seen as Yahweh thwarting Cain’s attempt.¹

And it is probably an indicator of his reputation as a brother-killer that Cain names the city not after himself, but his son. The fewer who know who he is and where he lives the better.

Another tie-in to the idea of this being a city of refuge for Cain is the Hebrew word for city used here—*ir* (EE-er)—which is from the root *ur* (OO-er), “to rouse” or “to raise an alarm.” This points to the city as a place of refuge when an alarm might be raised.

v18

Now to Enoch [hah-NOOK] was born Irad [ee-RAHD], and Irad was the father of Mehujael [mah-HU-ya-el], and Mehujael was the father of Methushael [meh-tu-shah-el], and Methushael was the father of Lamech [LEH-meck].

The Names

It can be confusing any time one digs into the several name lists in the Bible, for there are names—similar, and some times identical—that appear in more than one. For instance, a comparison of the names descended from Cain and those descended from his brother Seth reveals some that are similar (Enoch and Enosh) and some that are identical (Lamech and Lamech).

Some scholars claim that this means the ancient names are drawn from a single source—i.e., that over time the lists have become corrupted and confused. But that needn’t be the case; after all, how many “Davids” are there in the

¹ The building of his “city,” completed or not, does not nullify God’s curse and prophecy. He could have built the settlement, even finished it, but then have been forced to move on later, still the wanderer, ever the vagrant.

world. And when one takes into account interaction and communication between families, of course they could reuse names, or create individualized variants of a favorite ancestor's name.

Nonetheless, one has to pay attention to context and, more important than that, the correct starting point (or at least immediate progenitor) for the common names. Let's take Lamech for one example, Cain's great-great-great-great grandson, who becomes the central figure as this episode comes to an end in v24.

If one does a search for the name, one finds the first occurrence in this passage: Genesis 4:18-24. He is a descendant of Cain, son of Adam. When one turns the page to Chapter Five, one finds the name again listed in vv25-28, and at the top of the list is Adam, so one might gather from this that the two Lamechs are the same man. But in Chapter Four the Lamech is descended from Cain, while the Lamech in Chapter Five is descended from one of Adam's other sons, Seth (v3).²

The Lamech descended from Cain is a chip off Cain's block; he is no good, and never heard from again. The Lamech descended from Seth will become the father of Noah, and the grandfather of the three important tribes of the Middle East; more importantly, however, he is included in the lineage of the Messiah, Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

Read Luke 3:23, 36-38.

Luke's lineage works *backward* toward the original progenitor, while a similar list in 1 Chronicles 1, works *forward* from Adam and Seth.

What these various lists reveal is that whatever Eve imagined for her first son, Cain, he would not be the seed to "bruise [the serpent] on the head" (3:15). His line would come to an abrupt end (at least in the biblical chronicles) because it would be one not of God but of the world. Cain did not just make a mistake; he "was of the evil one," "his deeds were evil" (1 John 3:11-12), and his line will go nowhere in God's economy.

By contrast his brother Seth will indeed inaugurate the line from which will eventually spring forth the Messiah—the one who would "bruise [the serpent] on the head."

vv19-22

The narrative now skips forward several generations to focus on Lamech and his line. And though it is relatively subtle, the picture is one of these descendants of Cain living out their lives focused not on things above, but on the things of this earth.³

First off, Lamech invents polygyny by taking two wives, thus corrupting the ideal standard set by God of a man and woman becoming one flesh. The names of both wives reveal an attention to the physical, and the sensual: *Adah*

² And the difference between the two lines is like night and day.

³ It is not obvious from the printed page, but this is because we too are residents grounded in this earth; our spirits may soar with Christ, but our feet remain firmly planted in the soil. The contrast is clear, however, when one compares it to the picture of Adam and Eve originally in pleasant communion with Yahweh in the garden, and their son Abel making an acceptable offering to Him.

⁴ Keep in mind that all these names are the rough Hebrew equivalent of original names we do not know, in a language unknown to us—and, perhaps, even to Moses.

Leupold: “It appears that many of the names of these early days may not originally have been given, to their bearers, but may have originated in the course of time as descriptive of the outstanding characteristic of the person.”

(from the root *ada*): to bedeck, ornament, or remove a garment; *Zillah*: the shady or the tinkling (perhaps from her adornment).⁴

vv20-21

Before long Lamech has four children from his two wives. His wife Adah delivers Jabal (yah-val), who will be “the father”—i.e., the “originator” or “ancestor”—of herdsmen; apparently it was he who hit upon the idea of living in a portable tent so as to travel about in search of pasturage for his flocks and herds. Then Adah delivers a second son, Jubal (yoo-val), the root of which means to produce, to bring forth—in this instance, sound from musical instruments. Again, he is the “father,” the originator of musicians. We get our word “jubilate,” to shout for joy, from his name.

v22

As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Lamech’s second wife gives him another son and a daughter. And the occupation of this third son (tuval-kine) just may play a role in the poem or song that closes out this episode. There are some intriguing threads hidden here beneath the surface of our common translations of v22.

The LSB says that Tubal-cain was the “forger of all implements of bronze and iron,” and our other versions have subtle variations on this (I have no idea why the KJVs have “instructor”—unless by that they mean he was the first and subsequently taught others his craft, which we can assume to be true). Actually a more literal picture of his craft would be “hammering all kinds of cutting things in brass and iron” (K&D) or “the hammerer of every cutting device of bronze and iron” (Leupold). Since “cain” means spear or lance, this could have been a surname given him because of his profession, i.e., “Tubal the spear forger.”

The use of a variant of this word by Isaiah hints at a measure of darkness in Tubal-cain’s craft; in Isaiah 3:3 it is translated, “the skillful enchanter.” And some interpretations of Lamech’s song suggest that he could have assumed that the weapons created by his son held an enchanted power.

vv23-24

And Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give ear to my word, For I have killed a man for striking me; And a boy for wounding me; If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

This has been a troublesome passage ever since it was written, with commentators' interpretations all over the place. Regarding v23, one's interpretation boils down to whether Lamech is speaking about something he has already done—implied by the past tense used in all our versions—or boldly declaring what he *will or can* do (in other words, a boast)—which is offered as an alternate reading in the LSB/NASB footnote, “or kill,” and even more specifically in the original NIV: “or I will kill.” It is toward this latter interpretation I lean.

As mentioned earlier, this entire narrative about Cain and his descendants, from vv8-24 in Chapter Four, describes Cain as a self-centered, willful, unrepentant scoundrel, and at least one purpose for its inclusion in Scripture is to show the contrast between the unrighteous, worldly line that emanates from Cain, and the righteous line that leads from Seth to King David, and then to Jesus (Luke 3).

In keeping with that difference, we see Lamech as a worldly, boastful individual who has placed his hope in the beauty and strength of worldly things:

- he has selected not one, but two wives for their appearance;
- his daughter is named Naamah, which means pleasantness, pleasure, lovely or graceful;
- his sons have taken up useful, practical, pursuits that are also rooted in the strengths and wealth of this world: flocks and herds (wealth), entertainment, and the crafting of implements for agriculture and war.

It is this last that segues into Lamech's boasting song. Even if it does speak in the past tense—“I have killed”—it does not speak of the equitable retribution that will later be prescribed by the Law. Leupold sees the man picking up one of his son's just-forged weapons (from the previous verse), brandishing it about as he utters a poetic threat to those who would dare threaten him with injury.

K&D: The perfect [tense] is expressive not of a deed accomplished, but of confident assurance; and the suffixes are to be taken in a passive sense. The idea is this: Whoever inflicts a wound or stripe on me, whether man or youth, I will put to death; and for every injury done to my person, I will take ten times more vengeance than that with which God promised to avenge the murder of my ancestor Cain. In this song—which contains in its rhythm, its strophic arrangement of the thoughts, and its poetic diction, the germ of the later poetry—we may detect “that Titanic arrogance, of which the Bible says that its power is its god (Hab. 1:11), and that it carries its god, viz., its sword, in its hand (Job 12:6)” (Delitzsch). (emphasis added)

Here we have the voice of the fallen world, celebrating itself rather than Yahweh God, and a life pursued for itself rather than for Him.

SESSION 38: A NEW DIRECTION

Genesis 4:25-5:2

PREFACE

To our regret and shame, many of us can cite times in our personal history—or perhaps just one dramatic time—when, as a Christian, we rebelled against God; when, for whatever reason, He said go west and we went east.* But afterward we were convicted of our sin, confessed, repented, and by His forgiving grace later found ourselves back in fellowship with our Lord.

I stand by my earlier position that we cannot say with certainty whether Adam and Eve are—or are not—in heaven. Adam lived 930 years; a lot can happen in a lifetime of almost one thousand years, and none of it is recorded in Scripture or elsewhere beyond the days of Eden. For example, in the “roster of faith” in Hebrews 11, the earliest name mentioned is not Adam, but his son Abel.

Nevertheless, in the passage before us we have pretty good evidence that the first couple did not remain in that initial state of rebellion against their Maker, as recorded in Genesis 3.

Before we proceed into that, however, let’s establish where we are in this narrative. We have just left the story, in vv17-24, of an unholy family—the Cainites—which ends (the story, not the family line) in the story of Lamech and his family. Lamech was Cain’s great-great-great-great grandson, and he represents, in a broad sense, the culture of the world in opposition to the culture of righteousness, those aligned with the physical over the spiritual. In other words, the fallen, depraved culture in which all of us dwell still today.

If we didn’t have v25, v24 would leave us discouraged over civilization’s prospects, and wondering why Yahweh permitted Cain to murder the more righteous Abel.

Read Genesis 4:25-26.

v25

Then Adam knew his wife again; and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth...

I must confess that a conversion process must take place in my brain whenever I read the name Seth (Hebrew, *Sheth* [shet]). I have long been a student of ancient Egypt, and their multi-faceted god of the deserts, storms, chaos and war: *Set* (Greek, Seth). So not unlike translating the face of a digital clock into the more familiar analog clock face, I must wipe away the darker image of the Egyptian Set and replace it with the more benign and brighter Seth of Genesis.

* e.g., Jonah 1:1-2.

More than a few assume from the text that there was an extended period in which Adam and Eve had no sexual union, and hence, no more children until they decided to start again and Eve subsequently gave birth to Seth. There is no reason to hold that position. Verse 25 simply records another son born to the couple. Period.

But for some reason—as evidenced in the name she gave him—Eve saw in *this* birth a special sign; at the very least she saw in this birth God’s gracious hand, his condescending mercy in replacing the loss of Abel.

for she said, “God has set for me another seed in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.”

Among our common versions the LSB alone translates this literally. The other versions alternate between “appointed” and “granted,” but Eve uses a word that is a play on the name she gives the boy, which is evident in English. “Since ‘set in place of’ means ‘to substitute’ we may adequately interpret the name ‘Sheth’ to mean substitute... As a word of Eve it definitely connects the two acts and states that God meant Seth to be a substitute for the slain Abel” (Leupold).

However long it had been since their egregious behavior with the serpent, it is clear from Eve’s spirit in this that they were no longer living in open opposition to God, but, presumably, striving to live in obedience to Him.

It may be that the person who saw a prophetic connection between this birth and the “seed” in 3:15 who would “crush [the serpent] on the head” was not Eve or Adam (who seems to have already faded into the background) but the author, Moses. He is the one pressing the “seed” narrative from here through Chapter Five.

And here one more pattern is set, one that will be seen time and again throughout much of the OT: God’s favor is bestowed not on the eldest, but a younger son. Cain, the eldest received God’s *dis*favor, while the younger of the two, Abel, received God’s favor. Because he was killed by the eldest, Seth (younger still) will replace Abel as the recipient of God’s favor. There are a number of examples of this pattern,¹ but to cite just one, David was the least of the sons of Jesse, yet it was in him God established the Davidic line and throne—an *eternal* throne on which would reign the Messiah.

v26

And to Seth, to him also, a son was born; and he called his name Enosh.

It is an interesting name that Seth gives his son: Enosh (ee-NOSH). Elsewhere, when used as a common noun, and simply translated “man” or “mankind,” it refers to the *frailty* of man, his earthiness, his mortality. Once again the venerable William Wilson fleshes this out for us.

Wilson: [Enosh means] to be sick unto death, in very great distress, mortal, fatal, and according to nature; the common name of man in

¹ Examples in Genesis of the eldest son being passed over:

Japheth (10:2-5)
Ham (10:6-20)
Nahor (11:29; 22:20-24)
Ishmael (17:20)
Lot (19:19-38)
Esau (Chapter 36)

regard to his being heir to corruption and weakness; not used of man before the Fall.

In this *enosh* is just about synonymous with another word translated “Man”: *adam*. So we wonder why Seth named his son Enosh.

Was it because he was particularly frail when born?

Was it a way to give him his own name, but also hearken back to his grandfather—either in a respectful or, remembering his dad’s great sin, more accusatory way?

Or was it Seth’s way to acknowledge the general frailty and mortality of mankind as a whole—especially in contrast to the strength and immortality of Yahweh? That is, was it a way to express his submission before God?

Then men began to call upon the name of Yahweh.

While there are a few who want to translate this, “Then men began to be called *by the name of the Lord*,” the consensus, as seen in our common versions, is that this refers to men “calling upon” the name of the Lord—that is, calling out to Him in public worship.

And here it seems natural to associate this with the immediately preceding statement about Seth naming his son Enosh. If this was a time of spiritual awakening and acknowledgment of Yahweh as merciful, unchangeable, and faithful (as his personal, covenantal name implies), then it would have been only natural for man to acknowledge his own lowliness, his “frailty” (*enosh*) before sovereign God. Thus Seth may have chosen his son’s name to commemorate this special time of awakening, and worship of Yahweh.

Here is the picture: From the creation of man, *private* worship had existed in one form or another. We can safely assume that in 130 years this worship had had its natural ebbs and flows—periods of faithful adherence, followed by stagnant periods of relative disinterest. For whatever reason, the naming of Enosh marked a time when this worship flowered into a more public form of worship which incorporated a calling out to God by the audible use of His name.

Now we turn the page to Chapter Five, where for the first time we get a picture of the breadth and depth of these generations. But before that the chapter begins with a brief recapitulation of how it all began.

Read Genesis 5:1-5.

v1

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

We begin by recognizing that this is clearly organized by Moses. That is, he knows how the story ends (or at least the end as witnessed by him), so he steers the narrative—as he has from Genesis 1:1—in that direction. Thus he does not

waste any ink on Abel, since his line ended with him; nor does he waste any ink on Cain, since he was a reprobate whose line in the scope of God's economy goes nowhere. Instead Moses zeroes in immediately on the line through Seth.²

And speaking of Moses, we notice something else right off; something is familiar about this first verse in Chapter Five: it is almost identical to v4 of Chapter Two. Moses has used the same template to express the “generations of Adam” as he did earlier to express the “generations of the heavens and the earth.”

2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.

5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

But there are also two differences.

the “book” of the generations

The word translated “book” (*sepher*) refers to any writing complete in itself, no matter its length. By this Moses may be referring to an even more ancient document as his source for what follows. Not necessarily, but perhaps.

“Elohim”

Logically, because he is hearkening back to the Creation epoch, Moses returns to using *Elohim* (“God”) as in Chapter One. This emphasizes “the Creator who is to be feared,” in contrast to the more personal, gracious *Yahweh* employed in Chapters Two to Four. (Not by a *different* author, as some contend; just a different emphasis by the *same* author.)

In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

This is not just a repeat of the creation of man, a simple refresher course, but an effort by Moses to ground what follows in the fact that it all began with God—just as Luke does in his backward genealogy of Christ Jesus, which ends with, “the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” It all begins with God, and Moses doesn’t want the reader to forget that, as he plows through the long list of human “begats” which follow.

Verse 3 states that “Adam...became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image...” Moses reminds us, in v1, that the first man was created “in the likeness of God.”

Thus we are to remember that God, Adonai Elohim, Yahweh is behind it all. He created man pristine, sinless; that was His intention.

In other words, God is the Father of all humanity. And Chapters Three and Four have revealed that His children have now gone in different directions—their own way; even the righteous, such as Seth and his son Enosh have lost that original state enjoyed by the first man and woman for a while.

² Perhaps here we should remind ourselves that what Moses knew must be informed by what the ultimate author—the Spirit—knew. After all, Moses the man did not know that the Seth line would culminate in the Messiah—he did not even know it would continue into the Davidic line! So how did he know to record Seth’s history and not Cain’s? It would seem that the Spirit’s counsel would be critical for this.

v2

He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

Just as Eve named her third son Seth, and Seth named his son Enosh, so—we learn here explicitly for the first time—God named his first human creation “Man.” We’ve taken that for granted all along, but Moses states it clearly here. And we have learned that “Man” (i.e., mankind), “man,” and “Adam” are all of the same word in Hebrew.

This presents a fascinating dichotomy: Verse 1 states that “God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.” Man is made in the likeness of God—yet, God chose to name this creation—both as a species and as a proper name—“Man,” which means from the ground, the soil from whence he came. For whatever His reason, God wanted human beings to be of the earth, of the soil—not just *residing* on this planet, but *of it*.

Made in the image of God, yet people of the soil—no wonder we’re confused!

We are familiar with Hollywood’s love of grand, epoch stories that go on for hours and hours, requiring thirty-five Blu-ray discs to tell the story in its entirety. Well, here’s one for you, Hollywood. How about telling the epic story that would cast into shade every other feeble epic previously produced: the story of Yahweh God’s plan for Mankind, from Creation all the way through to the Eternal State for some, the lake of fire for the rest.

Not just a series of action sequences (*talk about your action sequences! see the Eschaton*) alternating with romantic interludes, but the intricate, complex reasoning behind it all—God’s purpose, His plan from beginning to end, how it all fits together perfectly, with perfect result.

Now, I’d pay good money to see that.

SESSION 39: THE RIGHTEOUS LINE BEGINS, PART ONE

Genesis 5:3-27

PREFACE

There are a number of basic perceptions we need to either establish or at least consider before moving into this chapter.

The Span of Years

For the non-literalist there are two common ways that Chapter Five is interpreted so as to bring the life-spans of the patriarchs more in line with our own experience:

- **Years are really months.** Thus, for example, Adam's 930 years would then be reduced to 77.5 years. The problem with this is that this would require Enoch to have fathered Methuselah when he was only 5.5 years old.
- **Each name represents a family, rather than an individual.** This is slightly more palatable than the previous, but one does not get this sense reading through the list. The common-sense understanding is that we are reading about individuals fathering individuals.

So we will take a literalist position: the years are real years, and the names represent individuals in a family tree.

How Could This Be?

The explanation for the long life-spans of the patriarchs that seems to track the best is that, even considering the corruption resulting from the Fall, it would take a long time for the vitality and longevity created in the first man (Adam) to be diluted from man's constitution. Or as David Guzik puts it,

It is more likely that people did live much, much longer before the flood. This is because the degenerative effects of the fall on the human gene pool had not yet accumulated greatly, and because the environment in the pre-flood world was so different, with the blanket of water vapors surrounding the earth (Genesis 1:6-8). In the post-flood world, life spans quickly came down to the life-spans we are familiar with today.

Along with this, perhaps it was God's intention to extend man's life-span for a while to more rapidly populate the earth. One man can father a lot of children in 930 years.

For example, "one writer has estimated that if Adam, during his lifetime, saw only half the children he could have fathered grow up, and if only half of those got married, and if only half of those who got married had children, then even at these conservative rates, Adam would have seen more than a million of his own descendants" (Guzik).

The Textual Pattern of vv3-31

With only a few exceptions—exceptions which we will look at later—each generation in this chapter employs the same template:

And <father's name> lived <# years till son> years and became the father of <son's name>. Then <father's name> lived <# of years> years after he became the father of <son's name>, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of <father's name> were <# of years> years, and he died.

As in,

And Seth lived 105 years and became the father of Enosh.
Then Seth lived 807 years after he became the father of Enosh,
and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Seth
were 912 years, and he died.

And Seth lived 105 years and became the father of Enosh.

Scholars are split on whether the names of the sons in this list are or are not firstborns. For me it is obvious. We already know that Seth was not Adam's firstborn, and in our previous session we enumerated an incomplete list of second- or third-borns receiving the blessing rather than the firstborn—not least, King David, who was the runt of his father's litter after *seven* brothers!

The text simply says that so many years passed before *this* son was born. It just gives us the age of the father when this son was born. And in this was the Holy Spirit, working through Moses, aiming us toward the chosen line that would lead us, initially, to Noah, and then onward to David and Jesus of Nazareth.

...and he had other sons and daughters.

Likewise, there is nothing in the text to require his “other sons and daughters” being born *after* the chosen son. The literal text just reads “and begat sons and daughters.” Again, we know that at least in Adam's case there were two sons prior to Seth, and who knows how many daughters (at least one, which Cain surely married).

...and he died.

The inclusion of this in each statement is more than just acknowledging a funeral for each aged patriarch. By this Moses is emphasizing the regrettable but certain, Fall-induced mortality of man. We might add to it the unspoken but implied tag: “But it didn't have to be this way.”

The Time Span

Adding up the generations we come to the following conclusion: The Flood began in the year 1656 after Creation.

Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6)

There is, of course, much overlap in the generations. Thus Adam would have lived until after the birth of Lamech, the ninth patriarch; Methuselah, the eighth patriarch (the oldest and last to die [other than Noah and his sons]), would have lived until the year of the flood (Sailhamer).

THE EXCEPTIONS

vv3-5: Adam to Seth

Read Genesis 5:3-5.

The first exception does not really break the template but just expands it with an initial tidbit of information; in place of “father of <name of son>”, it has: “father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.”

And we can’t help but do what, I believe, was the author’s intention: that is to hearken back to—and draw a distinction *from*—the creation of Adam by God. The phrasing is similar, but flipped.

1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image,
according to Our likeness...”

5:3 he became the father of a son in his own likeness,
according to his image...

Some invest meaning in the flipping of “likeness” and “image,” but I just see it as the prerogative of any author to phrase it differently this time. The meaning is the same in both—except in this instance there is a depth of meaning in the contrast between God creating Adam and Adam becoming the father of Seth.

Adam was not just *created*, but created in the image of deity.

image = *tselem*: At its root the word means something carved, cut off or cut out. That is, something formed to look like something else.

likeness = *demut* (dee-MOOT): This word is similar, but has a different shading. It means a resemblance in outward appearance, similitude, in the same pattern; it includes the idea of “a representation of that which is not visible.”

As formed, Adam was created sinless and into an uncorrupted environment; the loss of both of these would come later.

The author Moses goes out of his way, as he initiates this line in Chapter Five, to emphasize that Adam’s son Seth was not made in the image of God, but in the image of man—*fallen* man, at that.

Even so, Keil & Delitzsch say that there was *something* of God passed down to his son.

K&D: As Adam was created in the image of God, so did he beget “in his own likeness, after his image;” that is to say, he transmitted the image of God in which he was created, not in the purity in which it came direct from God, but in the form given to it by his own self-determination, modified and corrupted by sin.

That is, from Abel, Cain, and Seth onward, every human being has been a mix of the two: a little bit of God, as man’s initial Creator, and a lot of the weakness and corruption of flesh and sin.

vv21-24: Enoch to Methuselah (meh-thoo-SHEH-lach)

Read Genesis 5:21-24.

This, of course, is a different Enoch than the one in Cain’s line from Genesis 4:17. Different line; different person. And at the relatively young age of sixty-five, he became the father of Methuselah, who will be the oldest living human being in the history of mankind. His father, Enoch, will have the *shortest* lifespan of the patriarchs of his generation—only 365 years. But this man had a better distinction than that.

Enoch “walked with God” (*Elohim*).

Alexander MacLaren: A dreary monotony runs through the ages. How brief and uniform may be the records of lives of striving and tears and smiles and love that stretched through centuries! Nine hundred years shrink into less than as many lines. The solemn monotony is broken in the case of Enoch. This paragraph begins as usual—he ‘lived’; but afterwards, instead of that word, we read that he ‘walked with God’—happy they for whom such a phrase is equivalent to ‘live’—and, instead of ‘died,’ it is said of him that ‘he was not.’

¹ Precisely what the name means, that Enoch gave his son, is hard to pin down; the basic definition of the name “Methushelah” seems to be “man of a dart,” or “man of the javelin.” If David Guzik is correct that his name means “when he is dead, it shall come,” which echoes the venerable Matthew Poole (1624–1679), who makes it “he dies, and the dart or arrow of God’s vengeance comes; or, He dies, and the sending forth of the waters comes,” then Enoch may have been privy to a prophecy regarding God’s future judgment upon mankind—i.e., the Flood—and so commemorated this in the name of his son, even as the prophecy affected his walk with God.

However your version arranges the words of v22, all the versions are saying the same thing. The word translated “after” means the hind, behind, or following part; so we are left with the impression that there must have been something about the birth of his son Methuselah that changed—or at least improved—Enoch’s relationship with God ever after.¹

Since Enoch is seventh from Adam in the line of Seth, as Lamech is seventh from Adam in the line of Cain, we see Enoch as the exemplar of righteousness, as we saw Lamech as the exemplar of evil—or at least worldliness—in their respective lines.

But the most important aspect of Enoch’s life was not his long-lived son, but that Enoch “walked with God.” And we have a pretty good picture of what that means in the prophecy of Malachi where, after God states his curse against the priests, He describes the nature of His relationship with Levi.

Read Malachi 2:4–6.

I agree with Leupold that this was probably not an intimate face-to-face relationship, as enjoyed by Adam and Eve prior to the Fall, but more of a *spiritual* relationship—which even we can enjoy today. Even so, this must have been a remarkable “walk.” As Jude’s epistle states, Enoch was not just a righteous man, but a prophet as well.

But Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, also prophesied about these men, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14–15)²

² See Commentary on Jude passage at the end of this session.

Enoch was a man of faith, as the writer to the Hebrews describes him.

Read Hebrews 11:5-6.

Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch was so faithful to God that his Lord rewarded him by saving him from the experience of death. The word translated “took” (*laqach*) offers an exquisite word picture of what God did; it means to accept, to take in the hand. It is a picture of the Lord God reaching down and lovingly lifting Enoch up and into His literal presence.

His being taken in this quiet manner does not picture the drama of Elijah’s translation (2 Kings 2:11-12), but it is, in some respects, more preferable in its level of soft intimacy. One day Enoch was; the next, he was not.

And Enoch’s translation is more akin to what living believers will experience when Christ Jesus raptures His church. One moment they will be walking the soil of earth in their corrupted flesh; then next moment they will be walking the streets of heaven in a brand new, uncorrupt, glorified body.

In our next session we will complete the generations in this list with Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah—another patriarch who “walked with God” and was “blameless” (Genesis 6:9)—and who represents an important milestone in these early generations.

COMMENTARY ON JUDE 14

Enoch, who "walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Gen 5:24), is not specifically called "the seventh from Adam" in the OT. But in Genesis 5 and also in 1 Chronicles 1:1—3, he is the seventh in order (counting Adam as the first). Here, however, Jude quotes not Genesis but the Book of Enoch (also called "The Ethiopia Book of Enoch")—the longest of the surviving Jewish pseudepigraphical writings and a work that was highly respected by Jews and many Christians. Those who wonder about the propriety of Jude's quotation of this noncanonical book should note that he does not call it Scripture. Paul also quoted from noncanonical writers statements he considered true. See Acts 17:28, where he quoted Cleanthes and Aratus (Phaenomena 5); 1 Corinthians 15:33, where he quoted Menander (Thais 218); and Titus 1:12, where he quoted Epimenides (De oraculis). Lawlor (p. 102) argues that Jude is not quoting the Book of Enoch but a prophecy of his given to Jude by inspiration. This is possible, of course, but unnecessary. The prophecy does not give any startling new information but is simply a general description of the return of the Lord in judgment (cf. Deut 33:2; Dan 7:10-14; Zech 14:5; Matt 25:31).

(Edwin A. Blum, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p393; 1981, The Zondervan Corporation.)

SESSION 40: THE RIGHTEOUS LINE BEGINS, PART TWO

Genesis 5:28-32

PREFACE

In Chapter Four of Genesis—specifically, vv16-24—the author of the Pentateuch, which we take to be Moses, gives us the beginning generations of the line coming forth from the first son of Adam, Cain. This will be an earthy, worldly, at times downright evil line that will be distinct from the more righteous line coming forth from Adam’s third son, Seth.

The beginning generations of Seth’s righteous line is delineated in Chapter Five of Genesis, which includes at least two individuals who are declared to have “walked with God”: Enoch and Noah (6:9). That is, they were particularly righteous men who evidenced an earnest, steadfast relationship with God. This does not mean they were perfect or without sin; it does mean that, like their descendant King David, they had a heart for God and desired to live for Him above all else.

Moses, on the surface at least, is rather pedantically outlining the two family trees, but beyond that he is painting a picture of two diametrically opposed worlds, two worlds that remain firmly in place even today. The first is dedicated to the material; the second, to the spiritual. The first places its hope in this moment and this temporal place; the second places its hope in the future and things above. The first strives to obey and glorify only itself; the second strives to obey and glorify eternal God.

Finally, Moses’ third purpose in itemizing these generations is to lead us to the man Noah, whose biography will occupy more words and pages than all the others combined, and will not close the list begun in Chapter Five until the end of Chapter Nine, when a *new* “generations” is inaugurated in Chapter Ten with the three lines shooting off from Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

But back to Chapter Five, where we are now ready for the third exception in this list of generations which spans 1,656 years from Adam to the Flood.

Read Genesis 5:28-32.

vv28-29

Lamech was born in the 187th year of his father Methuselah—a mere stripling at the time. In Lamech’s 182nd year, his son Noah was born, and the name he gave him hearkens back to his forefather, Adam, and the days after Adam rebelled against Yahweh God.

Read Genesis 3:17-19.

Now, almost one thousand years after the Fall, that curse was clearly still in effect, for Lamech voices the enduring work and pain of it, memorializing his hope for respite from it in the name of this son. The Hebrew is *Noach*, which means rest, or resting place.

It is not easy to find fulfillment of Lamech's prophecy regarding his son—if it even is prophetic; perhaps it just reflects the hopes and wishes of a father for his son.

Of all our common versions, only the ESV differs from the rest, with—
...and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands."

—which seems to be saying that either the relief that Noah will bring, or Noah himself will come "out of the ground." Not a helpful translation of this verse.

And here is an instance in which I disagree with Leupold. He writes, "[Lamech's] prophecy...may meet its highest fulfillment in the removal of the curse from the earth, which removal came after the Flood (8:21f)."

Well, no, God did not *remove* the curse of Genesis 3 after the flood; He just said—to Himself only—"I will never *again* curse the ground..." (emphasis added). This earth still groans from the weight and travail of that initial curse (Romans 8:18-22).

So just what is Lamech saying here? Is this a prophecy that will be fulfilled? (If not fulfilled, it's not a prophecy, but a hope.)

What was in the mind of Noah's dad when he named him is impossible to say—even *with* the explanation he includes in this verse. After Noah was dead, the ground remained cursed, man still toiled for his daily bread, sin and corruption (if these were included in his thoughts) would return. Perhaps the answer is to look for this prophecy's fulfillment well into the future from Noah's time.

Noah would be the instrument through which Yahweh God would secure the righteous line even as he expunged the Cainite line from the earth by means of the Flood. From an earthly point of view, David would not have been born had Noah not built his ark and been kept safe within it while all other people of the earth were destroyed. If David had not been born, the Davidic line would not have been established for the one who would reign on its throne "forever"—namely, the Messiah, Jesus the Son of God. And only in Him would *all* prophecies be fulfilled—including this from the lips of Lamech. Ultimate rest, comfort will come only when Christ reigns upon the earth and sin and evil and Satan and Death have all been thrown into the eternal flames.

vv30-31

The rest of this generational narrative follows the pattern set earlier. Lamech lived to be 777 years of age, and during those years he fathered other sons and daughters.

v32

And Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Every time I read about Noah and his three sons, my mind immediately returns to early 1982 when Linda and I were vacationing in Africa—first, two and a half weeks in Egypt, then two and a half weeks in Kenya. While we were in Egypt I noticed the name “Misr” on just about everything: buses, buildings, etc. And one day I mentioned to our guide that this “Misr” guy must own just about everything in the country. He laughed and said that that was the *Egyptian* name for Egypt. Turn please to Chapter Ten.

Read Genesis 10:1, 6.

Mizraim is shortened to Mizr or Misr today for what Egyptians call Egypt, but most of the world refers to it as Egypt. Turn the page to Chapter Twelve.

Read Genesis 12:10.

“Egypt” here and following translates the same Hebrew word Mizraim. Now, back to Chapter Six. We will just begin our look at this mysterious opening to Chapter Six, returning to it in our next session.

MIXING WHAT SHOULDN'T BE MIXED, PART ONE

Read Genesis 6:1-4.

“SONS OF GOD” AND “NEPHILIM”

Being a fan of Science Fiction and Fantastical stories, I would love for the early verses of Genesis 6 to be describing supernatural beings joining with human women to create a generation of giants. However... Let's clear this up right away.

“Sons of God”

There are a number of interpretations for both of these, but I will cut right to the chase. Leupold in his commentary rightly titles this passage, “The Comingling of the Two Races.” There is a reason that Moses has emphasized the two tracks humanity has followed thus far: the righteous line of Seth, against the worldly line of Cain.

In the episode before us these two lines, previously kept separate, now come together in an unauthorized, sinful manner—with fateful consequences. What is then meant by “sons of God” (*bene ha elohim*)? Let's look at just a couple of examples. Turn please to Psalm 73.

Referring to the righteous followers of God, Asaph writes in v15,
If I had said, "I will recount thus,"
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.

The Hebrew translated "children" is, literally, sons (*bene*). In other words, those who call upon the name of the Lord, those who follow the precepts of God, are referred to here as "sons of God."

The prophet Hosea writes,
And Yahweh said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people, and I am not your God."
Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And it will be that in the place
Where it is said to them, "You are not My people,"
It will be said to them,
"You are the sons of the living God." (Hosea 1:9–10)

So it is not uncommon in God's word to refer to the righteous, the followers of God, in a familial manner, as sons or children of God. It is true that, as some interpreters insist here, that in a few places in the OT angels are referred to in the same way. For example, Job 1:6 and (probably) 38:7. So we must look beyond the words to the setting to determine our interpretation, and I believe Moses has given us the context in Chapters Four and Five, and in the following Flood narrative: the Cainites vs. the Sethites, sons of the world vs. sons of God.

K&D: The question whether the "sons of Elohim" were celestial or terrestrial sons of God (angels or pious men of the family of Seth) can only be determined from the context, and from the substance of the passage itself, that is to say, from what is related respecting the conduct of the sons of God and its results... the connection of Genesis 6:1-8 with Genesis 4 necessitates the assumption, that such intermarriages (of the Sethite and Cainite families) did take place about the time of the flood.

Leupold summarizes this nicely:

Leupold: Here now is the natural sequence of thought: after the Cainites were observed to be going in one definite direction in their development, and the Sethites, too, were seen to be going in an entirely different direction, and these two streams of mankind were strictly keeping apart because they were so utterly divergent in character, now (ch. 6) the two streams begin, to commingle, and as a result

moral distinctions are obliterated and the Sethites, too, become so badly contaminated that the existing world order must be definitely terminated.

“Nephilim”

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days...

Just who are these mysterious “Nephilim”? The succinct answer is that they really were not mysterious at all.

Of our common versions only the KJVs render this word “giants.” This stems from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, which translated the original as *gigantes*. While admittedly misleading—we immediately think of abnormal beings of towering height—the word giants is fine if one broadens the definition according to the context.

Closer to our own time we refer to some men or women as “giants of industry”—for example, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Carnegie. More fitting for this context would be military or political giants, such as General Douglas MacArthur, Nimitz, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. All these men were, as v4 states, “mighty men, men of renown.” They stood out in a crowd, they were powerful, they were leaders, they changed things—some times for the better, some times for the worse.

But the word *Nephilim* as used in this context goes further than that; the word “tyrant” (as we interpret that word today) would not be a bad translation, men who were dedicated to conquering others, not just benignly ruling over them, but at times viciously dominating them; think Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan. These last three examples come closest to what the word means in our text. That some may have been physically dynamic, even larger or taller than the average man, is just one more aspect of their total presence.¹

This same interpretation can be applied to the one other instance of the word *Nephilim*, in Numbers 13:33.

On both of these passages—“sons of God” and “Nephilim”—mine is not a minority interpretation; the commentary community is not even split down the middle, as it often is. No, out of all the scholars I typically, or even occasionally reference, *all* but one subscribe to this position. That one who diverges from the rest is, curiously, the most contemporary of them all: David Guzik, who boldly speaks of angels mating with human women and towering giants roaming the earth.²

With these two controversial passages now established, in part two in our next session we will approach the text of Chapter Six as we normally do.

¹ It is not clear whether the last sentence in v4—“Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”—speaks of the Nephilim themselves, or their offspring. Nonetheless, I believe it could apply to both.

² K&D, Martin Luther, Adam, Clarke, J.F.B., Albert Barnes, John Gill, Matthew Henry, Peter Lange, H. C. Leupold, John Sailhamer, Matthew Poole, Paul Kretzmann.
vs.
David Guzik

SESSION 41: MIXING WHAT SHOULDN'T BE MIXED, PART TWO

Genesis 6:1-4

PREFACE

In our last session we sorted out the meaning of “sons of God” (v2) and “the Nephilim” (v4) at the beginning of Chapter Six. In this session we will now place these in their proper context. In short, the conclusion I offered last week was that “sons of God” speaks of those in the righteous line of Seth, and “the Nephilim” speaks of either the unrighteous tyrants—“mighty men... men of renown”—or their offspring, or both.

Now, although I pointed out that the majority of scholars agree with this interpretation—not all, but more—you are free to disagree and stick with fallen angels mating with human women and supernatural giants roaming the earth. That, however, will not be part of our interpretation of vv1-4, where, along with the verses that follow this opening passage as a run-up to the Deluge, everything in the text points to this drama being played out on earth between and against *humans*. For example, in vv1-7, “men” or “man” is used 10 times, with no mention of angels, fallen or otherwise.¹

¹ And, of course, there is that pesky statement by Jesus Himself that “For when [believers] rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). Angels are created, immortal beings who do not marry or reproduce—fallen or not. Period.

Read Genesis 6:1-4.

v1

Now it happened...

And it came to pass...

*Now it came about...**

It is fascinating that there is almost a lackadaisical tone to how the author opens his account of the great Flood. It is almost as if Moses has gathered his grandchildren around his feet to tell them a bedtime story: “Once upon a time...” But, in truth, it is to be a dramatic, *cataclysmic* story—grounded in geological fact—and one the details of which are decidedly *not* for young ears.

...when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Since Cain, at least, has a wife (4:17), we know that this verse is not announcing that all of a sudden female children began being born.

The author is setting the scene. The story is set some time in the future and the humanity that began in the garden in Eden has now multiplied to the extent that it cannot be contained in a small space, but must spread out over the earth in search of land for crops and grazing. It is strongly implied that the line from Cain and the line from his brother Seth have heretofore gone their separate ways, staying relatively separate from each other. This story

* The ESV and NIVs leave this phrase untranslated.

will describe how that has now changed—with tragic consequences. Moses includes the phrase, “and daughters were born to them,” not to announce something new, but to set the scene for what follows.

v2

[Now it happened...] that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good in appearance; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

On the surface we read this and might think, *What's wrong with that? A man spies an attractive woman and wants to marry her. Where's the harm?* But Moses embeds a subtle clue that this represents a move in the wrong direction.

Read Genesis 3:6.

See how that critical moment in the Fall is repeated here?

Chapter Three

Then the woman saw
that the tree was good for food
so she took from its fruit and ate

Chapter Six

the sons of God saw
that the daughters of men were good in appearance
and they took wives for themselves

The first instance resulted in the corruption of man and this earth; the second will result in a remaking of the earth and the annihilation of all mankind but the family of Noah.

Sufficient time has passed since the beginning generations from Seth, as recounted in Chapter Five, for the two generational lines—righteous and unrighteous—to intermingle. And what happens because of this is as timeless as Eden.

the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good in appearance

It is the timeless way of the world: women show, and men look. But more pertinent to the story, is that here the wrong men are looking at the wrong women. The author makes the point, drawing a distinction between the more righteous “sons of God” and “the daughters of men.”

Albert Barnes: The daughters of the stirring Cainites, distinguished by the graces of nature, the embellishments of art, and the charms of music and song [see Genesis 4:19-22], even though destitute of the loftier qualities of likemindedness with God, would attract attention and prompt to unholy alliances... The sons of God [i.e., the Sethites], therefore, are those who are on the Lord's side, who approach him with duly significant offerings, who call upon him by his proper name, and who walk with God in their daily conversation.

² Sin will not be permanently removed until death and hell are finally consigned to the lake of fire at the end of the Eschaton, at the second death (Revelation 20:13-15).

³ The good news: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There is a tenacious *persistence* to sin; that is the unfortunate legacy of the Fall. In the Flood, for example, the Cainites will be extinguished from the face of the earth. Yet even through the “righteous” line of Noah, sin and corruption will survive to repopulate throughout all the earth.²

In this we recognize that the word “righteous,” when applied to man, is a *relative* term. The Sethites, when compared to the Cainites, were righteous; when compared to Yahweh God, the Sethites were steeped in sin.³

The men of the Sethites looked upon the women of the Cainites and liked what they saw. That is, their “lust of the eyes” overpowered their allegiance to the ways of Yahweh.

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

These men were not interested in the women’s character, their beliefs, their morality, but were driven by superficial, worldly characteristics.

v3

Then Yahweh said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years.”

There are two predominate interpretations of this phrase “his days shall be 120 years,” but just as with “sons of God” in v1, one position is far and away the majority interpretation—and that, in my opinion, is the one that makes the more sense. But let’s begin with the beginning of the verse.

Then Yahweh said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh...”

“To ‘strive’ (*dîyn*) is to keep down, rule, judge, or strive with a man by moral force” (Barnes). Our versions choose different words to translate this verb—the NASB and LSB go with the KJVs and its “strive,” while the ESV makes it “abide,” and the NIVs make it “contend”—but they all are in general agreement in referring to the work of God’s Spirit in the lives of men and women.

Remember, even though He is seldom mentioned, ever since the very beginning—v1:2—the Holy Spirit has been actively involved on earth. Here it refers to the Spirit as a governor, as a controlling influence in humans.

And once again we are reminded that these early days of the Creation epoch have much in common with the Last Days epoch—the Eschaton—only in reverse. Here we are reminded of the common grace of the Holy Spirit, tempering the natural bent of human flesh even today. In our study of the Last Things we saw what happened on earth once that influence of the Spirit was removed from earth, for a while, at the Rapture of the church. The result? The seven-year Tribulation. And much the same thing is going to occur in Genesis when God removes the governing influence of His Spirit.

K&D: Men, says God, have proved themselves by their erring and straying to be flesh, i.e., given up to the flesh, and incapable of being ruled by the Spirit of God and led back to the divine goal of their life.

Yahweh is saying, in essence, *OK this isn't working, because man listens more to the influence of his own flesh than the influence of My Spirit. So I am going to remove my Spirit to let the flesh run riot.*

As the prophet Hosea writes, "Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone." There comes a point where God's patience runs out and he lets man wallow in his sin and corruption.

"...nevertheless his days shall be 120 years."

A few commentators say this refers to the dwindling life-span of humans after the much longer ones experienced by the earlier patriarchs. But this is difficult to substantiate, since there followed, post-Flood, a number of individuals that lived well in excess of 120 years.⁴

The position of a majority of commentators is that this represents a respite—a grace period, as it were—during which Yahweh would hold back His judgment upon mankind. In His gracious longsuffering, He gave humanity time to mend its ways and return to Him. Alas, the record shows that it didn't.

God tells us two things, two time marks:

- In Genesis 7:6 and 11 His word states that Noah was 600 years old when the flood began.
- Genesis 6:3, explicitly quoting Yahweh, says, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years."

So we can conclude from this that Noah was 480 years old when this death knell for mankind was pronounced. In the interim, while he was building the ark, the NT tells us that Noah was "a preacher [herald] of righteousness" to the condemned (2 Peter 2:5). This makes Genesis 6:1-8 essentially a parenthetical passage inserted between 5:32 and 6:9, and not necessarily following the chronology of the narrative. Note that v6:1 does not begin, "*Then* it happened..." but "*Now* it happened..." and even the more nebulous, "When men began to increase..."; in other words, it is not following a strict timeline.

v4

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

Here is more evidence that these verses are set apart from a strict timeline. Verse 4 backs up a bit to inform the reader that "mighty men who were of old,

⁴ Genesis 11:11 (Shem),
13 (Arpachsad),
15 (Shelah),
17 (Eber),
19 (Peleg),
21 (Reu),
23 (Serug),
25 (Nahor);
25:7 (Abraham);
35:28 (Isaac);
47:9 (Jacob).

men of renown” had been and were still around when the Sethites began intermarrying with the Cainite women.

We covered the essentials of v4 in our previous session. This verse, with v2, represents Yahweh’s breaking point; here was the evidence that this generation of men were incorrigible, and beyond hope. Even so, He would grant them 120 years to repent and prove otherwise.

CONCLUSION

Consider these four verses—as well as the preliminary Chapters Four and Five, and even all the way back to Chapter One—from God’s point of view.

- He creates the first man and woman perfect and sinless, and places them in a paradise.
- They rebel against Him, so He casts them out of the paradise.
- Man’s now fallen state is manifest in their first son murdering their second.
- Cain is made a refugee and begins an unrighteous line that is relatively separate from others.
- In His grace, God gives Eve another, more righteous son, beginning again a righteous line through Seth, one relatively separate from Cain’s line.
- But now the righteous line becomes corrupted by the women in the unrighteous line.

Yahweh God keeps giving man a second chance—a chance to go in the proper direction—but every time He does, man reverts back to evil ways. Is it any surprise that He would conclude what He does in vv6-7?

And Yahweh regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And Yahweh said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I regret that I have made them.”

Yet, even as sin persists in man, so does God’s grace persist:

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh. (Genesis 6:8)

God always maintains a remnant.

SESSION 42: THE FLOOD: AN OVERVIEW

Genesis 6:5 to 9:17

PREFACE

With v5 of Chapter Six we begin the Flood narrative. Verses 1-4 serve as a preface, setting the stage for what will follow. That is, in v5 Yahweh declares what He is about to do. He also gives the reason: “the evil of man was great on the earth...”; vv1-4 give us the background information that supports Yahweh’s conclusion in v5 about this evil.

Here is an outline for the Flood narrative, covering 6:5 to 9:17.

I.	6:5-12	Yahweh’s decision to send the Flood as He saves Noah	} Perspective: <i>Heaven</i>
II.	6:13-22	The command to build the ark	
III.	7:1-5	The command to enter the ark	
IV.	7:6-24	The floods come	} Perspective: <i>Earth</i>
V.	8:1-14	The floods abate	
VI.	8:15-19	The command to exit the ark	} Perspective: <i>Heaven</i>
VII.	8:20-9:17	The building of the altar and the covenant	

When we step back for a moment to consider the forest instead of the individual trees, we see some remarkable things going on in this multi-chapter narrative—things that we might easily overlook.

THE CREATION-FLOOD INCLUSIO

The word *inclusio* is a Latin term meaning confinement, or enclosure. Although it need not be, it is more often than not related to biblical study. (In this secular culture, if you search for “*inclusio*,” your helpful search engine will come back with, “You must mean ‘inclusion’”—which is *not* the same thing.) None of my dictionaries even include the word, and I am slightly embarrassed to find that the clearest explanation of an *inclusio* I could find was in *Wikipedia*:

In biblical studies, *inclusio* is a literary device similar to a refrain. It is also known as bracketing, or an envelope structure, and consists of the repetition of material at the beginning and end of a section of text.

As our pastor is wont to say, an *inclusio* defines a “unit,” a portion of Scripture that has clearly defined “bookends,” as it were.

The *inclusio* before us spans Chapter One to Chapter Nine, but reveals itself in v6:7.

Read Genesis 6:7.

The attentive student of God's word will read that and ask, *Wait a minute—where have I read that before?* You read it in Chapter One.

Read Genesis 1:25-26.

Now, the true value of an inclusio is not in the literary structure itself, but in its effective emphasis of an idea, a truth, or, as in this instance, a narrative. The inclusio adds impact to what is being related here: Almighty God who created everything is now announcing—using some of the same wording—that He is about to *destroy* everything He had created.

We must let that sink in. There is no indication that God is destroying parts of His Creation *beyond* earth—heavens, stars, planets, atmosphere—nor does v7 mention the destruction of anything living in the seas, rivers, and lakes. But everything created for “the face of the land” and to fly in the sky will perish, except for those safely in the ark. The beginning of the inclusio—the detailed, meticulous structure, the systematic method of His creating one thing for another—adds power and tragedy to its end. Chapter One of Genesis reveals how tragic, how utterly *terrible* this inundation will be—and how terrible the sin and corruption of man has become that such an awful remedy is necessary.

One can only conclude, from reading the Creation epic recorded in Chapter One, that this was and is something important to Yahweh Elohim. This wasn't an afterthought, something to casually while away a lazy Saturday afternoon, but a meticulously planned and executed work by the triune Godhead.

Knowing this—knowing how it was all Created—we can grasp the full weight of sin and corruption that was required to cause Yahweh to make this necessary, yet tragic, decision.

Adam Clarke: How great must the evil have been, and how provoking the transgressions, which obliged the most compassionate God, for the vindication of his own glory, to form this awful purpose! Fools make a mock at sin, but none except fools.

In our next session we will properly digest this evil.

ONE RIGHTEOUS MAN

Verse 8 tells us that “Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.” Why? Because he “walked with God” (v9), just as Enoch, Noah's great-grandfather, was described in 5:5 & 24.

An Interesting Repetition

Whenever something is repeated a number of times in a relatively brief span of verses we should pay close attention, because it typically means the authors—the human and the Spirit—are telling us something special.

In Chapters Four and Five we have name lists that move from one man to the one son that will continue the line of interest. But look at v5:32.

And Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

OK, we get it: these three sons represent the beginnings of three separate lines—three *races*, as it were—that will be dispersed after the Flood. I find it curious, however, the number of times these three brothers are mentioned by name. Look at v6:10.

And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

7:13.

On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

9:18.

Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan.

I can imagine that those scholars who subscribe to the theory of multiple authors for the Pentateuch (E, J, P, D, and R [Redactor or compiler])* would say that these repetitions of the sons' names stem from the respective authors stating them for their own purposes.

Since that is not our position in this class, without further study at this moment I would say that the repetition simply emphasizes the unique situation that Noah's immediate descendants do not follow just one line in Scripture, but three; so they all are mentioned as a trio each time. (However, I reserve the privilege of amending this position at a later date.)

NARRATIVE VIEWPOINT

If you look again at the outline for the Flood narrative, you can see on the right-hand side that the perspective, or viewpoint, of the narrative shifts. From 6:5 to 7:5 the narrative is expressed from God's viewpoint: Here we are allowed the privilege of looking down from heaven to see what Yahweh Himself sees; his thoughts are shared with us, as well as His conversations with Noah, and we are granted an intimate insight into what God feels in His "heart."

Then from 7:6 to 8:14 (the story of the actual Flood) the narrative shifts to an earthly, or horizontal perspective: Now we experience the actual inundation through Noah's eyes.

Finally, from 8:15 to 9:17 the viewpoint shifts back to God's when in v15 we are told, "Then God spoke to Noah, saying..."

* See a discussion of this in Session 4.

The result of this structure is that Moses has presented the story in an almost *cinematic* manner; the perspective shifts with the important action: When God is the one speaking, we have His perspective; when the Flood is raging, we have the perspective of the eight humans sealed in the ark; once the flood waters abate, we are once again privy to God's viewpoint. For example, look at vv20-21 in Chapter Eight.

Read Genesis 8:20-21.

Thus we see how the profound importance of this moment is expressed in at least two ways:

- the literary device of the *inclusio* from Chapter One to Chapter Nine, and
- the dynamic, cinematic narrative.

And this importance will be expressed in even more ways as we pursue this passage—not least, that it culminates in Yahweh establishing an historic covenant with Noah.

A PICTURE OF TWO HEARTS

I would like to conclude this overview of the Flood narrative by zeroing in on the two verses that set it up.

Read Genesis 6:5.

Here we have a painful description, by the all-knowing God, of man's condition. Note the absolute *totality* of his evil:

“the **evil** of man was **great**” (abundant evil)

“on the **earth**” (the *whole* earth)

“**every** intent”

“of the **thoughts of his heart**” (from the core of his being)

“**only evil continually**”

What an indictment!—especially when compared to the other end of the *inclusio*, as in v1:31.

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

Man, in a relatively brief period of time had become grossly evil to the core: his heart. This is not a reference to man's physical heart, the organ, but to “the fountain of life in the blood, and therefore [used] for life, or the principle of natural life... the seat of feeling and affections” (Wilson). Along with the absoluteness of this condition expressed by the other words in this verse, we have a picture of humanity utterly consumed by evil.

Now let's consider the other heart in this encounter.

Read Genesis 6:6.

Most of us are familiar with other passages in God's word that anthropomorphize Him. We know that He is spirit-kind (e.g., John 4:24, in Jesus' own words), but we accept that from time to time the writers of Scripture will employ language using human reference points to describe or explain deity.

Being spirit-kind, Yahweh God probably does not have a literal, pumping organ suffusing blood throughout His physical body. But God (with Moses) wants us to know that He experiences emotions similar to our own.

We just read in Chapter Eight that Yahweh "smelled the soothing aroma" coming from the burnt offerings on the altar made by Noah after the flood. It's a pretty safe bet that in His "natural" state, God does not have a nose, but He can still inhale and appreciate the aroma of the sacrifice.

Similarly, though he does not possess the same physical organ, we are told that because of the sin of mankind, "He was grieved in His heart." The word is the same used in v5 (*leb*, pronounced "lev"), which represents the seat of feeling and affections or emotions. God feels, and this deplorably sinful state of man cuts Him deeply.

The ESV has the best translation with "it grieved him **to** his heart." *Young's Literal Translation* has, "and He grieveth Himself—unto His heart." The idea is that God's response to the sin is so visceral (another anthropomorphism) that He experiences the pain, it "grieved Him"—it hurt, it caused pain—all the way to the core of His being.

There is a picture of two hearts: the first so bad "that every intent of [its] thoughts [are] only evil continually," and the second so holy and so gracious that the condition of the first causes it painful anguish.

Personally, I come away from this with two thoughts, two questions that I put to myself:

First, even as I may not fit the description of humanity just before the Flood, what have *I* done that might have caused my Lord such painful grief?

Second, does sin—either my own, or the sin in others—grieve *me* as it does my Lord?

SESSION 43: A HARD GRACE

Genesis 6:5-10

PREFACE

In our last session we looked at the forest instead of the individual trees regarding the Flood narrative. It is time now to return to working through the text.

Verses 1-4 of Chapter Six set the stage for Yahweh's impending judgment against mankind—but not just humans; His judgment will fall upon the beasts of the earth, the fowl in the sky, and the very earth itself. All outside the ark, except the creatures in the sea, will be either destroyed or changed. Man has reached such a level of depravity and evil that Yahweh will wipe clean the slate and begin again from the family of the lone righteous man on the earth, Noah, and the animals he has sheltered in the ark.

In His longsuffering and grace, the Lord God has given man 120 years to change his ways (v3), but he has not. So the judgment will proceed.

Read Genesis 6:5-8.

v5

Then Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great on the earth,
and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil
continually.

I take it that v5 describes the mind of Yahweh 120 years after v3. He sees that man not only has not repented, but has grown worse in the ensuing years. As we discussed last week, we would be hard-pressed to find a more thorough and discouraging description of human-kind than we have here.

“the **evil** of man was **great**” (abundant evil)

“on the **earth**” (the *whole* earth)

“**every** intent”

“of the **thoughts of his heart**” (from the core of his being)

“**only evil continually**”

Again, this is not a reference to man's physical heart, the organ, but to “the fountain of life in the blood, and therefore for life, or the principle of natural life... the seat of feeling and affections” (Wilson). God's word repeatedly cites the “heart” as the source from which our thoughts, our ideas, our plans emanate, as in Proverbs 19:21.

Many thoughts [or plans] are in a man's heart,
But it is the counsel of Yahweh that will stand.

I said before that this verse, like many others in Genesis, mirrors the events and dark energies of the Eschaton. Turn please to Revelation 16. There will come a point in the final days when seven bowls of God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth; these will be seven sequential and horrific plagues inflicted upon mankind—this is commonly referred to as The Third Woe. (As the name implies, this is the third—and worst—woe to be inflicted after two others that were bad enough in themselves.) This takes place near the climactic end of the seven year Tribulation. I want to read this now—not necessarily to relate the astounding plagues that are poured out upon the earth, but to show the response of the wicked people left on earth. Let me begin reading at the fourth bowl.

Read Revelation 16:8-21.

Mankind on earth will have suffered through three and a half years of life under the satanic rule of Antichrist, and through repeated demonstrations of God's judgment upon it and them. On earth, evil is not just dominate—it is the law of the land. Finally, God gives man one last chance to repent of its evil and turn to Him before the Final Judgment.

Instead, they blaspheme His name and refuse to acknowledge His glory—just as they did in the time of Noah.

v6

And Yahweh regretted that He had made man on the earth,
and He was grieved in His heart.

I have said that there are times when we must, by necessity, anthropomorphize our God just to understand His ways and His character. Here, however, we *dare not* do that.

If we read v6 as if we were reading about a human being, we miss its meaning entirely. The first important Hebrew word is *nahem* (nee-HAM), translated, unfortunately, in the KJV as “repented.” In this Church Age we understand “repent” (Greek, *metanoeo*) to mean to change one's mind or purpose, i.e., to turn and go in a different direction.

Were we to apply this familiar definition to Yahweh—that He suddenly decides to change His purpose—we undermine what Scripture reveals about not just who God is, but how He behaves, and how His Creation is not a momentary, day-by-day experiment, but an exquisite, minutely planned and executed system arcing from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

The word in Genesis 6 means to comfort, to feel sorry about something, to console oneself. There is a tenuous connection between the two, but the other versions of our Bible use English words more clearly understood today: regretted, was sorry, was grieved. The second word, also translated “grieved” in most of our versions is a different Hebrew word: *aseb* (ahts-EV), but related in that

the second word is, in a sense, the result of the first. Interestingly, *aseb* can also be translated “carve”; that is, to shape or fashion as one would carve a statue. So here is the idea of something sharp, something painfully stabbing a person all the way down to the core of his being.

K&D: The force of “it repented the Lord,” may be gathered from the explanatory “it grieved Him at His heart.” This shows that the repentance of God does not presuppose any variableness in His nature of His purposes. In this sense God never repents of anything (1Sam. 15:29)... The repentance of God is an anthropomorphic expression for the pain of the divine love at the sin of man, and signifies that “God is hurt no less by the atrocious sins of men than if they pierced His heart with mortal anguish” (Calvin).

As we discussed at the end of class last week, it is not that Yahweh God, ignorant of how mankind would turn out, felt bad that it had gone the way it did, but that His created beings, given a form of free will to make decisions in their lives, had indeed taken the path God knew they would.

I would suggest that what we witness in v6 is just another form of God’s mercy and grace—which is His singular distinction as a god.¹ Even though He knew man would take this course—falling into abject depravity and disgrace and deserving of nothing less than being extinguished from the face of the earth—this produces not glib satisfaction that He had been right all along, but painful anguish in His heart, a deep level of sadness and regret that He would now have to *destroy* the very core of His Creation.

vv7-8

I believe we see this mercy, this compassion being played out in v7 even as Yahweh plans for the destruction of all mankind and the beasts that live with him.

And Yahweh said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I regret that I have made them.”

There are times in the study of God’s word that we must digest a passage a bit more challenging than others. Here it is easy enough to understand what is being said, but what is more difficult is wrapping *our* minds around the mind and heart of Almighty God in this moment.

It is typical, and understandable, to read anger and wrath in the resolution of this verse. It is more difficult to read what I believe to be sorrow and grace. For in this destruction of the old we see a gracious *second chance* for the new.

¹ I have said many times before in our studies, there is no God like Yahweh. Yes, we know there are *literally* no other gods. But throughout the history of man—especially ancient history—there have been “small-g” gods. And none of them—not one—was like the compassionate, loving, gracious, merciful *one God*, Yahweh.

Thinking of this in human terms, Yahweh God could have turned to the other members of the Trinity and said something like, *Well, that didn't work. Let's just throw it all away and return to enjoying Our glory among Ourselves.*

But He didn't say anything like that. As He will throughout the rest of the life of man upon this earth, He instead shows grace, giving man another chance.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

Yes, people and animals will indeed die. They will perish. But man and animals *as species* will be given another chance. And here the KJVs are to be preferred. There is nothing wrong with the translation “favor” for the Hebrew *hen* (chen), but “grace” in the KJVs speaks volumes for what is going on here.

Alfred Edersheim: It brings before our minds “the sorrow of Divine love over the sins of man,” in the words of Calvin, “that when the terrible sins of man offend God, it is not otherwise than as if His heart had been wounded by extreme sorrow.”²

v9

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among those in his generations; Noah walked with God.

Edersheim: It needs no more than simply to put together the notices of Noah, in the order in which Scripture places them: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah;” and again: “Noah was a just man, and perfect”—as the Hebrew word implies, spiritually upright, genuine, inwardly entire and complete, one whose heart had a single aim—“in his generations,” or among his contemporaries; and lastly, “Noah walked with God,”—this expression being the same as in the case of Enoch.

Not to disagree with Edersheim (where he says, “It needs no more...”), but I think we can add just a few more thoughts on this passage. Another reason why I prefer the KJV “grace” in v8 is that it keeps v9 in proper perspective for us.

Noah was not in possession of a supernatural, other-worldly piety; the scene at the end of Chapter Nine will make this clear. As Leupold points out, when the Bible states that a person is “righteous,” “blameless,” “perfect” or “complete,” it means that those things God seeks or desires in man are present—and they are indeed present in Noah. These descriptive words “cover a state approximating perfection as nearly as man can.”

Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others “walked with God” and were declared “blameless.” This surely revealed in them a level of faith and righteous obedi-

² For this study I was reacquainted with that venerable scholar of Scripture, Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) and his one-volume Old Testament Bible History (1876), which was one of the first Bible reference works placed on my library shelf in the early eighties.

ence that we all could and should emulate. Yet even as we do this we dare not miss the *grace* that is part of the equation.

I have mentioned the grace of God that will preserve Noah and his family through the Flood, but there is grace here as well, for no man—*no* man or woman—can meet God’s definition of holiness. For Him to accept us, for Him to grant us the privilege to “walk with” Him requires His unmerited, undeserving grace.

To state it boldly, it was not his level of faith that saved Noah; it was God’s *grace* bestowed upon him that saved him.

SESSION 44: CORRUPTION!

Genesis 6:9-13

PREFACE

Read Genesis 6:9-13.

v9

Before moving on to v10 I would like to add a few more thoughts on v9.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among those in his generations; Noah walked with God.

Our common versions employ various synonyms for two words which in the LSB are translated “generations.” There is no basis for quarrel with the other English words used; I bring this up to point out that these are two different words, and hence mean two different things.

These are the generations of Noah.

The first word is *toledot*, which clearly refers to genealogy, i.e., descendants, parentage, order of birth—generations. That is, it refers to *people*.

blameless among those in his generations;

Here the word is *dorotay*, which refers to a cycle, a lifetime; more specifically here, to a generation or period; as Wilson puts it, “a generation of men; a race of men contemporary.” The word is indeed plural, but the reference is to those people who were Noah’s *contemporaries*—not descendants.

v10

And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

In a moment I will suggest that there is more reason for this verse to be here besides simply repeating the names of Noah’s sons.

But first, let’s take this opportunity to outline the respective descendancies of the three sons. We will look deeper into this in Chapter Ten, but for now let’s just itemize the peoples or races that will grow out of these three men, so we can see the broad picture. Let’s consider them in the order they are presented in Chapter Ten. Turn there, please.

Japheth (v2)

The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.

It is commonly agreed that Japheth was the ancestor of a number of tribes and peoples associated with the regions to the north and west of the Middle East—especially Anatolia (parts of Turkey) and the Aegean Sea. That is, the upper NW of the Middle East, bleeding into the Caucasus and even into Eastern Europe. This makes perfect sense, since this region is immediately west of Mt. Ararat, which is located in far eastern Turkey, but right next to the borders of Iran and Armenia.

Ham (v6)

The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.

I previously pointed out the connection between Mizraim and the nation of Egypt today—called in Arabic, “Misr.” Ham was the father of *many* peoples and tongues; some names which stand out in just this passage: Canaan, Nimrod, Babel (i.e., Babylon), Accad, Ninevah, Philistines, Jebusite (early dwellers in what would become Jerusalem), Gaza. Right off we see mentioned not just references within Israel, but many that will become *enemies* of Israel—and of God.

Shem (v22)

The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.

I think Shem, Noah’s firstborn, is here listed last, since, for the purpose of the biblical narrative, he is the most important. He is not just the father of all “Semites” (including the Hebrews), but Luke 3:36 confirms that Jesus the Messiah was born through Noah, Shem, and Arphaxad (i.e., Arpachshad).

This is just a thumbnail sketch of the descendants of these three men. When we get to Chapter Ten we will examine them more closely.

But let’s consider the flow of this passage and, aside from the details within each verse, the picture being presented by the extended whole.

For some time now the author Moses has been contrasting one group with another, the righteous versus the evil, or at least those with a worldly bent in contrast to those with a spiritual bent.

- At the end of Chapter Four, Seth, the third son of Adam and the one who initiated a time “when men began to call upon the name of Yahweh” (4:26), is contrasted with the arrogant and worldly Lamech, descendant of the murderer Cain.
- Near the end of Chapter Five we have a slightly veiled description of this new character, Noah, who, his father Lamech (different from the Lamech in Chapter Four) prophesies “will give us rest from our work and from the pain of our hands arising from the ground which Yahweh has

cursed.”

- When we get to Chapter Six the comparisons increase. In the chapter’s first four verses Moses paints a picture of the beginnings of the moral descent of man: the two groups—the righteous and the ungodly—are now commingling. The result? “Then Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (v5).
- The first seven verses describe the darkness overwhelming the earth and Yahweh’s response to it, but then in v8 all this is contrasted to the righteous Noah: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.”
- Verse 9 contrasts Noah’s righteousness with “those in his generations,” or contemporaries—in other words, good against evil. And in this light, a case can be made for Moses repeating the names of Noah’s sons in v10 to associate them with Noah’s righteousness, with the package of vv9-10 expressing the rightness of the Noah family as a whole.
- Then, finally, a last contrast is drawn as God condemns “all flesh” but Noah’s in vv11-13.

So for a couple of chapters Moses has made a point of comparing and contrasting the Yahweh followers with the evil in the world.

vv11-12

Now the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

In these two short verses there is a word that is used *three* times, so we had better understand what it means; though the tenses are different, the root word is identical. That word is *sht* (shee-HIT), or I have also seen it pronounced *shacath*. The word is universally, in all our versions, translated “corrupt” or “corrupted.”

The word means to go to ruin, to be polluted, depraved, decayed, rotten.

I don’t know about you, but it is frustrating—and infuriating—to me that this is built into our flesh, this bent toward evil. See how this sickening cycle is repeated throughout God’s word, throughout the *generations* of man. First, from the words of Moses himself near the time of his death:

Read Deuteronomy 31:28-29.

Then we have that nauseating cycle repeated in the book of Judges.

Read Judges 2:18-19.

Alexander MacLaren: Notice the universal apostasy. Two points are brought out in the sombre description. The first is moral corruption; the second, violence. Bad men are cruel men. When the bonds which knit society to God are relaxed, selfishness soon becomes furious, and forcibly seizes what it lusts after, regardless of others' rights. Sin saps the very foundations of social life, and makes men into tigers, more destructive to each other than wild beasts. All our grand modern schemes for the reformation of society will fail unless they begin with the reformation of the individual. To walk with God is the true way to make men gentle and pitying.

MacLaren draws the connection between corruption and violence, which is seen in v11. It refers to physical, malicious wrong. And guess what the Hebrew word is: *hamas*.

But back to the beginning of v11.

Although all of our versions (except the KJVs) begin the verse with “Now,” the first word in the Hebrew is the same as the first in v12, translated, more often than not, “And.” This, as is often the case, connects it to the previous verse. In 30,160 instances of this word it is translated “and”; however, it can also be translated “but” (instead of parallel, in opposition), as it is 2,373 times. This is how Leupold interprets the verse, beginning it with “But” to show the contrast—the opposition—of “the earth” to the righteousness of Noah and his family. Even using the “Now” of our versions it is easy enough to hear the opposition: “*Noah* walked with God... Now the *earth* was corrupt...”

and the earth was filled with violence.

Here is another clue showing the pervasiveness of this evil: The Hebrew *ma-le* means accomplished, completed. With the sole exception of Noah and his family, the earth was *completely* corrupt and violent.

And God saw the earth,

Verse 11 describes what the earth had become. Verse 12 reveals what God (*Elohim*) saw when He looked at it, and the “behold” is included to express the unexpected. Of course, this is all anthropomorphic; God is not surprised, nor does He see as we see. He has been aware of the gathering wickedness all along the way.

and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

“But,” as Leupold concludes, “the verse does indicate that in the esteem of God, the perfect and righteous Judge, the measure of the world’s iniquity was full.” Note how this is worded: “All flesh” in other settings can refer as well to the beasts, but here the verse is specifically worded in such a way to refer only

to man, with “all flesh had corrupted **their way** upon the earth” (emphasis added).

And speaking of contrasts, turn back to the end of Chapter One.

Read Genesis 1:31.

Now, sadly, in v12 we have the darkened mirror image of the wonder and beauty—and goodness—of the sixth day of Creation. Now, using the identical sentence structure, it is, “And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.”

v13

Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.”

Verse 13 does begin a new paragraph, and does serve as an introduction of sorts to what follows: God’s detailed command to build the ark. But it also serves to wrap up what has preceded. We will take an initial look at it now, but will also return to it in our next session.

We have listened in as God has observed what is going on on earth and has formed His conclusions. Now, in v13, Elohim communicates His conclusion—and future actions—to His faithful servant Noah. And H. C. Leupold puts it well.

Leupold: There come times in the events of this world when God’s gracious dealings with men are definitely terminated. Such times come only when grace has been offered in richest measure. But when the end is resolved upon, there is no recall. Such a case is marked by the “end” that God here determines.

We have chronicled time and again God’s longsuffering grace shown to man. But here we have one of God’s “ends”—when He at last says, *That’s it!* Once He does this, all bets are off; all second chances are shut down. We saw it in our previous class, in the Last Things; we saw it when Israel and Judah had tried Yahweh’s patience for the last time, and He destroyed Jerusalem and sent His people into exile; and we see it here, as He is about to destroy and remake His Creation and its people.

God has just said, *That’s it!*

SESSION 45: A PRESERVING SHOE BOX

Genesis 6:13-16

PREFACE

I take it that we have now reached the end of the 120-year grace period extended by Yahweh in Genesis 6:3. He has granted them several generations to repent and change their ways, but the population of the earth has just grown more evil, more corrupt. In our previous session we understood that this was *not* a case of a few bad apples causing doom for all, but of an entire world literally *consumed* by and with unremitting evil.

Read Genesis 6:11-16.

This is not a description of a world with just a few bad apples. Note:

the earth was corrupt

the earth was **filled** with violence.

it [the earth] was corrupt;

all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

the earth is filled with violence

Here was a foreshadowing of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the great harlot Babylon (Revelation 17:5).¹ The book of the Revelation offers us a picture that would seem to apply as much to the state of things just before the Flood, as it does specifically to the period at the end of the Tribulation.

Read Revelation 18:1-3.

¹ And [the angel] carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; then I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her sexual immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Revelation 17:3-5)

v13

Just a few more thoughts on this verse.

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."

K&D: "The end of all flesh is come before Me." when applied to rumours, invariably signifies "to reach the ear" (vid., Genesis 18:21; Exo_3:9; Est_9:11). [But] in this case *ges* is not the end in the sense of destruction, but the end (extremity) of depravity or corruption, which leads to destruction.

That is, "The end of all flesh has come before Me" is God declaring that humanity has reached the limit of depravity, and thus it is required of a holy and righteous God to take action against them.

A member of our class raised an interesting question last week: Does “I am about to destroy them with the earth” mean that God is going to destroy the earth *along with* man—or that He will use the earth to destroy man? I could find no one to substantiate that second interpretation; the NIVs make it obvious with “I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.” Nonetheless, it is an interesting take, because God *does* employ the subterranean earth to release its “fountains” to quickly flood the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

Finally, there is a play on words in vv12-13 which is missed in the English translations. All our versions use the word “destroy” at the end of v13, but it is the same Hebrew word translated “corrupt/corrupted” in vv11-12. It is God saying, *Your lives have become morally ruinous, so I am going to ruin both you and the earth on which you dwell.*

But there is also a practical difference between the two uses of the word: aside from Noah’s family, the people will be literally destroyed—dead—while the earth will be *remade*, reshaped, reconfigured. Now God describes to Noah the means by which he and his family will escape the coming wrath.

vv14-15: CONSTRUCTION AND DIMENSIONS

“Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood...”

Only the NIVs have “cypress wood”; the rest have “gopher wood” for the material with which to construct the ark—but no one knows what gopher wood is!* (We can only assume that at least Noah understood which trees to cut down.)

We all have so many preconceptions, and have seen so many illustrations of the “ark,” that we need to understand what all these words really mean. First there is the word translated “ark.” The only other use of this word—Hebrew *tebah* (tay-VAH)—is in another familiar story from Sunday School: Moses in the bulrushes. And that is not the only similarity between the two stories.

Read Exodus 2:2-3.

Some of our versions use the word “ark,” but also basket; it is the same word as in Genesis 6:14, and it is possible it is a loan-word from the Egyptian (*teb*). The word refers to a box or chest, even coffin, and what these have in common is that they in no way describe a “boat.” This vessel was never intended to sail or navigate through the waves; it was meant to be a simple rectangular, yet floating box for the preservation of lives in the flood. There is no mention of a keel, or rounded or sloping sides, or a helm. It was just a box.

* Hebrew: *go-per*, pronounced go-phair.

David Guzik: What is described is not really a boat, but a well-ventilated barge, meant only to float and not to sail anywhere. After all, an ark is a chest, not a ship; this refers to the “shoebox” shape of the vessel.

“...you shall make the ark with rooms, and you shall cover it inside and out with pitch.”

Like Moses’ little ark for one, this ark needed to be sealed to keep its occupants dry. Literally the text reads, as in the KJV, “pitch it...with pitch.” That is, the same root word—Hebrew *kaparta/kopher*—is used as both verb and noun. This is an interesting word, for at its root it means “cover,” as in the ransom paid for a life. So, essentially, the naturally occurring substance of tar-like pitch, or bitumen, is sealing the ark—inside and out—to protect it, “cover” it from the water.

In God’s description we see that this ark will be more than just a box; it will contain what all our versions call “rooms.” The Hebrew is *qinnim* (plural), and means, literally, “nest.”

“Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,
That hovers over its young,
He spread His wings and caught them;
He carried them on His pinions.” (Deuteronomy 32:11)

And here I think the movie, *The Bible: In the Beginning*, has it about right. In that film the interior of the ark is rudely sectioned off into stalls filled with straw for the animals, as well as the humans. So I believe we are not only *not* talking about enclosed apartments, or even walled cubicles, but crude, fenced-off stalls filled with fodder used for bedding and, in some cases, food for the animals.

v15

“Now this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.”

The ancient cubit is generally reckoned to be equal to 18 inches (the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger), so translating these dimensions into more familiar measurements we find that

a length of 300 cubits = 450 feet;
a width of 50 cubits = 75 feet; and
a height of 30 cubits = 45 feet
—as the original NIV translates for us.

John Sailhamer puts this into perspective for us.

Sailhamer: For a wooden vessel, the size of the ark was enormous by ancient as well as modern standards. It would have been about two

and a half times the size of the large “Byblos-boats” used by the Egyptians during the Early Dynastic Period and would even have been larger than the largest wooden ships in the modern period of sailing. The Cutty Sark, a three-masted clipper ship launched in 1869, was just over 212 feet. Oceanliners of the twentieth century, being constructed of steel, are much larger. The Queen Elizabeth, the largest passenger liner ever built, measured over 1,000 feet in length. By modern standards Noah’s ocean vessel is comparable to a small cargo ship, thus still of considerable size.

And David Guzik adds,

Guzik: If the ark carried two of every *family* of animal, there were around 700 pairs of animals; but if the ark carried two of every *species* of animals, there were around 35,000 pairs of animals. The average size of a land animal is smaller than a sheep. The ark could carry 136,560 sheep in half of its capacity, leaving plenty of room for people, food, water, and whatever other provisions were needed.

Another clarification on the capacity of the ark’s interior is offered by Paul Kretzmann, who writes,

The cubic contents of the vessel thus exceeded 1,800,000 cubic feet, and afforded ample room for the purpose which the ark was to serve, being able, as has been demonstrated, to carry a cargo greater by one-third than any other form of like cubical content.

v16

“You shall make a window for the ark, and complete it to one cubit from the top”;

About half of our versions—ESV and the NIVs—translate this “make a **roof** for the ark,” while the other half—LSB, NASB and KJVs—translate it “You shall make a **window** for the ark.” The root of the Hebrew *sohar* (TSO-har) means midday or noon, as a sun (light) demarcated time of day—and, since it is “a bit too obvious to specify that a ‘roof’ should be built, and then to suggest that it is to be ‘toward the top’” (Leupold)—“window” would seem to be the preferred translation. That is, an opening, for light and ventilation, was to be made just under the roof, all the way around the top of the ark. And you might rightly ask, Where does it say “all the way around”? Let’s let Leupold explain.

Leupold: This means more than a window. It means an opening of a cubit from the top or “toward the top.” (*milma’lah*) to be made entirely around the structure. This is implied in the verb from “make it com-

plete” (*tekhallénah*) which, being in the Piel stem, signifies, as we might say, “run it completely around” toward the top.

...and set the door of the ark in the side of it;

You might note that while the instructions are explicit, they do not include every last detail for the making of the ark. *Were there other openings? How thick should the planking be? How high up should the door be positioned in the side of the ark?* But there are other instances in the Bible where God hands down instructions that are detailed, yet not complete (e.g., the construction of the first tabernacle and its accouterments), relying on the skills and common sense of the builders to complete the task before them.²

² I do not agree with those commentators (e.g., Sailhamer) that allow for the possibility that Noah enlisted non-family members to help build the ark.

“you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.”

Not only would having multiple decks (or stories or floors) make for more efficient use of the space and, perhaps, make it more structurally strong, but this could be one way of segregating the different species of animals from one another: carnivores on one floor, herbivores on another; predators on one, prey on another.

The word “decks” or floors or stories is implied, and not in the text—i.e., “with lower, seconds and thirds thou shalt make it.”

Thus far God has not told Noah the *why* for all this—although by now he might be putting two and two together; in v13 God declared that He was “about to destroy [all flesh] with the earth,” followed by a description of a huge “ark” covered in pitch. It would not take much for Noah to realize that God’s method would entail a lot of water—which he details in the next verse.

And when all of Chapter Six draws to a close in v22, we see the proof of Noah’s obedience, and his level of faith and trust in God.

Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

So once again, as is so often the case in God’s word, at its root this is a story of trust and faith in Yahweh God—as the writer to the Hebrews confirms:

By faith Noah, being warned about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

SESSION 46: COMMANDS AND OBEDIENCE

Genesis 6:17-22

PREFACE

What strikes me right off, when I read Genesis 6:17-22, is that this world today—and perhaps even some who call themselves Christians, believers, followers of Christ and Father God—have an insufficient impression of who and what God is. In this narrative, from 1:1, we have repeatedly seen evidence of His grace, His mercy, His patient and loving condescension to His creation.

And that is the most comfortable picture of God to us: He *loves* us, He forgives us, He is longsuffering and patient. That is an absolutely accurate picture of our God, and because it is so comforting, we cling to that aspect of Him. But there is another aspect of our God that is just as accurate, just as true—but can be far less comfortable.

God—that is, God the Father, Son, and Spirit—is all-powerful, ruling His sovereign will as He pleases. And what is easy to lose sight of is that this aspect of His Being is just as inherently true as what we might think of as His “softer side.” What can be easy to forget is that God’s omnipotence—at times *brutal* omnipotence—is just as right, just as righteous, as His grace and mercy. Whatever He does, be it pleasing or a brutal affront to our senses, is *right*. No matter how little we understand it, no matter how uncomfortable His decision may leave us, nothing He does is wrong.

Monday morning last I was reading a number of Jesus’ parables in the gospel of Matthew, one of which was the parable of the tares amid the wheat—that is, weeds sown in with the crop one wants to keep. In the parable—in Matthew 13:24; turn there please—the hired hands ask if they should go out at the early stage and pull the weeds, but the landowner says for them to wait until the time of harvest. Jesus then explains this parable to His disciples beginning at v37.

Read Matthew 13:37-43.

Note particularly that last section beginning at v41. Look who is doing this: that gentle, loving, gracious flower-child Jesus—“the Son of Man.” The Christ Himself will be judge over all, and He will be the one to “throw them into the fiery furnace,” where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

And it will be right to do it. That will be a righteous sentence against those will reject the sovereignty of God.

Just so, the sentence handed down by righteous and holy God in Genesis 6 will be right. As this world works hard to shave off the sharp edges of Father God and His Son—when it even acknowledges them at all—we must redouble our efforts to see God for who and what He truly is, and part of that is that He is never wrong or unjust in His decisions.

Beginning in v14 God has dictated the dimensions and structure of the ark—not a navigable ship, but, at best, a barge: essentially a watertight shoe box. Now He describes the reason for its construction and how Noah is to use it.

Read Genesis 6:17-22.

v17

Here with v18 we have a picture of the fullness of God's character: The stern judgment of v17 is contrasted with the grace and mercy of v18. For all those outside the ark, that sentence of death will be total; no more delay, no more 120-year stays of execution. The door has now shut on God's patience.

"As for Me, behold I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall breathe its last."

Let's remind ourselves of the nature and behavior of those who are about to be destroyed.

Read Genesis 6:11-13.

¹ The juxtaposition of v17 to v16 reminds me of a moment shortly after Linda and I returned to Iowa after 20 years in CA. We had rented the upper apartment in an old house in Marshalltown—in which it was the habit of the owner and landlord to rent to those who were either on the dole or just could not afford the rent. Some of these he had "work off" the cost of their rent by doing chores around the property. He related to me one day a conversation he had with a young woman renting out the basement apartment. He listed the work he expected her to do, and she then she replied with, somewhat indignantly, "What are you going to be doing?" He answered her impertinence with something like, *What is it to you if I sit in the shade and watch; you're working off your rent.* This passage does not include such impertinence from Noah, but it does include a "you do this, while I do this" exchange.

And, remember, this description is *after* God allowed them a period of 120 years to repent and change their ways.

*As for Me, behold I...*¹

Note in v16: "You [Noah] shall make... " and again, "You shall make..." lower in the verse. Now in v17 God declares what He will be doing: "As for Me, behold I..." The LSB best expresses the juxtaposition of v17 with v16 ("You" vs. "I"), but the NASB and KJV best express the emphasis in the original text of the incredible nature of such a judgment visited upon the One who created it in the first place: "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth..." (the Hebrew requires "*the* flood" over "*a* flood," emphasizing that this will be a unique flood). This doubling ("I, even I") could also be used to establish the *certainty* of what God was about to do (see Genesis 41:32).

As to God's right not only to destroy the world He has just made, but to destroy it by these particular means, the venerable Matthew Henry writes,

Henry: He told him, particularly, that he would destroy the world by a flood of waters. God could have destroyed all mankind by the sword of an angel, a flaming sword turning every way, as he destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and the camp of the Assyrians; and then there needed no more than to set a mark upon Noah and his family for their preservation. But God chose to do it by a flood of waters, which should drown the world. The reasons, we may be sure, were wise and

just, though to us unknown. God has many arrows in his quiver, and he may use which he please...

to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven;

Two clarifications are included here, modifying “all flesh”: First, “in which is the breath of life,” meaning all human beings and all animals; the flesh of fruit and vegetables is not included—although certainly there will be an initial wiping out of those that do not survive the flood. Second, “under heaven,” in the Bible a common way to express “in all the earth” or “in all existence” (Acts 4:12), which Moses reinforces with “everything that is on the earth shall breathe its last.”

So v17 represents God’s righteous judgment—His wrath—inflicted upon those who have determinedly rejected Him. But now this same God will express His righteous grace and mercy upon Noah and his family.

v18

“But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.”

Opinions vary—all over the board, in fact—regarding which covenant is referred to here; two possible interpretations seem appropriate.

1. This could be God (Elohim) simply promising to save Noah and his family through the upcoming flood. This would seem to fit in with the rest of the verse.
2. This reference to “My covenant”—note that He “*will* establish” it—could refer to the formal covenant God will establish with Noah after the Flood. With my extremely deficient knowledge of Hebrew grammar, this is not just in the *future* tense (“will”), but in the *perfect* tense, meaning it is used “to emphasize assurance about whatever is being expressed in the sense that the ‘completeness’ of that event is an assured conviction and truth” (*Blue Letter Bible*). So probably the best interpretation is that this is God saying, *I assure you now that after the Flood I have already established this covenant with you*. This covenant we will look at more closely when we get to Chapters Eight and Nine.

vv19-20

Then God adds the beasts and the birds to those who will be secured in the ark.

“And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.”²

² In this confused, even perverse age in which we live, it is incumbent on us to note the clarity offered by God in His instructions to Noah regarding the collection of animals. He does not say, *Bring one that considers herself to be male, or one that believes himself to be female*. No, He says, “they shall be male and female,” for this would be the only way to ensure generations to follow.

We cannot look to this verse to determine the answer to the question, Two of every *what?*, for the word “kind” is not in the original text. Based on it being in v7:14, however, where this command is reiterated and expanded, we know that God commands two of every *species* (*minah*) of animal.

Read Genesis 7:13-16.

We will see, as we turn the page to Chapter Seven, that “two of every” is just a starting point, but that can wait until our next session.

Verse 20 reveals that it will not just be the lovable and huggable mammals that are brought into the ark.

“Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.”

Birds and bugs and crawling things will be added to the ark’s menagerie. And for those who have wondered just *how* all these beasts will be acquired, the verbs in these two verses explain. Verse 19 says that Noah “shall bring” (*tabhi*, i.e., cause to come in), that is, by whatever practical means, Noah would go get them and bring them into the ark. Verse 20, however, says that the birds and creeping things and others “will come” (*yabhau*), that is, they will arrive on their own initiative, presumably either by instinctive impulse or divine impetus. And if there is any doubt as to the why for all this, God is explicit: “to keep them alive.”

v21

We have already seen the supernatural at work—in the detailed commands and descriptions handed down personally, audibly by God, in the gathering and welcoming of the beasts, and, of course, in the devastating deluge to come. But now, in His final instruction, God leaves it to Noah and his family to secure for themselves sufficient food for the humans and the beasts—no small thing, considering they will be shut up together for over a year’s time.

“As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.”

v22

The concluding v22 of this narrative always reminds me of the story of Abraham and his son Isaac—another instance of God’s command being answered by unquestioning obedience. We find that in Chapter Twenty-two.

Read Genesis 22:1-3.

Remember, at this time Abraham is over one hundred years old, and has been praying for a son through Sarah for most of his life. God has finally answered that prayer in the affirmative. Isaac is probably now an older child or young teenager—large enough to carry a load of firewood. To say this son is precious to the old man would be a gross understatement. Yet now, God requires of Abraham the life of his only, long-awaited son. And what is Abraham's response? "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey..." In other words, unquestioning obedience. That does not negate probable anxiety, wonderment—even anger in his heart. But he obeys. And we have a similar, if not identical, situation here at the end of Chapter Six. God has just detailed this extraordinary, seemingly insurmountable task to this old man, and what is his response?

Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

Period. God says to do it—so I do it. This is the behavior of someone who knows who and what God is. When the omnipotent, omniscient Lord of the universe tells you to do something, no matter how insane the order, you obey. Noah understands the full breadth and depth of God's character and sovereign lordship. He is and will be experiencing God's grace and protection; soon he will be witness to the fullness of God's wrath against evil.

SESSION 47: A WEEK FROM THE END

Genesis 7:1-5

PREFACE

One aspect of the Bible that has always fascinated me is the amount of repetition used on its pages. I realize that much of this is cultural, and just reflects the manner in which people wrote at the time.¹ Yet to my eyes and ears this repetition seems to be, as the apostle Paul describes the unauthorized speaking of tongues in First Corinthians, like “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” *Just tell me once; the rest is just irritating noise.*

Certain scholars are convinced that some of this repetition is obvious evidence of a different author, as we discussed earlier in this study. Turn back to Chapter One of Genesis.

In Chapter One the author itemizes in almost bullet-point form the systematic, day-by-day progression of Creation by Elohim. Then, as we turn the page to Chapter Two, beginning in v4 the chronological pointer appears to reset to Day One, with certain events reiterated; along with this, “Elohim” is replaced by “Yahweh God.” Some cite this as evidence that a different person is now penning the words, but in this class I have made the case, instead, for a logical change in emphasis, with an expansion—a “fleshing-out,” as it were—of Creation details in Chapter Two.

Thus, while in Chapter One it is succinctly stated in v27 that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them,” in Chapter Two this process is *literally* “fleshed-out” with more details about the literal forming of the first man and woman in v7 and vv21-25.² It doesn’t require a second author to do this, just one author adding more details to the narrative. And the one author, Moses, shows determined purpose in how he identifies God, as H. C. Leupold explains,

On the matter of the use of the divine names in this story observe how much is to be said in support of our position... Note the very good sense that pervades the whole situation when these basic facts are kept in mind: when God’s gracious dealings with Noah and with mankind are to be considered, then the name *Yahweh* is used; but when God is thought of as the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, whose particular province it is to judge men and to determine their fate, this God whom men should reverently fear is called *Elohim*.

The pattern that we see in Chapters One and Two is somewhat repeated in Chapter Six and Seven in the Flood narrative. We have already been told in Chapter Six that Noah and his wife will be accompanied by their three sons and their wives (v18); we have already been told the methods of acquisition and numbers of the animals that will be housed in the ark. But now, in Chapter

¹ *Sailhamer*: “Andersen has shown that much of the repetition in the Flood account stems from the writer’s use of a type of sentence he has called ‘epic repetition’ and ‘chiastic coordination.’”

² It is our position in this class that Moses was the author of not just the entirety of Genesis, but of the five-volume Pentateuch.

Seven, these will be reiterated and, in some instances, expanded with more details. And, in true biblical fashion, some of those details will be repeated and expanded even within Chapter Seven (see v6 and v11).

Read Genesis 7:1-5.

As the curtain opens on Chapter Seven, we are one week out from the beginning of the rains. The ark is completed, and we can assume that all or most of the supplies and foodstuffs have been stored inside. From the length of time it took to build the ark and collect the animals, we can safely assume that they have been corralled in pens outside the ark until now.³ This would only follow, for there was much sorting out to do (as v2 suggests), and the animals would have either arrived on their own or been searched out by Noah over a period of years.

v1

Then Yahweh said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.”

Leupold makes a good point here: “Of God’s mode of speaking to Noah we know nothing. Noah knew that God spoke.” And that should suffice for us; in whatever form God communicated with Noah, Noah got the message.

Yahweh declares openly that He sees Noah “alone” to be righteous. The text does not give us explicit information regarding the spiritual status of his wife, his sons, and his daughters-in-law.

I don’t want to over-think this, but I believe the evidence thus far would show that were his children not also righteous, learning faith and righteousness from their patriarch, they would not have been included in the ark’s passengers, for they would not have been required to continue the human race. Noah’s wife, however, is in a different category. The sons are in the next generation—if we hold to a narrow interpretation of “generation” (*dor*)—while Noah’s wife is in his. Would Yahweh God have accepted her, even if *not* righteous, just for the sake of continuing the species?

Leupold seems to offer a pretty good perspective on this—a perspective which has application to fathers and families even today.

Leupold: The blessing that may grow out of the godly conduct of a consecrated individual may, indeed, redound to the good of others who are associated with him and be much greater, than what these persons would have received apart from their associations with such an individual. See how Israel is blessed both for Abraham’s and for David’s sake. However, prominent as such blessings are, we have every reason to assume that the father’s influence affected the personal attitude of

³ I have heretofore given John Huston credit where deserved when his imagery seems to faithfully illustrate reality, but I don’t offer him plaudits for how he imagines the animals just ambling in from over the horizon, the various species all mixed up, and all arriving in the vicinity at the last minute upon the completion of the ark, just as the humans are entering and the thunderclouds already forming.

the members of his household to Yahweh, so that of their own volition they chose to walk in the godly patriarch's footsteps. Yet had Noah not stood firm, they themselves might soon have wavered. Therefore Yahweh ascribes righteousness to Noah alone in this his generation.

I believe that the influence of Christian fathers and mothers on their children goes well beyond just teaching them the habits and mechanics of faith. There is that, but there is more. It is possible the parents' actual faith may be a critical component in the child's. Why else would it be so easy for the teenager to rebel after leaving home, when suddenly introduced to opposing "faiths" absent the influence of the parents? Why, after being born and raised in the church and dwelling in a household of faith, did I rebel so easily once I was in the service and alienated from that home environment? Because I was not just surrounded by tempting new opportunities—but that I was now severed from that *environment* of faith within which I had been raised. I no longer rose each morning to the Christian warmth and reality established by and emanating from my parents.

Thus with Scripture's emphasis on Noah the individual and his personal righteousness, I believe we can safely assume that his example and witness was critical to the righteousness in the lives of his family members.

vv2-3

"You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and his female; also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep their seed alive on the face of all the earth."

⁴ "by seven seven"

The Hebrew text repeats the word translated "seven" (SHEH-bah). Some take this to mean seven each—three pairs with a leftover male, presumably to be used for sacrifice. Others take this to mean seven pairs—as do the ESV and newer NIV (YLT as well). The problem with the former is that the emphasis in these references has and will be on "pairs": male and female. In fact within v2 the phrase is, "by sevens, a male and his female." One male leftover breaks the pattern. So while this is no critical decision requiring resolution, I lean toward the latter: seven pairs of clean animals.

The consensus among interpreters seems to be that this sudden and unanticipated mention of "clean" (ceremonially clean) animals reveals that God's laws regarding such things were either

- assumed by man from his earliest days from the behavioral nature of the clean and unclean animals (cattle = clean, creepy spiders = unclean); or
- though unrecorded or less-formally commanded by God, this distinction was somehow made clear to man by Him—such knowledge evidenced behind Abel's righteous sacrifice (4:4). That is, God's "Law" was established from the outset of Creation, but not formalized for His chosen people in written form until the establishment of tabernacle/temple sacrifice, and after Israel is a settled, self-governing people.

Opinions vary for *why* Noah is to take in more clean than unclean animals.⁴ I cannot agree with those who say the reason is for the family to have clean animals to eat during the deluge. Since his creation, man has been vegetarian.

Read Genesis 1:29-30.

Man will not have Yahweh's permission to become a carnivore until He establishes His new covenant with him *after* the Flood.

Read Genesis 9:1-3.

There may be a two-fold reason for securing more of the clean animals: first, for sacrifices and second, so that once man is granted permission to eat meat, the numbers of clean animals on the earth will have a head start at propagation.

v4

"For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

Here is the sovereign Creator and Lord of the universe declaring with a certainty only He possesses that Noah has only seven more days to get all his baggage and cargo and food stored before the rains begin. Time to double-check all the caulking between the planks and the integrity of the roof.

The number forty is a favorite of the Lord God as a duration for testing and/or trial which ends with evil overthrown and good victorious. When the spies of Israel all returned from Canaan with a fatalistic report (with the exceptions of Caleb and Joshua) Yahweh declared that that generation of Israel would be penalized, with time given to sift out those who had rejected His promise of land for the nation.

Read Numbers 14:32-35.

And, of course, this was the duration of His own Son's trial in the wilderness before His ministry.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. (Matthew 4:1-2)

Now He declares that the rain and other floodgates will pour water upon the earth for "forty days and forty nights"; all evil—indeed, "every living thing"—will be "blot[ted] out" by the deluge. The Hebrew *maha* (maw-KAH) means to utterly wipe away, abolish.

It is risky business to anthropomorphize our God; He is, after all, spirit-kind (John 4:24) and beyond our ken. At the same time, however, God's word repeatedly does humanize the ways of God for our benefit, so that we might understand Him better.

So I offer the following food for thought in the spirit of the apostle Paul, when, writing to the Corinthians, he said, “I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion... (1 Corinthians 7:25).”

I am struck by how Yahweh closes v4. He could have made the same point by stopping at “...I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing”—as He did in Genesis 6:17.

“As for Me, behold I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall breathe its last.”

Here, however, He adds “...that I have made.”

When we read the Creation epic as recorded in Chapters One and Two it is explicitly clear that in God’s eyes, in His creative intent, man is, as it were, a sanctified (i.e., set apart), component of Creation. He is created as the earth’s highest form of life, and given dominion over all other species (Genesis 1:26); he alone out of all other living beings will be made “in the image of God.”

We can all agree that, as He is omniscient and omnipotent, Yahweh God has set these events in place long before they were enacted. From Genesis to the Revelation it was all worked out beforehand; God is never surprised. Even so, His word repeatedly describes Him with human emotions, as in Genesis 6:5-6.

Read Genesis 6:5-6.

Interestingly here in the context of these expressed emotions, in the next verse, Yahweh adds the thought He does in 7:4.

And Yahweh said, “I will blot out man **whom I have created** from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I regret that I have made them.” (Genesis 6:7; emphasis added)

Because of this, I hear sadness in v4. As we understand our God, He knew all along that mankind would turn evil, and that this watery judgment would be necessary. Nonetheless, when it comes right down to it, when it comes to actually turning the spigots to release the flood, there is a sad regret in His “soul” over having to destroy the most special, the most unique part of His Creation.

Being an all-knowing, all-powerful God and King of the universe does not preclude His having emotions of sadness and regret over the proclivity of flesh toward sin, toward evil.

I made them, He says with sorrow in His heart, *I made them, and now I have to destroy them*.

Verse 5 closes the paragraph with the confirmation that, once again, Noah will obey His Lord, and do what He commands.

SESSION 48: IT BEGINS, PART ONE

Genesis 7:6-12

PREFACE

In v4 of Chapter Seven Yahweh declared that “...after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.” In His longsuffering grace the Lord God had given the evil people of earth 120 years to repent; during this period of grace, roughly, Noah and his sons began work on the ark and, later presumably, began gathering the beasts that would ride out the flood inside the ungainly shoe box.

Now the ark and the beasts are ready and Yahweh affords the people of earth seven more last minute days of grace before He sends the rains. Yet still there are no takers; no one repents of their evil ways. By contrast, v5 tells us that “...Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.” Alexander MacLaren offers us a vivid picture of this contrast between people of faith in God and people who reject God.

Alexander MacLaren: We may think, finally, of the vindication of [Noah's] faith. For a hundred and twenty years the wits laughed, and the “common-sense” people wondered, and the patient saint went on hammering and pitching at his ark. But one morning it began to rain; and by degrees, somehow, Noah did not seem quite such a fool. The jests would look rather different when the water was up to the knees of the jesters; and their sarcasms would stick in their throats as they drowned. So is it always. So it will be at the last great day. The men who lived for the future, by faith in Christ, will be found out to have been the wise men when the future has become the present, and the present has become the past, and is gone for ever; while they who had no aims beyond the things of time, which are now sunk beneath the dreary horizon, will awake too late to the conviction that they are outside the ark of safety, and that their truest epitaph is “Thou fool!”

In our last session I discussed the repetition that occurs in this narrative—and in the rest of Chapter Seven we get, as it were, a *boatload* of repetition. Using various colors I have noted the repetitions in Chapter Seven on the next page.

For example, the blue underline is associated with Noah's age and general time-marks; yellow underlines reference Noah's family; orange underlines refer to the animals. Note especially the purple underlining beginning in v17: not only are these related, but there is a built-in crescendo of sorts—a crescendo of intensity to the Inundation with each subsequent verse through v20, and then v24.

Chapter Seven (LSB): Repetition

1 Then Yahweh said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.

2 "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and his female;

3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep their seed alive on the face of all the earth.

4 "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

5 And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.

6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,

9 by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 Now it happened after the seven days, that the water 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 this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

12 Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

13 On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every fowl, every winged creature.

15 So they came to Noah into the ark, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him.

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

18 And the water prevailed and multiplied greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water.

19 And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind.

22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.

24 And the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.

Crescendo

Read Genesis 7:6-12.**v6**

Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

Verse 6 offers two points for our consideration: Noah's age and the "flood of water." Let's first briefly consider the chronology of Noah's life.

His father, Lamech (LEH-mek), was 182 years old when Noah was born. Noah was 500 years old by the time—I would say, *around the time of*—his three sons were born (the ESV and NIVs have "After Noah was 500 years old...") That is, with the way it is phrased in Genesis 5:32, I'm not sure we can pinpoint his age when his wife gave birth to three, presumed sequential sons. The narrative in Genesis Six immediately has Yahweh declaring the 120-year grace period for the evil on earth, followed by instructions to Noah and his sons for the construction of the ark. Since Scripture declares flat-out in 7:6 and 7:11 that Noah was 600 years old when the Inundation began,¹ we accept that as hard fact, adjusting backwards to allow for the 120 years (e.g., the 120 years may have begun *before* Noah had his sons). I take Noah's age at the beginning of the flood as the only hard and fast time-mark we have; the other information is a bit nebulous.

¹ The Hebrew translated "six hundred years old" is literally "a son of six hundred years."

Now let's take the opportunity of v6 to take a closer look at the nature of this flood. (As you can see from the handout, we could do the same at v11b-12, and v17.)

The Rain

The question arose last week, *Would the people at the time even know what rain was?* Put another way, *Is it true that this was the first time rain had fallen on the earth?* Let's first look at the foundation for these questions.

A fair number of scholars hold to this position of the Flood comprising earth's first rainfall—not least John C. Whitcomb, author of *The Genesis Flood* (P&R Publishing, 1961), a respected, detailed examination of the biblical account compared to geological and scientific evidence. These scholars' starting point for this position is Genesis 2:5-6.

Read Genesis 2:5-6.

That word in your version translated "stream" or "mist" is the Hebrew *edh* (AID), and is indeed translated variously as mist or vapor, such as fog; it does not seem to describe what we would think of as a stream, a babbling brook running through a forest glen.

Since it is the conclusion in this class that Chapter Two (vv4-25) is a recapitulation, not just repeating but adding more information to the account in Chapter One, vv5-6 of Chapter Two are easily woven into Chapter One at vv11-12, the third day.

Read Genesis 1:11-12.

The Hebrew used in these two verses describes vegetation of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated. Note that man is not created until the sixth day, so these are wild grasses and foliage intended to feed the beasts and even man in his early days.

Verses 5 and 6 in Chapter Two are similar but different from v11 in Chapter One:

shrub of the field = *siach hassadheh* = field shrub or bush

plant of the field = *esebh hassadheh* = field plants, herb, or grass

That is, none of these—*cultivated* vegetation of the prepared and planted field—had yet been created because they required regular rain from the clouds and man to tend the field of crops. Put into a modern setting, the vegetation in Chapter One I can find by walking through the timber; the vegetation of Chapter Two I find by walking the rows of corn and soybeans in the adjacent farm field.

Verse 6 in Chapter Two explains how the earliest vegetation survived without rain or tending by man:

But a stream [or mist or vapor] would rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

It is difficult to say whether v6 speaks of the vegetation in Chapter One or that in Chapter Two. Even so, it speaks of a time when the full atmospheric infrastructure was not yet in place and man was not yet on the scene. Because of that I would lean toward it applying to Chapter One, vv11-12.

And what was the atmospheric infrastructure? Back to Chapter One.

Read Genesis 1:6-8.

We must remind ourselves of the current condition of the created earth, which is (at this point in the narrative) completely covered with surging water, and completely dark. Added to this is the Spirit of God taking part in the creative process.

Read Genesis 1:2.

In two words, the entire earth is wet and dark. Now, in v7, something new is about to happen.

So God made the expanse and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.

Up to this moment in the Creation the earth waters on the surface and the cloud waters (vapors), as we would recognize them, were contiguous—that is without any intervening clear space between them (Leupold). Remember, step-by-step, the Godhead is systematically preparing the surface of the earth for its inhabitants. With the surface of the earth, as we suppose, shrouded by continuous, impenetrable fog, it would be unsuitable for human habitation.

Similar to what was done with light and darkness in v4, the two “waters” are now separated—this time, however, they are separated by something: an expanse, a firmament, a vault. We know from practical experience that this expanse is not a rigid, impenetrable dome over the surface of the earth.

Clouds can ascend and descend through it, rain and hail and snow can descend through it, and rockets can ascend and descend through it. But there is a distinct layer of atmosphere between earth’s surface and space, and during the Creation this meant a lifting of the vaporous clouds from the waters on the surface.²

v8: And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Used in v8 is a word that in Hebrew usage can be used to refer to either the sky or space—even God’s dwelling place. But here, in v8, it refers to the sky—as in v20, a place where the “birds fly above the earth.” There is no water in space; but there is water in the clouds and the atmosphere immediately above the earth. We can agree that what is referenced in this passage is what we call, the “sky.”

This passage in Genesis One describes the “first heaven,” referring to it as an expanse. Elihu, the companion of Job 35 uses the same Hebrew word when he says,

“Look at the heavens and see;
And perceive the clouds—they are higher than you.”
(Job 35:5)

The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *samayim* is *ouranos* (ur-ah-NOS), and it is used in Matthew’s gospel to denote the place where the birds fly—in all our common versions translated “air.”

What I find most baffling is to read some commentators citing the creation of the first rainbow in Genesis 9:13 as evidence that this means there was no rain prior to the Flood. In other words, *no rainbows = no rain; no rain = no rainbows*. But rainbows can be caused by many forms of airborne water. These include not only rain, but also mist, spray, and airborne dew. At the same time, it is common for it to rain without seeing a rainbow. Such reasoning by these commentators I find bizarre.

Then we add to this the supposed picture of thousands of years passing, with mankind spread out over and beyond the fertile crescent, building cities,

² **below...above**

Note carefully what is being said here. Since I sometimes make this mistake myself, it is possible others do as well: The water we see overhead (in the form of clouds) does not dwell *in* what is called the “expanse”—the division being created here. No, they dwell *above* the expanse.”

planting crops, surviving and thriving all this time—and without any rain at all prior to the Flood? For me this is beyond comprehension.

Thus my position is this: Based on the original text of Genesis alongside basic common sense, at least once Adam and his immediate descendants began planting crops, there was rain on the earth.

There was rain—normal showers—but, as we will see, the Flood will be a unique, extraordinary event combining literal *waterfalls* of rain with subterranean vaults of water simultaneously released. This had not occurred before—and will never again. Here is how the venerable Matthew Henry describes it.

Matthew Henry: The rain, which ordinarily descends in drops, then came down in streams, or spouts, as they call them in the Indies, where clouds have been often known to burst, as they express it there, when the rain descends in a much more violent torrent than we have ever seen in the greatest shower. We read (Job 26:8) that God binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them; but now the bond was loosed, the cloud was rent, and such rains descended as were never known before nor since, in such abundance and of such continuance: the thick cloud was not, as ordinarily it is, wearied with waterings (Job 37:11), that is, soon spent and exhausted; but still the clouds returned after the rain, and the divine power brought in fresh recruits.

In our next session we will continue our examination of this most extraordinary event: the Flood.

SESSION 49: IT BEGINS, PART TWO

Genesis 7:6-12

PREFACE

Quite often there is more than one way to organize, or evaluate, a story. We have already noted, in our last session, the structure of *repetition* in Chapter Seven. In the handout I used underlines of different colors to group the instances of repetition or topics. Later we will consider Chapter Seven from the standpoint of *the flood's impact on the earth*—it's geological scope and massive destructive power.

Before we get to that, however, I would like to evaluate the chapter from another angle, one that is perhaps the most important from a *biblical* perspective—that is from the perspective of God's word as a whole; or put another way, what is the story's underlying *moral*. To that end I offer a second grouping of the verses in Chapter Seven, on the next page. To summarize this approach, we previously looked at *repetition*; now we look at *contrast*—the contrast between salvation, or life, and perishing.

Later Yahweh will formalize His commandments for the people of Israel, offering them a choice well-stated in Moses' final summation of the Law before his passing.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

Later still, this Law will be fulfilled in Christ, very Son of God; the rules will change, but the choices will remain the same: life or death.

Read John 3:14-18.

God says that if we believe in His Son we will be saved—which is another way of saying that if we *obey what God wants us to do*, we will be saved. That is what is going on in Genesis—and *has* been since the earliest days of Creation.

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

From Genesis to the Revelation, the Lord God has repeatedly offered humanity a choice: choose life in Him, or choose death. On page 2 of the handout look at the passages highlighted in gold, beginning in v1, with God's command to Noah to enter the ark. Even in those simple three words is the implication: enter the ark to live—do *not* enter, and you will die. And on through the rest of the chapter:

- Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.
- entered the ark

Chapter Seven (LSB): Salvation

1 **Then Yahweh said to Noah, “Enter the ark,** you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.

2 “You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and his female;

3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, **to keep their seed alive on the face of all the earth.**

4 “For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and **I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.”**

5 **And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.**

6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him **entered the ark** because of the water of the flood.

8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,

9 by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, **as God had commanded Noah.**

10 Now it happened after the seven days, that the water 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 this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

12 Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

13 On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, **entered the ark,**

14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every fowl, every winged creature.

15 So they came to Noah into the ark, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, **entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him.**

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

18 And the water prevailed and multiplied greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water.

19 And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

21 **And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind.**

22 **All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.**

23 **Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.**

24 And the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.

- as God had commanded him
- and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.

By contrast we see what happened to those who rejected God and His commandments, beginning in v4:

- I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.
- all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last
- All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

From beginning to end the consistent theme—the “moral,” as it were—in God’s word is choose life, or salvation, or choose death. In Genesis Chapter Three we have the first rebellion against God by man, and the first judgment against him as a result: death—in this setting meaning *instead of living forever, you will eventually die*. But here, in Chapter Seven, the rebellious, those who have rejected God, will perish immediately, swallowed up by the deep waters of His wrath. They chose death.

Read Genesis 7:6-12.

v7

Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

Even though the wording of this verse *sounds* like they entered the ark because it had begun to rain, the rest of the passage seems to say otherwise. Look at how vv16-17 read.

And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him. Then the flood came upon the earth...

So I take it that v7 could be read, *they entered the ark because of the impending water of the flood*. But more importantly, they entered because they were trusting in God, who had told them there would be a flood. They didn’t need to feel raindrops on their face to know it was coming. This was just one more act of obedience and trust.

vv8-9

Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

Just a couple of observations here:

- By my reckoning this is now the seventh time the phrase “male and female” has been used since Genesis 1:1—and there will be one more time in v16. This would seem to put the lie to today’s fanciful notion that there exists an unlimited number of sexes. No, God seems to be emphatic: in the human and animal world there are only two.
- Note that in the eleventh hour the animals know: “they came to Noah.” Either instinct or God’s Spirit is telling them to get inside with Noah and the other humans.

vv10-12

Though it will be reprised with more detail in vv17-20 and v24, now in these three verses the Inundation officially begins.

Now it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

In v4 Yahweh made the promise that “after seven more days” He would send the rain. Now the clock has struck and it is time. Notice that this statement in v10 is general, not specifying the source: just “water.”

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

The obvious question that springs to mind is, *Why are you telling us this? What is the significance of these precise details about the beginning of the Flood?* Two reasons come to mind.

First, these details express the importance, the earth-shattering impact of this event. They drive a peg in historical fact to show that this is not just a dream, or a fairy tale, or an illustrative parable.

Second, by placing it at a given point within a patriarch’s lifetime, it follows the pattern of antiquity to pinpoint events less on a specific calendar date than a year in a king or leader’s life. For example, repeatedly that pattern is used in Kings and Chronicles, such as in 2 Kings 13:1.

In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel at Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years.

Thus our starting point for the Flood epoch is, as it were, *in the six-hundredth year of Noah...* This beginning point is necessary to offer a foundation for the time marks that follow. And here is as good a point as any to discuss the organization of the Flood epoch into a *palistrophe*—or *chiasmus*—an inversion

of the relationship between the elements of phrases. This literary device is found throughout the Bible, more often than not in the Psalms, and I usually have small regard for it. But here, in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, it is particularly precise and dramatic. Just take a few moments to marvel at the symmetry in God's word.

The Flood Palistrophe, or Chiasmus

The tale is cast in the form of an extended palistrophe, that is a structure that turns back on itself. In a palistrophe the first item matches the final item, the second item matches the penultimate item, and so on. The second half of the story is thus a mirror image of the first.

A God resolves to destroy the corrupt race (6:11-13).

B Noah builds an ark according to God's instructions (6:14-22).

C The Lord commands the remnant to enter the ark (7:1-9).

D The flood begins (7:10-16).

E The flood prevails 150 days and the water covers the mountains (7:17-24).

F God remembers Noah (8:1a).

E' The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible (8:1-5).

D' The earth dries (8:6-14).

C' God commands the remnant to leave the ark (8:15-19).

B' Noah builds an altar (8:20).

A' The Lord resolves not to destroy humankind (8:21-22).

What then is the function of the *palistrophe*? Firstly, it gives literary expression to the character of the flood event. The rise and fall of the waters is mirrored in the rise and fall of the key words in its description. Secondly, it draws attention to the real turning point in the saga: viii 1, 'And God remembered Noah.' From that moment the waters start to decline and the earth to dry out. It was God's intervention that was decisive in saving Noah, and the literary structure highlights this fact. (Constable)*

So what happened in Noah's six-hundredth year? Quite a bit, actually.

all the fountains of the great deep split open,

The word translated "split [or burst] open" is the Hebrew *baqa*, which means "to cleave asunder, to rend, divide; to lay open anything enclosed that it may break forth" (Wilson). Think a huge, highly pressurized pipe suddenly split open by a strong iron cleaver.

The great "deep" (*tehom*) refers to a surging mass of waters, an abyss, a subterranean water supply. You may wonder, *How did that subterranean water get there?* Turn back, please, to Chapter One.

* My source for this is Dr. Thomas L. Constable's Commentary (2012).

Read Genesis 1:2.

That is, the surface of the earth was covered in a surging, rolling, tumultuous dark sea. Now, v9.

Read Genesis 1:9-10.

From the very beginning of this earth's existence in Genesis One to its ultimate demise in the Revelation—and several instances in-between—this globe has been subject to dramatic, surface-altering upheavals. In Chapter One, some of the earth's structure (today we would call them “tectonic plates”) beneath a globe of water, rise *above* the water to become dry land. Some of that replaced water flows into resulting seas, but some moves underground. Now, in one supernatural blow, it bursts free of its confinement. There is more to say about this moment—and we will—but for now let's move on.

and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

There are several scenes in William Wyler's 1959 *Ben-Hur* that take place in an upper room—something like a comfortable sitting room—in the wealthy family's home. One wall of this room consists entirely of latticed “windows” that can be angled open to regulate either incoming breeze or outgoing smoke—a common design in the Middle East even today—using not glass, but open wooden lattice.

This is why the KJVs and ESV faithfully translate the Hebrew *arubbah* “windows,” for that is the word: a latticed opening. But our other versions do a better job, I believe, of describing the *nature* of this supernatural event with “floodgates” of the sky or heavens. Either word is meant in a metaphorical sense, seeking to paint a picture of the sheer volume and intensity of this event.

Even though some commentators discount the impact of the rain in favor of the subterranean waters, I believe *both* were of a cataclysmic nature.

Thus far we have just teased that cataclysm; in our next session we will consider it in-depth. But for now, Moses closes this passage with a concise statement regarding the *duration* of the rain which cascaded out of the “windows of heaven.”

v12

Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

At our home our most desired spring or summer rain is a light shower of several days' duration. This allows time for the life-giving water to soak deeply into the ground without causing erosion or flooding. A hard “gully-washer” may fill up the pond nicely, but can cause more damage to the soil without allowing time for it to soak in, thus harming the garden without nourishing it.

Here, however, in this dramatic event, it is precisely destruction and death that the Lord God has in mind. This is not a nourishing shower, but a destructive and drowning inundation that will wipe away everything in its path. That is (if my math is correct), 960 hours of waterfall-intensity rain upon the earth.

Now, *that* will fill up the pond.

Matthew Henry: God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it; for he is slow to anger. But, though the destruction came slowly and gradually, yet it came effectually.

SESSION 50: THE EXTENT AND POWER OF THE FLOOD, PART ONE

Genesis 7:13-22

PREFACE

Let us begin by reading the first part of our passage.

Read Genesis 7:13-16.

We have already demonstrated the repetition employed in Chapter Seven—but it is important that we note that it is not *just* repetition, as if the repeated passages have no merit in themselves. Thus I would like to offer just a few brief observations on this passage—nothing earth-shattering, just interesting—before we move into the more dramatic second part.

v13

On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

I love to discover things hidden beneath the text—things which, in varying ways, illumine the richness of God's word. Here we have the simple word "very," as in "On this very day..." This is the Hebrew *etsem*, which means "bone." This seems odd to our ears, but it is a Hebrew idiom which means that the "bone" of a thing is in the very thing itself" (thus in the KJV, "selfsame," which is the most accurate rendering, but a bit confusing without the explanation). It refers to the *substance* of something, as it was used in Genesis 2:23, when Adam declared,

"This one finally is **bone** of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh."

v14

...they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every fowl, every winged creature.

This verse closes with what is called an apposition—a helpful, explaining second phrase or expression—so after "every bird after its kind," we have "every fowl, every winged creature."

Leupold: After the general expression, "every sort of bird according to its kind," comes an apposition which in Hebrew reads: "every little bird of every wing," or even better: "every sort of little bird of every sort of

wing.” Meek has found a very happy rendering for the phrase by the expression: “everything with feathers and wings.” That is practically what is meant. Insects are manifestly included under this head.

v16

And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as **God** had commanded him; and **Yahweh** closed it behind him (emphasis added).

Here we have an eloquent example of how the two designations for God are used by Moses. Again, from H. C. Leupold,

God, the awe-inspiring Ruler of all, **Elohim**, laid all these commandments upon Noah by virtue of His supreme authority. In the same breath, with skillful use of the proper divine name, the author asserts that it was **Yahweh**, the always gracious and faithful, who “closed the door after him,” so guarding him against possible assaults of the wicked, as well as preventing him from attempting to show ill-timed mercy to last minute penitents.

Now we are ready to appreciate the cataclysmic ramifications of the Flood.

Read Genesis 7:17-22.¹

To proceed we must answer two important questions:

1. Was the Flood a *global* or a *localized* event?
2. What was the physical impact of the Flood on the earth?

Was the Flood a global or a localized event?

Look again at v19.

And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

Whitcomb: One need not be a professional scientist to realize the tremendous implications of these Biblical statements. If only one (to say nothing of all) of the high mountains had been covered with water, the Flood would have been absolutely universal; for water must seek its own level—and must do so quickly!

Whitcomb then quotes our familiar source, H. C. Leupold:

Leupold: A measure of the waters is now made by comparison with the only available standard for such waters—the mountains. They are said

¹ For this next section I have relied—not totally, but substantially—on John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris’ *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*, (P&R Publishing, 1961). As stated earlier in Session 48, I do not agree with Whitcomb on all points, but his book is a thoroughly researched, scientific and scholarly treatise examining Creation and the Flood from the perspective of biblical inerrancy.

to have been “covered.” Not a few merely but “all the high mountains under all the heavens.” One of these expressions alone would almost necessitate the impression that the author intends to convey the idea of the absolute universality of the Flood, e. g., “all the high mountains.” Yet since “all” is known to be used in a relative sense, the writer removes all possible ambiguity by adding the phrase “under all the heavens.” A double “all” (*kol*) cannot allow for so relative a sense. It almost constitutes a Hebrew superlative. So we believe that the text disposes of the question of the universality of the Flood.²

² Let me add some more etymological background to this passage—specifically, vv18-20. Note the repetition of the word translated “prevailed”—except for in the NIVs—the Hebrew, *gabar*). One might be inclined to interpret “prevail” as meaning “to continue,” but it really means to be strong, mighty—and the passage shows the water becoming mightier and mightier. YLT says it well: “and the waters are mighty, and multiply exceedingly upon the earth; and the ark goeth on the face of the waters. And the waters have been very very mighty on the earth, and covered are all the high mountains which are under the whole heavens; fifteen cubits upwards have the waters become mighty, and the mountains are covered.”

As to the height of the water, I have heretofore been confused by the statement in v20 that “The water prevailed fifteen cubits [i.e., 22 feet] higher...” I have scratched my head over the common interpretation that this refers to the draft of the ark; *How do you get that from this statement, I wondered.* But at last, Whitcomb explains it in a way that even I can understand. He points out that it does not mean “the flood was only fifteen cubits deep,” nor does it mean that all “the mountains were covered to a depth of *only* fifteen cubits, for this would require that all antediluvian mountains be exactly the same altitude.”

Whitcomb: The true meaning of the phrase is to be found in comparing it with Genesis 6:15, where we are told that the height of the ark was thirty cubits. Nearly all commentators agree that the phrase “fifteen cubits” in 7:20 must therefore refer to the draught [draft] of the ark. In other words, the ark sank into the water to a depth of fifteen cubits (just one-half of its total height) when fully laden. Such information adds further support to this particular argument for a universal Flood, because it tells us that the Flood “prevailed” over the tops of the highest mountains to a depth of *at least* fifteen cubits. **If the Flood had not covered the mountains by at least such a depth, the ark could not have floated over them during the five months in which the waters “prevailed” upon the earth.** (emphasis added)

That tracks for me. Frankly, here we have another of those moments where one must either take the Bible for what it says—or not. But a word of caution: one might be inclined to base their argument for a global Inundation on the word translated “earth.” But the Hebrew *erets* is a flexible word, and can refer to the globe, land, countryside, a district or region, or even the soil. So that alone cannot be the basis for arguing for a global Flood. There is, however, plenty without it.

As we have seen already, the most readily available—the most obvious—basis for a global (or universal) Flood is found in vv19-20:

And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were

covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. (emphasis added)

Now, as we consider the various heights of mountains on this planet, we might be inclined to look favorably on the argument for a localized Inundation. After all, Mt. Ararat may be a mere seventeen thousand feet, but Mt. Everest has an altitude of *twenty-nine* thousand feet. In answering this I believe Leupold stumbles.

Leupold: We hold that the solution lies in this that those few peaks that rise above Mt. Ararat were unknown both to the people of the days of the Flood as well as to the contemporaries of Moses. All the mountains, they knew of were covered. In any case, as Keri indicates, such mountain peaks in relation to the whole earth would amount to no more than a few pinpoints on a globe, and are disregarded because of the limited horizon of the ancients.

To that I say, *Now hold on: you can't have it both ways.* Look at vv21-22:

And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

How would the ancients—Noah, Moses, et al—have *any visual* knowledge that *all* animals, *all* mankind was wiped out by the Flood? Even if the Inundation were localized, they could not possibly be able to visually account for the death of “All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life.”

No doubt Moses, the human author of Genesis, along with Noah, hadn't a clue about a peak located on the border between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China—just as neither of them could vouch, humanly speaking, for every last human and every last animal drowned in the Flood. Moses wrote by faith in God's Holy Spirit who fed him the information—just as we *read* by faith God's holy word, which states clearly that *every* mountain was covered, and every being that breathed was extinguished, save for those shut inside the ark—just as God had declared from the outset.

Read Genesis 6:12-13.

“...I am about to destroy them with the earth.”³

In our next session I will be speaking more to this business of the heights of mountains, but for now let's press on.

³ I do believe that in this passage as well as those in Chapter Seven *erets* is referring to the entire globe. It's just that that word alone is insufficient for grounding a universal or global interpretation for the Flood.

I include below a helpful chart found in Whitcomb’s book, which he gleaned from a commentary on Genesis by E. F. Kevan. Whitcomb disagrees with Kevan’s conclusion that the Flood waters continued to rise during the first 150 days, contending that the Flood reached its maximum depth after the first forty days.

Nonetheless this is a very helpful chart, offering a timeline for the entire Flood epoch, showing that the inhabitants of the ark were so secured for—not just “forty days and forty nights”—but for just over one year: 371 days.

Fig. 1. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLOOD^a

There were forty days during which the rain fell	40
Throughout another 110 days the waters continued to rise, making 150 days in all for their “prevailing” (7:24)	110
The waters occupied 74 days in their “going and decreasing” (AV margin). This was from the 17th day of the seventh month to the 1st day of the tenth month (8:5). There being 30 days to a month, the figures in days are 13 plus 30 plus 30 plus 1	74
Forty days elapsed before Noah sent out the raven (8:6-7)	40
Seven days elapsed before Noah sent out the dove for the first time (8:8). This period is necessary for reaching the total and is given by implication from the phrase “other seven days” (8:10)	7
Seven days passed before sending out the dove for the second time (8:10)	7
Seven days more passed before the third sending of the dove (8:12)	7
Up to this point 285 days are accounted for, but the next episode is dated the 1st of the first month in the 601st year. From the date in 7:11 to this point in 8:13 is a period of 314 days; therefore an interval of 29 days elapses	29
From the removal of the covering of the ark to the very end of the experience was a further 57 days (8:14)	57
TOTAL	371

This table appears in E. F. Kevan’s commentary on Genesis in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1953), pp. 84-85.

There is much more evidence that can be cited—geological, historical, textual, etc.—to show that the extent of the Flood was global, but for time’s sake (and the sake of your level of endurance) I have chosen to focus on the text itself for establishing this position. And I believe it clearly supports a global, or universal extent for the Flood.

In our next session we will be looking at the dynamic, physical impact the Inundation had on the geology of this earth.

SESSION 51: THE EXTENT AND POWER OF THE FLOOD, PART TWO

Genesis 7:13-22

PREFACE

In our previous session we discussed the range, the scope of the Flood, and concluded that the Inundation was not local, confined to a rather limited geographical region, but global, universal. It defies logic to say we take God's word for what it says—"And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered." (Genesis 7:19–20)—but then conclude from that, that the Flood was restricted to just a portion of the Middle East!

With that—the *extent* of the Flood—out of the way, we now turn to the destructive and manipulative power unleashed on this earth by the Flood—which consisted not just of rain, but also the eruptions of the subterranean vaults.

Read Genesis 7:17-22.¹

What was the physical impact of the Flood on the earth?

On our property there are a number of areas where, over time, rain and the gathered running water have effectively altered the landscape. Water running from low spots in our drive toward the pond has cut channels in the slope, that then continue to erode during subsequent rains. The spillway for runoff from the pond, which began as a subtle man-made depression, has deepened to the point that I have had to fill it with concrete rip-rap to slow the erosion. All of this and more has been caused just by normal rains, augmented and worsened by the occasional "gully-washer."

These landscape changes have been made by normal Midwest weather, without benefit of extraordinary climatic extremes.

At a point millennia ago, the corruption and evil of mankind became so bad that Yahweh God determined to both wipe out that generation of man and completely alter the earth on which it dwelt.

Read Genesis 6:11-13.

In the passage before us, vv17-22 in Chapter Seven, we have Yahweh doing just that. Here is the chronicle, in condensed form, of the Inundation that will destroy all living things on land save for Noah's family and representatives for the essential species, as well as dramatically alter the terrain of planet earth. And right off the bat, v17 requires some clarification.

¹ Someone could easily teach an entire multi-session class on this topic alone. So it is clear that I cannot cover every last detail, every piece of evidence in just one or two sessions. For those details I commend to you Whitcomb's book, *The Genesis Flood*, as well as any number of resources at *The Institute for Creation Research*—founded, by the way, by Whitcomb's coauthor, Dr. Henry M. Morris. Another fine example, also available at the Institute for Creation, is *Carved in Stone*, by Dr. Timothy Clarey.

v17

Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

Two words, the first noun and verb in this verse, require a closer look, for we can often think of a flood as a done deal, a relatively static thing, a body of water as the *result* of heavy rain or a dam breaking. But the word here is *mabbul*, which contains within it the idea of flowing, a deluge—that is, a flooding of water: the *cause*, not the *result*.

The corresponding verb as well can be confusingly interpreted. The KJVs “was” speaks of the result: a body of water upon the earth for forty days. Yet this contradicts v24, which speaks of “the water prevail[ing] upon the earth 150 days.” The LSB and NASB are better, with “the flood **came upon** the earth for forty days.” Best, surprisingly, are the NIVs, with “For forty days the flood **kept coming** on the earth.” That’s the idea: for forty days the flooding water fell and erupted upon the earth.

Yet vv11-12 remind us that the rain was not the first component of the Inundation. There was an earth-shattering event that began before the rain.

Read Genesis 7:11-12.

There may have been only a split-second between the two, but Scripture tells us that “the fountains of the great deep split open” *before* it began to rain.

Both of these components were of a cataclysmic nature; they are both God-managed, *destructive* events meant to depopulate the earth and radically alter the shape and terrain of the globe.

Man is a short-sighted being—always has been, always will be, this side of Glory. Humans cannot see over the horizon, and usually do not wish to. Likewise humans spend little time in retrospection; they know little of the past, and tend to imagine by default that things as they are right now are as they always have been—or if they are different, what is right now is the preferred.

Thus it is easy for us to imagine that the shape and terrain of this earth is today as it was originally created.

- The rivers that flows through or around our state have always been there;
- the trees that pepper our lawn have always had today’s appearance;
- land that is today arid desert has always been arid desert;
- and the largest natural objects on earth, mountains, were initially created at the height and shape they are today.

None of these are true.

Read Psalm 104:5-9.

That passage, in poetic form, relates how the face of the earth was changed by the Flood. We seldom consider the destructive *turbulence* of the Inundation; after all, from Sunday School flannel graphs on we probably have a picture in our mind of the ark floating placidly upon a tranquil sea. That is not necessarily inaccurate, just incomplete. If just normal, seasonal rain can alter the landscape of our few acres, what would a Flood higher than the highest mountains along with violently erupting quaking and spewing from underground vaults do to the earth? Here is a great summary statement by John Whitcomb.

Whitcomb: The entire account plainly yields the inference that tremendous quantities of earth and rock must have been excavated by the waters of the Flood. Many factors must have contributed to this—the driving rains, the raging streams resulting from them, the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the powerful tidal waves, then later the waves and other currents generated by the rising of the lands and sinking of the basins, and perhaps many other factors which we cannot now even guess. Never since the world was formed could there ever have been such extensive erosion of soil and rock beds, on a global scale, as during the Genesis Flood. And the materials that were eroded must eventually have been redeposited somewhere, and necessarily in stratified layers, such as we find everywhere around the world today in the great sedimentary rock systems.

In other words, what “science” claims took millions of years to slowly occur, could have mostly occurred during the one year of the Flood event. And regarding the raising and lowering of the land, valleys and mountains, Whitcomb writes,

It is extremely interesting in light of the biblical suggestion of uplift of the lands at the conclusion of the Deluge period, to note that most of the present mountain ranges of the world are believed to have been uplifted (on the basis of fossil evidence) during the Pleistocene or late Pliocene...Since the Pliocene and Pleistocene are supposed to represent the most recent geological epochs, except that of the present, and since nearly all of the great mountain areas of the world have been found to have fossils from these times near their summits, there is no conclusion possible other than that the mountains (and therefore the continents of which they form the backbones) have all been uplifted essentially simultaneously and quite recently. Surely this fact accords well with the biblical statements.

His point is this: Those fossils, in number and type, found near the mountain summits, are supposed to be limited to areas considerably lower, which is evidence for dramatic—and, in geological terms—fairly recent uplift, all at the same time.

If one backs up and squints, considering the span of history from Creation to Eschaton, it is easy to see that this earth is in an almost continual—or at least repeated—state of flux and change. Whitcomb breaks this down into “five great epochs of history, each of which has produced substantial segments of the geological formations.”

- The initial Creation itself,
- the work of the subsequent six days of Creation,
- the Antediluvian period (before the Flood),
- the Deluge itself,
- the modern, post-deluge period.

Whitcomb is of course looking backward, but to this I must, looking into the future, add the cataclysmic upheaval that will occur during the Last Things, the Eschaton, which will be, in many respects, a mirror image of that which takes place during the Inundation and six days of creation.²

I keep coming back to the crescendo in vv18-19:

And the water prevailed and multiplied greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water. And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

Here we have a picture, painted with words, of an event steadily increasing in fierce strength with an overwhelming reach. If one takes the Bible as God’s inerrant word, describing the Flood as a geological catastrophe affecting the entire planet, one cannot go wobbly on its two principal components: rain and the release of subterranean water and other natural elements such as magma.

A number of commentators almost ignore the idea of underground vaults of water, going right to earthquakes and volcanoes spewing lava—and I think it is feasible to include all of the above. Even if Yahweh’s intent was to release subterranean water, that process would certainly invoke a multitude of structural movements, the shifting of tectonic plates, and the release of more than just water.

Perhaps the best picture of this calamitous event is found in the description of the events during the opening of the Sixth Seal in the last things.

Read Revelation 6:12-17.

Two different events that include different components, but I think what we just read paints a pretty accurate picture of the same sort of cataclysmic impact on the people and structure of the earth as in the Genesis Flood. That ark may have had days of floating upon a relatively tranquil sea, but especially dur-

² see Zechariah 14:1-10, Habakkuk 3:6, Micah 1:4, Isaiah 2:2, and of course the lengthy narrative of the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls—the tribulations and plagues with which the earth and its people are inflicted during the Eschaton, in the Revelation.

ing the first forty days there also would have been days of rolling, surging tidal waves, vast towering waves, eddies and whirlpools throwing and spinning the ark about like a toy.

And put yourself in the place of the poor lost souls outside the ark: there would have been nowhere safe to hide. Flooding, yes, but also valleys and mountains switching places; heaving ground that had just moments before been a quiet plain; bottomless cracks in the earth suddenly swallowing everything in sight; placid mountains spewing lava and rock and ash; hot, suffocating mud competing with incessant, torrential downpours. Seek shelter anywhere—mountain cave, stone hut—only to have it collapse upon you.

Just as will happen during the end times, shake your fist at God, but He is the one in charge, and your options have run out. You are experiencing the full force of His holy wrath.

And in no time at all the continually rising surface of the water would be crammed with the corpses of humans and animals alike, along with all the floating detritus that accompanies total destruction—resulting in vv21-22:

And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

And to bring this home, I experience to this much the same reaction I did to the study of the events of the Eschaton. Yes indeed we have a loving gracious Savior in Christ Jesus, as well as a patient and merciful Father who gave Him for the salvation of our souls. But we should never—*never*—forget that our God is also God of wrath.

Man is shortsighted; we imagine by default that things as they are right now are as they always have been—or if they are different, what is right now will always be. But God's word tells us a very different reality.

Most of us remain blind to God's wrath because—dwelling in the Church Age, the age of grace—we have never experienced it, and when we read about it, it seems so far in the past or so far into the future that it cannot possibly affect us.

We should all be both encouraged and *sobered* by the fact that our God never changes. He remains who and what He has always been—and that includes His Son. There will come a day when *His* wrath will be loosed upon this earth and its rebellious people—just as it was in the Great Inundation of Noah's time.

SESSION 52: GOD REMEMBERS NOAH

Genesis 7:23-8:3

PREFACE

The passage before us in Chapter Eight raises a few questions in our minds; for example,

- If it was necessary for God to “remember” Noah (8:1), does this mean He had forgotten him?
- If the water was so deep and pervasive that it covered the mountains, when it eventually “receded from the earth” (8:3), where did it go?

These we will answer in due course, but let us first finish Chapter Seven.

Read Genesis 7:23-8:3.

vv21-22

As Chapter Seven closes we have, of course, more repetition, but we can glean something from it. If we back up to vv21-22 and note certain phrases, we can see a purpose in this reiteration.

And **all flesh** that moved on the earth **breathed its last**, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the breath of **the spirit of life**—of all that was on the dry land—died. (emphasis added)

v21: “all flesh”

v21: (depending on your version) “breathed its last,” “died,” “perished”

v22: “the spirit of life”

Now go back to Chapter Six. In the LSB v17 reads

“As for Me, behold I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall breathe its last.”

In vv21-23 of Chapter Seven Moses, by the Spirit of God, uses some of the very same language God used in pronouncing the judgment He was about to send upon life on the earth, thus confirming that God did precisely what He said.

At the same time we should recognize a small *difference* in yet another phrase from one used before. Go back to Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 2:7.

“Yahweh God...breathed into [Adam’s] nostrils the breath of life.”

Here in v22,
“the breath of the spirit of life”

Leupold points out that here there is a distinction drawn between the personal breath of God that animated man, and the breath which animates all living beings.

Leupold: Here in v. 22 the expression used is “the breath of the spirit of life,” not the distinctive breath that animates man but the breath by which the Spirit of life, God’s Holy Spirit, animated living beings.

A rather subtle difference between the two, but perhaps a better takeaway is the commonality: *Both* are supplied by God. The lost will dispute it to their dying day, but *all* creatures are given life by Him, and *all* humans are made in His image. There is the tragedy: rejected by His own offspring.

v23

Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.¹

¹ “Every living thing” translates *kol yequm*, all standing substance or all existence.

Here is the final, “solemn, if not intentionally dreary” (Leupold) reiteration of what God (“He”) has just done on and to this globe. He has wiped the slate clean so that He might start all over again—this time from Noah’s sons instead of Adam’s—although, of course, still in the same line.

This painful chapter ends with the cold, matter-of-fact statement that “the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.” That is, for five months (which most believe included the forty days and forty nights) the mighty water conquered the earth. The deep flood held the entire globe in its watery grip, not just drowning the earth’s inhabitants, but rearranging its geography, re-sculpting the earth’s surface to a dramatic, and rather incredible, extent.

v8:1

Then God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark;

Some commentators interpret God “remembering” Noah (*zakhar*) as an *anthropomorphism*—something expressed in human terms so we can understand it. That may be the case, but I’d like to add another layer to it. Certainly no one is going to claim that Yahweh God actually *forgot* Noah; *zakhar* is used a

number of times to express God showing kindness, granting requests, or delivering from harm. For example, in Genesis 30:22 Moses writes,

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. So she conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” And she named him Joseph, saying, “May Yahweh give me another son.”
(Genesis 30:22–24)

The text tells us that God “remembered” not just Noah, but all that were in the ark. And the extra layer I would add to this “remembering” is that during the latter portion of Chapter Seven Yahweh Elohim has been focused on the *destruction* of the earth and the living things on it. Now His remembering the inhabitants of the ark means He has now changed His focus from destruction to *salvation*. The destruction of the old has been accomplished; now it is time to begin again—and that will start with the removal of the water from the face of the earth.

...and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

I confess I have had to chew on this quite a bit. My regular sources were of little help in answering the question, *Where did all the water go—and when?*

It is frustrating when—and it seems to occur regularly—the text leaves you with a fundamental question and all the scholars just pass over it without mention. The first reason for this struggle is found in v2:

Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained;

This describes the closing of the sources for the water: the subterranean fountains and the torrential rain from above. All well and good—but if those sources are literally “closed” (and the Hebrew means that they were “shut up”) then that would mean that the water they shed could not flow back into the space from whence it came—most importantly, the water could not flow *back* into the subterranean vaults! The water would have to recede to some other place—and where else would that be? Yet, in v3 we are told that “the water receded from the earth, going forth and returning.” To where did it return if the subterranean vaults had just been shut?

The wind of v1 certainly would *contribute* to evaporation of the water—but common sense tells us that it would have to be augmented by some supernatural force to have a meaningful and timely effect upon that much water, and we, of course, cannot discount an “act of God” in this.

And regarding that phrase in v3—“the water receded from the earth, going forth and returning”—sometimes you just have to love the intellectual wisdom coming from our varied commentators. No matter the topic, no matter the Scripture passage, one will—if not often, at least inevitably—be faced with one saying black and another saying white.

I was amused this week to read the following from Leupold regarding the phrase, “and the water receded from the earth, going forth and returning”—

The double infinitive absolute appended to the finite verb would yield a connection which might be rendered: “they subsided going and returning,” which amounts to: “they subsided with **a very pronounced fall**” (emphasis added).

—followed by this from Matthew Henry:

Then the effect ceased; not all at once, but by degrees: The waters abated (Gen. 8:1), returned from off the earth continually, Heb. they were going and returning (v. 3), which denotes **a gradual departure** (emphasis added).

I won’t bore you with the details, but only point out that Leupold is the one probably correct. Considering the vast amount of water, it retreated at a pretty good clip. Again, this would seem to speak against the wind *by itself* being a determining factor.

...and at the end of 150 days the water decreased.

Finally, before we reach a conclusion on this, there is one more fly in the ointment.

When v3 ends with “and at the end of 150 days the water decreased,” there is no consensus on whether this refers to the original 150 days in v7:24, or refers to an *additional* 150 days of drying time. Leupold believes it refers to the original 150 days.

Of our versions, only the LSB and NASB seem to suggest by their wording that after the 150 days of the water “prevailing,” they decreased, which could be read, began to recede.

The rest of our versions seem to suggest—primarily by their verb tenses—that this could refer to an additional 150 days. For example, the ESV has, “At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,” and the NIVs have, “At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down”—in other words, past tense. But with my extremely limited understanding of Hebrew tenses, the original is not in the past tense, but rather is a future or incomplete tense.

After all that, then, how do we answer the question, *To where did the water return if the subterranean vaults had just been shut?* To my mind, a determining factor for this is when the displacement of geological features took place. Look again at Psalm 104.

Read Psalm 104:5-9.

Look especially at v8-9. The other versions seem to confuse the waters with the valleys, but I believe the NASB and LSB have it clearly:

The mountains went up; the valleys went down
To the place which You founded for them.
You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
So that they will not return to cover the earth.

That is, v8 refers to the geological mountains and valleys being moved, while v9 refers to the “waters”—clearly understood from the boundaries being set so that “they [the waters] will not return to cover the earth.” It would make no sense to say that the *valleys* “will not return to cover the earth,” even in poetry.

So the question is, *When did this geological shifting described in Psalm 104 take place?* We made the point in our previous session that certainly there was rearranging of the surface of the earth from the outset of the Flood. But if this raising of the mountains and lowering of the valleys occurred early on, that would mean that at the end of the 150 days—the cessation of new waters being added to the Flood—those deep valleys would already be filled with water.

But if the raising of the mountains and lowering of the valleys occurred right about at the end of the 150 days, this would give us an answer for the question, *Where did all the water go?* Psalm 104:8b-9 gives us the answer:

...the valleys went down
To the place which You founded for them.
You set a boundary that they [i.e., the waters] may not pass over,
So that they will not return to cover the earth.

This would mean that

- the initial Creation was of an earth with far less extremities, mountains and valleys, than it has now; not necessarily a smooth marble, but lower mountains and shallower valleys;
- this would mean that the Flood did not have to be miles and miles in depth to cover the highest peaks;
- and if the sudden raising of the mountains and lowering of the valleys (including today’s oceans) occurred right about the time when the Inundation ceased, this would create new basins for the Flood water in which to recede—and at a fairly rapid rate.

Thus by v3 we have the beginning of the end of the dramatic Inundation of the earth. Noah, his family, and all the beasts have been preserved throughout the raging Flood, but they remain locked inside the ark—Yahweh personally shut them inside the ark (7:16), and He will be the one to command them to disembark (8:15ff).

And the waters will now begin to recede.

SESSION 53: THE EARTH DRIES OUT

Genesis 8:4-14

PREFACE

I would like to begin by posing a question: *Where did the ark come to rest?*

Most of us grew up thinking that the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat—but that is not correct. Let's read the first portion of our passage.

Read Genesis 8:4-7.

In the Flood narrative the Lord God has just turned His attention away from destruction to begin the restoration process. He has kept safe Noah and his family, along with representatives of the essential beasts, for, thus far, 150 days. Now He begins the necessary steps that will lead, eventually, to Noah and his charges once again standing on *terra firma*.

And in this day and age it is customary for our eyes to glaze over when confronted with the minutia in this passage. We are a generation with little patience for pedantic details. But here the details are important; for one thing, they demonstrate and affirm that we are not reading a fairy tale, but an actual account of an historical event. These details bring on-the-ground, realistic affirmation to the conclusion of a supernatural event.

So let us at least acknowledge these important milestones—without dwelling on them *too* long.

v4

In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month,
the ark rested upon **the mountains of Ararat**. (emphasis
added)

Back to our question. For once all of our common versions agree; the Hebrew is plural, *har*, “mountains”—that is, the mountainous portion of the kingdom of Ararat. In the Bible Ararat was the name of a region, a country, as in Jeremiah 51:27

Lift up a standard in the land,
Blow a trumpet among the nations!
Set apart the nations against her;
Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and
Ashkenaz...

There are a number of peaks in that country's mountainous region, the highest being Mt. Masis, but more important than on which of these peaks the ark came to rest is the location of the *country* of Ararat itself. Look at the first map on the next page.



These mountains (and the ancient nation of Ararat) are located in the far eastern portion of modern Turkey, nudging up against modern Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the northwest tip of Iran. The genius behind God’s choosing that location for those in the ark to disembark is seen when we look at the second map.



This was a perfect location from which to repopulate the earth! From this corner of today's Turkey, from this spot Noah's three sons and their descendants could easily migrate in all four points of the compass. As we looked at in Session 44,

- **Japheth** was the ancestor of a number of tribes and peoples associated with the regions to the north and west of the Middle East—especially Anatolia (parts of Turkey) and the Aegean Sea. That is, the upper NW of the Middle East, bleeding into the Caucasus and even into Eastern Europe.
- **Ham** was the father of *many* peoples and tongues; some names which stand out: Canaan, Nimrod, Babel (i.e., Babylon), Accad, Ninevah, Philistines, Jebusite (early dwellers in what would become Jerusalem), Gaza—and, not least, Egypt (through Mizraim, Ham's son).
- **Shem**, Noah's firstborn, is the most important. He is not just the father of all "Semites" (including the Hebrews), but Luke 3:36 confirms that Jesus the Messiah was born through Noah, Shem, and Arphaxad (i.e., Arpachshad).

These are just the ones chronicled in the immediate line from Noah and important to the biblical narrative. We can well imagine various families and tribes gravitating north and east, around today's Caspian Sea, and even beyond Egypt into western and southern Africa. The ark came to rest in a perfect spot for repopulating the earth.

Note that the ark would have "grounded" upon a mountain peak before any of the mountains would have been visible. This would not occur until seventy-four more days passed (v5).

VV6-7: THE RAVEN SENT OUT

Then it happened at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; and he sent out a raven, and it went out flying back and forth until the water was dried up from the earth.

The raven, being a scavenger bird that will eat just about anything—including carrion and garbage—would find sufficient sustenance to survive outside the ark. If he required places to rest, he could have used the exposed peaks of the higher mountains. Thus, no doubt happy to be free of it, he does not return to the ark.

The Hebrew literally reads, "and it goeth out, going out and turning back," which suggests the raven periodically returned to the ark, perhaps to perch on its roof; but all of our modern versions just translate this "back and forth," or "to and fro."

Read Genesis 8:8-12.

vv8-9: THE DOVE SENT THE FIRST TIME

Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; but the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot, so it returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he stretched out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark to himself.

Having a more selective diet, which leans toward seeds and grains, and only occasionally earthworms and insects, the dove found nothing. Unlike the raven, the dove is also more particular about where it alights, requiring a clean place. Since the passage informs us that “the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot,” Noah thus deduced that there was yet no cleared portion of dry land. (The dove would *not*, like the raven, perch atop a floating dead body.) Finding no food or ground suitable for him, the dove returned to the ark.

vv10-11: THE DOVE SENT THE SECOND TIME

Then he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. And the dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in its beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.

A week later Noah tries again with the dove—note the definite article: the same dove as before.

This time the dove returns that evening bearing proof that plants are beginning to sprout. Note too that the waters are falling with sufficient speed that Noah considers seven days time enough for different results. This time the dove found a clean and dry spot to land during the day. Leupold offers more about this event.

Leupold: Doves are not considerate birds who bring men tokens of the state of affairs upon the earth. That this dove brought a leaf in its beak is to be attributed alone to an impulse divinely directed. The “*fresh* olive leaf” ... (*taraph*) indicates that it had just been plucked, and was not an old one swimming in the waters. So, being fresh, it pointed to an olive tree then in foliage. Though these trees will grow in water, yet they are found only below certain levels. So Noah could conjecture about how far the water level must at least have gone down into the valleys.

v12: THE DOVE SENT THE THIRD TIME

Then he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove; but it did not return to him again.

Now the family in the ark knew with certainty that the day of their release was close at hand.

God's word, though filled cover to cover with mystery, with unblemished holiness, with the Godhead performing supernatural deeds, nonetheless is a very practical, sensible narrative of human life on earth. The next two verses demonstrate this through what at first might be considered redundancy.

Read Genesis 8:13-14.

vv13-14

We are never given a calendar year for the Flood; the time marks have been, from the outset, Noah's lifespan.

5:32 - And Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

7:6 - Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

7:11 - In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

v13: Now it happened in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth.

As the NIVs insert into the text, we know this refers to the six hundred and first year "of Noah's" life. And I believe here is evidence that we should consider the numbers in charts like the one I have included as, so to speak, "round numbers." Math is not my forte, I admit, and at this point the numbers seem to be confusing, but the chart we have does offer an explanation. For me the best explanation is that we understand that, first, the *event* of the flood does not end just because the ground *appears* ("the surface of the ground") to be dry. And second, even though the narrative trips along quickly, there are time intervals embedded that are not mentioned. For example, by the end of v12, 285 days are accounted for; the very next line at the beginning of v13 occurs 29 days later, bringing the total to 314 days.

Anyone living where there is snow and possibly ice, or anywhere where the ground freezes, knows that in the spring the ground may *appear* dry, but walking on it can be like trying to walk on chocolate pudding. Once the ice below the surface of the ground thaws, it takes a while before it becomes really solid, and the same would be true for this incredible amount of water that has covered the earth for over ten months.

From v11 through v14 we have four references to the level of dryness in the earth's surface. The last two seem redundant, but can be understood properly if we see these all as *incremental*—each one drier than the previous.

v11: “the water was **abated from** [i.e., moved off] the earth”

v13: “the **water** was **dried up**”

v13: “the **surface** of the ground was **dried up**”

v14: “**the earth was dry**” (emphasis added in all)

The venerable William Wilson in his *Old Testament Word Studies* (1870) helps us understand the difference. The Hebrew translated “dried up” in v13 (both instances, *charab*) means “to be dry in a lesser degree; it means only the taking away of moisture in general, or from the surface.”

The Hebrew in v14, however, (*yabesh*, [yaw-bashe']) means “to be so dry as to be ready to burn,” withered. In other words the earth was not *completely* dry of the flood waters until v14.

Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.

Because the same Hebrew word (*mikseh*) is used for the skin covering for the tabernacle, some interpreters conclude that the roof of the ark was also “skinned.” But that is a silly and impractical argument; the roof of the ark had to withstand an incredible assault of rain and wind and crashing waves.

Noah has been patient to wait upon the Lord every step of the way, but now he feels confident to lift off—or probably more accurately, dismantle—the cover, the roof of the ark. He is confident the worst of it is over and is faced with not just a collection of humans, but a veritable cargo-load of beasts of every stripe—all suffering from acute cabin-fever after a year of being cooped up with each other.

I believe that the math shows the probability of Noah and his sons systematically dismantling the timbers of a fairly solid and well-engineered roof to the ark, which would take time. This would help explain the additional fifty-seven days between the removal of the roof and their actual departure; the work involved would be their occupation while waiting for God's permission to leave the ark, which He does in v16; they will disembark in vv18-19.

v14

Meanwhile, during these fifty-seven days, the earth continues to dry out.

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,
the earth was dry.

Leupold: A comparison with [Genesis] 7:11 nets the result that the total duration of the Flood was one year and ten days (375 days), at least that was the length of time that Noah was confined in the ark.

Or, the 371 days of the chart shown earlier. Again, round numbers.

SESSION 54: RELEASE, DISPERSION, AND SACRIFICE

Genesis 8:15-22

PREFACE

The inclusio that ends in today's passage began back at the end of Chapter Six.

Read Genesis 6:17-20.

Keep your finger here in Chapter Six as we read the first portion of our current text.

Read Genesis 8:15-19.

RELEASE AND DISPERSION

First, it is God—*Elohim*—who utters the command to Noah to build and go into the ark. and it is *Elohim* who is about to release the inhabitants of the ark. This refers to the first member of the Trinity as the mighty, all-powerful God of Creation—"the Creator who is to be feared."

Second, the language regarding the beasts is similar—not identical, but similar—to the first passage.

There is a thread, however, that is *different*—and I surmise, for a good reason. That thread is about *family*—specifically, the family unit. Note in 6:18,

"But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you."

There God mentions Noah's sons before Noah's wife: the pattern is, men, then women. Then notice how the beast's are designated in vv19-20:

"And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every **kind** into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their **kind**, and of the animals after their **kind**, of every creeping thing of the ground after its **kind**, two of every **kind** will come to you to keep them alive." (emphasis added)

That word translated "kind" is *min* (meen), and refers to the various species. Now back to Chapter Eight, and look at v16:

"Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you."

Now the pattern changes to the family unit: Noah and his wife, followed by the sons and their wives. Then look at the end of v19; all of our versions except for the NIVs and the original KJV have the beasts emerging from the ark

“by their families.” This is because a different word is used from the *min* in Chapter Six. Here it is *mishpaha* (mish-paw-KHAW), which means clan, a tribe, a circle of relatives—a family.

I could find no one to confirm my perspective on this (which has never stopped me before). We’re not talking about a doctrine-critical passage here; it is just that one wonders *why*—Why change the order of the humans, and why change the description of how the beasts emerge from the ark from how they went in? And I can think of at least one good reason.

A little over a year earlier its population entered the ark for one reason: to preserve a remnant of humans and beasts with which to repopulate the earth. At that time what was critically important was the need to preserve the two sexes of each species, so that each—human and beast alike—could “keep their seed alive” (7:3), to “be fruitful and multiply on the earth” (8:17).

That has been accomplished. Meanwhile, over the last year or so, the beasts, at least (there is no mention of human children, although one would assume...), the beasts have surely not waited for release from the ark before getting busy on this multiplying activity. One male and one female penned up together; the female goes into estrus, the male goes into rut; and nature follows its course. They don’t reason together, discussing whether it might be smarter to wait until release from the ark when they will have more room to grow. No, they just do what comes naturally—and now there is a family unit: a conjugal couple with the addition of offspring.

I have no doubt more beasts exited the ark than entered. And they now exit as family units, because, like the humans, they will disperse as *families*; they were called as individuals, they entered the ark as couples, they exit the ark with their offspring as an expanded family.

The humans as well exit the ark and, eventually, disperse across the land as individual family units. No more the pattern of men and women within the Noah family; now it will be Noah and his wife, Shem and his wife, Ham and his wife, and Japheth and his wife. No longer one, but now *four* family units.

SACRIFICE

Read Genesis 8:20-22.

v20

Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Tradition and Hollywood tells us that the ark contained just two—male and female—of each “kind” of beast; this is, of course, biblical, taken from Genesis 6:19-20. But just a few verses later, at the beginning of Chapter Seven, this is expanded.

Read Genesis 7:2-3.

That is, of “clean” animals (including birds)—the word is *tahor*, clean or pure, probably here in a ceremonial sense—Noah was to bring into the ark a greater number than the unclean animals. As we discussed in Session 47, opinions vary as to what is meant by the “by seven seven(s)” of the Hebrew text. Does this mean seven individuals or seven pairs? Because the text adds after this, “a male and his female,” I lean toward the interpretation of the ESV and the 2011 NIV, which have “seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate.”

At least one reason for the greater number of clean animals would have been to have an immediate supply for sacrifices. And that moment has now arrived.

I do not hold with those that say that because this is the first altar *mentioned* in Scripture, that altars heretofore had not been used. The K&D commentary, for which I have an immense respect, unfortunately expresses this position.

K&D: The sons of Adam had built no altar for their offerings, because God was still present on the earth in paradise, so that they could turn their offerings and hearts towards that abode. But with the flood God had swept paradise away, withdrawn the place of His presence, and set up His throne in heaven, from which He would henceforth reveal Himself to man. In future, therefore, the hearts of the pious had to be turned towards heaven, and their offerings and prayers needed to ascend on high if they were to reach the throne of God. To give this direction to their offerings, heights or elevated places were erected, from which they ascended towards heaven in fire.

I have problems with that on a number of levels. (I could spend the remainder of this session dissecting it.) For now I will let H. C. Leupold reply.

Leupold: That Gen. 4 does not mention an altar may signify nothing... To deduce from this first mention of an altar that prior to the Flood altars to raise up offerings to heaven were not thought of because God's presence was still manifest in the Garden, as the place of revelation, is building up too much conjecture on the mere silence of Scripture. We do not know whether the Garden continued to be God's place of manifestation after the Fall. We do not know whether altars originated now or in Adam's time. *Mizbéach* strictly means "the place of slaughter." This altar is raised to Yahweh, because Noah is mindful of the gracious fidelity which God in the person of Yahweh so mercifully displayed. This is an added argument for the fact that the offering was one of thanksgiving.

Whether it be called an altar built of stones, or just a cleared area in the scrub, Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, offered burnt sacrifices to Yahweh—one acceptable, one not (Genesis 4:2-5). It is clear that however it was implemented, man since Adam had offered up offerings to Yahweh—here, by Noah, clearly an offering of thanksgiving and praise for their deliverance, by the grace and mercy of God, from the Flood.¹

I do, however, appreciate what the K&D commentary says about the sacrifice itself.

K&D: In the sacrificial flame the essence of the animal was resolved into vapour; so that when man presented a sacrifice in his own stead, his inmost being, his spirit, and his heart ascended to God in the vapour, and the sacrifice brought the feeling of his heart before God. This feeling of gratitude for gracious protection, and of desire for further communications of grace, was well-pleasing to God.

Meanwhile, David Guzik points out the sacrificial “cost” angle to this moment.

Guzik: As is the nature with true sacrifice, this was a costly offering unto God. With only seven [14] of each [clean] animal on the ark, Noah risked extinction by sacrificing some of these animals. But costly sacrifice is pleasing to God.

Along with Pastor Guzik, I have always been impressed by King David's position on this, expressed after his sin of taking an unauthorized census of Israel.

Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25.²

v21

I will wait till our next session to examine some of the important aspects of this burnt offering and the resulting covenant Yahweh cut with Noah. For now let us push on through the text.

Whatever the specific nature of this burnt offering, Yahweh was pleased by it—meaning, He was pleased by the intentions of Noah's heart. This was done not by the dictates of a document or promise; the setting seems to describe an act of spontaneous, earnest thanksgiving and praise for Yahweh preserving Noah and his family through the year-long Inundation.

And what follows is the text of what Yahweh said to Himself—to His heart (*leb*, LAbE), the inner man—but what is also part of the covenant He cuts with Noah.

Verses 21 and 22 must be read carefully, digesting every word to understand what Yahweh is saying—and *not* saying—to Himself, to Noah, to us. The

¹ And I believe that impetus still dwells in the heart of God-fearing man today—whether implemented literally, or just verbally. In Christ we no longer offer up burnt offerings, but I recall a moment many years ago when, after writing a well-received production, my heart was so full with gratitude and praise to God, that I considered stepping outside and offering to him a burnt offering of the script. I didn't, mainly because I couldn't work out in my mind whether or not it would be—again, in Christ—somehow blasphemous.

² Speaking only for myself, personally, this is why today in this era I am uncomfortable using the word “sacrifice” to apply to any offering to God. For example, while I realize the author of Hebrews uses the phrase “...let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Hebrews 13:15), I would rather say an “offering” of praise. To praise and thank my God requires no “sacrifice” on my part; it costs me nothing—it is a privilege, not a sacrifice.

details of His covenant will continue through the first seventeen verses of Chapter Nine; these two verses are, effectively, a preamble, or preface to the whole. More accurately, it seems to be *in addition to* the formal covenant below—perhaps even separate entirely.

And Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma; and Yahweh said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.”

Although I initially was unhappy with “soothing” as a description of the aroma,* the vapors rising from the offering, the more I thought about it, the more I realized it may be a pretty accurate description. We typically think of being “soothed” because of something wrong with us—say, a soothing ointment on a wound. Initially I thought this can’t be right, for there is nothing “wrong” with God. But an aroma from a righteous sacrifice might “soothe” or “quiet” the righteous wrath of God that had been played out over the last year. In this, Noah’s offering could play a part in quieting, calming, His demonstrated anger.

and Yahweh said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man...”

Then Yahweh makes a promise—but it is not yet the promise we typically think of; that and the rainbow will come later in 9:15. Here Yahweh refers to what He said in 3:17.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In pain you will eat of it All the days of your life.”

Because of Adam’s sin, this physical earth was inflicted with a curse. Here Yahweh says that no matter what level of sin mankind exhibits, He will never *again* do what He did because of Adam’s sin. This does not remove the initial curse; that curse is still in effect today, and will be until the new earth in the Eschaton.

...for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth;

Here is one of those statements that can confuse before it is understood. If Yahweh concludes that “the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” that seems reason enough for Him to do just the *opposite* of what He just promised. *Man will continue to sin, so keep doing what He did before!*

* ESV and NIVs, “pleasing”

But here is one more example of God's grace—yet in a slightly different form. If we think of this in human terms, this statement would be voiced with a sigh of resignation. *What more can I do? They're just going to keep sinning.* But that's how a human would express it.

Man's incorrigible sin is not the *reason* Yahweh will withhold His curse; beneath the surface in this statement is something Job will echo in so many words: Because he is born with a bent toward sinning, *man will require a Redeemer.*[†]

Here is how K&D explain it:

K&D: It was not because the thoughts and desires of the human heart are evil that God would not smite any more every living thing, that is to say, would not exterminate it judicially; but because they are evil from his youth up, *because evil is innate in man, and for that reason he needs the forbearance of God.* (emphasis added)

...I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done."

In this relatively short stretch of time since Creation, man has demonstrated time and time again that he will persist in sinning against a holy God. Even though there will always be personal consequences to sin, Yahweh vows that He will never again destroy *all* because of it.

Here is one more demonstration of God's love for His Creation: Instead of universal punishment, He, Himself, will become the atoning sacrifice for their sins.[‡]

v22

Yahweh Himself translates this promise into verse, and Chapter Eight closes with it.

"While all the days of the earth remain,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease."

This, which we might call the natural order of things, will proceed by the command of the Creator—and within it He places the hint that there will come a day when this earth will *not* "remain," and this "natural" rhythm to life will no longer be necessary.[§]

[†] Job 16:18-19; 19:25-27.

[‡] Acts 5:31.

[§] The Revelation 21 & 22.

SESSION 55: THINGS CHANGE, PART ONE

Genesis 9:1-7, 8-17

PREFACE

The break between Chapters Eight and Nine while not egregious, is unnecessary, for the narrative flows seamlessly from one into the other. God's blessing in 9:1-3 is the direct result of the "soothing aroma" rising from Noah's sacrificial altar, and is a continuation of His promise in 8:21-22.

Although I suppose one can (and commentators often do) combine verses 8:20 to 9:17 into one "covenant-promise," I believe it is more helpful and accurate to organize it in the following way:

8:21-22	Yahweh's promise not to again "curse the ground" because of man's sin
9:1-7	God's blessing , including new rules between man and beast, and between man and man
9:8-17	God's formal covenant (which He promised in 6:18) that he would never again destroy the earth and flesh by means of a flood

GOD'S BLESSING

Read Genesis 9:1-7.

Verses 1 and 7 demarcate a mini-inclusio.

1: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

7: "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Swarm on the earth and multiply in it."

Between these two verses, with their familiar call repeated from 1:22 (beasts) and 1:28 (man and woman), we have the inception of a new order on earth. Things have changed; there are new rules in place.

v2

"And the fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given."

If this show were being run by humans, I would say a great awakening has taken place—that now it is clear that humanity and the other beasts on earth require a different program—different rules.

But this show is being run by its omniscient Creator; He is not surprised by any of this; recent events have not sparked a fresh awakening in Him. No, man is behaving just as Yahweh God knew He would. This is simply the next foreordained step in the “evolution” of the earth. What began as a paradise of peaceful harmony between man and beast has devolved into warfare.

So even today, when I step outside to feed the deer, they run from me—they snort and stomp their feet at me, even though they know I am going to put out food for them. Why? Because it is now in their DNA that humans *shoot* deer. They know that instinctively from birth.

While we today may see this moment as a good thing—those who prefer meat and potatoes over Brussels sprouts and other rabbit food—it actually marks a sad decline in man. Pleasant harmony is at an end; now, in many respects, there will exist a contentious relationship between man and beast.

So even though in some respects this is a “beginning again” moment, it is a different, a *sadder* restart, acknowledging, even in the righteous Noah, the presence of sin. This is a *fallen* restart to Creation.

v3

“Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; as with the green plant, I give all to you.”

Back in Chapter One God “gave”—*nathan* (naw-THAN)—other food to both the humans and the beasts.

Read Genesis 1:29-30.

Man and beast alike were created vegetarian. The first *recorded* death was the righteous offering Abel made (4:4), but probably the first death of an animal (or animals) occurred when Yahweh God made coverings for the man and woman out of “skins” (Hebrew, *or*). This act may have also been of a sacrificial nature, setting the pattern for the shedding of innocent blood to atone for sin.

Before that, during the earliest days of Creation, God had given man dominion—to rule, to dominate, to prevail—over the beasts (1:28). But He did not give them to him as food. As Leupold points out, “If men before the flood ever ate the meat of beasts, they did so without divine sanction.”

Now things will change; now using the same word (*nathan*), God gives man, again, all the beasts. But now He expands the gift. And just in case it may be misunderstood, God makes clear that what He means is that man may now consume meat just as he always has the green plant.

v4

Foreshadowing the Law, God now adds a caveat to the new rule:

“However, flesh with its life, that is, its blood, you shall not eat.”

Read Leviticus 7:26-27.

The word rendered “its life” in our passage is *nephesh*, which means the soul; the breathing essence of being. Leviticus 17:11 establishes the connection between life/soul and blood.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”

Physically this is true: without our blood, we die. And God demonstrates the *spiritual* aspect of this—and, in a sense turning it around—by requiring the *shedding* of blood for eternal life with Him. The body of both man and beast requires blood to live, but blood must be *shed* to live with God.

v5

“Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every living thing I will require it. And from every man, from each man’s brother I will require the life of man.”

God’s word is truly marvelous. I admit that reading v5 in the LSB or NASB, while true to the original text, can leave the reader wondering, *Just what is being said here?* Some of our other versions do translate it in a more explanatory fashion, but what, once again, makes the Bible such a remarkable document is that the very next verse explains the previous—and in poetic verse, no less.

v6

“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.”

Here too is a change of sorts. Cain’s killing of his brother Abel was an act of cold-blooded murder. By the command in Chapter Nine he should have been executed for this—which was not just homicide, but *fratricide*. Yet, Yahweh did *not* kill him, but punished Cain with exile—even protecting his life with a sign.

We could come up with a number of reasons why Yahweh chose to countermand His position; being God, He would have every right. What I do not believe to be correct is to assume that this, here in Chapter Nine, is a brand new position for God. It is only an explicit command new to man. And, of course, this will be included in the formal Law handed down to Moses. First regarding beasts (v5: “from every living thing”):

Read Exodus 21:28-29.

Then regarding man:

Read Exodus 21:12-14.

I would say that this command in Chapter Nine is fundamental to all the laws that follow, for it flows out of the root of man's Creation *by* God "in the *image* of God." In fact, some say (with Luther) that v6 institutes government as a basic institution for the welfare of society. Here is where earthly human government is invented.

The fundamental fact that man has been created in the image of God is what makes intentional abortion so heinous: it matters not whether the baby is still in the womb or out, it is still a human being made in the image of God!

v7

"As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Swarm on the earth and multiply in it."

Our other versions try to be more refined in their choice of words, but the LSB is quite accurate in translating the Hebrew *sharas* (shaw-RAHTS) "swarm" (KJV: "bring forth abundantly"). The verb *sharas*, and its noun form, *sheres*, have a decidedly insect-like connotation: to swarm, teem; teeming things, creeping things. The root means "to wriggle."

This is the same word—both noun and verb—used by God in Genesis 1:20, during the fifth day of Creation.

Then God said, "Let the waters **swarm** with **swarms** of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens." (emphasis added)

The implication of this more strenuous term in a reiteration of the command to "be fruitful and multiply" is that God considers it a priority that the earth be quickly repopulated.

GOD'S COVENANT

Read Genesis 9:8-17.

We will just begin our look at this covenant, finishing it in our next session.

v8 (WITH v1)

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

I confess that my initial reaction to this, along with v1, was *Hey, what about the women? They, too, have just weathered this year-long Inundation! What about them?*

But God has His order, and part of that is that the man is the corporate head of the family. It is enough for Him to address that head, with the understanding that what flows into him flows out to the rest. And, as we saw in the *first* family, when righteous retribution is called for, the bulk of that falls upon the male corporate head. No matter that physically, *Eve* was the first to sin, “...in *Adam* all die...” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

I believe these two verses also reinforce my position in our previous session that the emphasis now is on the individual family units that will be branching out from Noah and his wife. If God had just addressed this to Noah, alone, we still would have understood that the blessings and the covenant apply downward, through the succeeding generations. But the point is made, by including Noah’s sons, that God is addressing *four* family units. That is, from here on out we will see the narrative proceeding through the three sons and their families—clearly set forth in vv18-19.

v9

“As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you;”

Most earthly covenants are established between two parties, both of which are obligated by certain agreements necessary to keep the covenant in effect. Some covenants even established by God are like this. For example, in Genesis Seventeen God establishes His covenant with Abram, but requires of him that he be blameless.

Now it happened that when Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me and be blameless, so that I may confirm My covenant between Me and you, And that I may multiply you exceedingly.” (Genesis 17:1-2)

Along with this, the sign of this covenant would be not something produced by God, but a sign of obedience and of belonging to God and the Jewish people: every male would be circumcised.

Here, in Chapter Nine, however, with Noah and His descendants, God cuts a covenant that is entirely one-sided: the obligation is entirely upon Himself.

Ger de Koning: God establishes a covenant not only with Noah, but also with all his descendants and with all creation... In this covenant there are no obligations for Noah and his descendants. God takes upon Himself all obligations to keep this covenant. It is a one-sided covenant. The foundation is the offering. When clouds appear again, man need not be afraid of a new flood.

Alexander MacLaren: Note the great thought, that God limits His freedom of action by this definite promise. Noah was not left to grope in dread among the terrible possibilities opened by the flood. God marked out the line on which He would move, and marked off a course which He would not pursue. It is like a king giving his subjects a constitution. Men can reckon on God.

One thing we are learning from this study is that the Lord God's generous longsuffering and mercy did not begin with Israel and followers of Christ, but was evident from the very beginning of Creation.

SESSION 56: THINGS CHANGE, PART TWO

Genesis 9:8-17

PREFACE

We began our look at this text in our previous session. Before we press forward, just a few additional thoughts about vv8-10.

As is so often the case, I think we fail to consider the state of mind of the characters in these narratives. So much time has passed since then, that we see them as simply plastic saints—or plastic demons—without considering what would naturally be passing through their minds as human beings—how would their experience be affecting them. And even last week, after reading vv8-17 in class, we remarked about the repetition in the passage. Well, in this setting, these two things go hand-in-hand. That is, *Why did God go out of His way to mention and reiterate so much minutia about His covenant?* One answer to that would be, because of the state of mind of Noah's family.

I can well imagine that upon emerging from their safe but claustrophobic ark, Noah and his family would have been torn by two powerful emotional thoughts: First they were grateful for the fresh air and sunshine, the dry and unmoving land, with their thoughts filled with future possibilities. But right alongside this—and in fierce competition with their joy at being released—would be their apprehension—their *horror*—that such a catastrophe as the Flood might occur again.

After all, this had been Yahweh God's method of ridding the earth of man's persistent sin. These people knew as well as we know today their own proclivity toward sin; how did they know whether God wouldn't turn around and do it again? Imagine spending the rest of your life wondering if every rain storm was just a precursor to another destructive inundation!

So with detailed—and yes, repetitive—assurance, God assures them, with a formal covenant no less, that He will never do it again. And He begins by getting their attention: “Behold,” that is, *Pay attention, I am about to declare something important.*

Read Genesis 9:8-11.

THE COVENANT

vv8-10

First, God establishes the originator and the parties involved in this covenant. “As for Me... I establish”; by this we know that God Himself, and *by* Himself, established this covenant. As to the other parties involved, He makes that clear as well:

“...I establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you;”

This promise is being made to every human being emerging from the ark, and to every one of their descendants. But He doesn't stop there.

"...and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth."

God vows the same to every member of the animal kingdom; I think the last phrase of the verse is His way of repeating the same promise to the animals that He made to the humans—that is, "and with your seed after you."

Now we know the parties involved in this covenant. Verse 11 gives us the meat of the covenant itself.

v11

"Indeed I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, and there shall never again be a flood to destroy the earth."

Most of us are well aware of the prophetic fact that in the end times God will utterly refashion this globe in ways not unlike what happened during the Inundation in Genesis. During the end times, millions of human souls will be killed, as well as millions of beasts and fish and fowl. The last half of the Tribulation especially will be a period of horrific destruction and death. And after all that, what little is left of this earth will be removed and replaced by a brand new earth (Revelation 21:1).¹ This means that God will indeed one day in the future destroy this earth and a substantial portion of the human and animal population.

God in the Genesis covenant, however, is not saying He will never again destroy the earth. He is saying that He will never again destroy it *by means of water*. Smaller-scale floods will occur, but never again will humanity, animal life be wiped out and the earth remade universally, globally by means of a flood.

I can imagine this brought profound peace to the minds of those in Noah's family. In our secure apathy we may slough off this promise, as those who have never lived through such a calamity; but to Noah this would have brought immeasurable relief—and confidence, moving forward into a reinvigorated life.

Alexander MacLaren: We have said that the one thing needful for Noah was some assurance that the new order would last. He was like a man who has just been rescued from an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. The ground seems to reel beneath him. Old habitudes have been curled up like leaves in the fire. Is there to be any fixity, any ground for continuous action, or for labour for a moment beyond the present? Is it worth while to plant or sow? Men who have lived through national tempests or domestic crashes know how much they need to be stead-

¹ One of the best arguments to refute the position that this "new" earth (in Revelation 21) will be just the old one cleaned up, is found in Isaiah 65:17-19.

The Hebrew word translated "create" in that passage is *bara* (lit., br), which always refers to divine creativity, and means something from nothing—not something from something else. As we see in Revelation 20:11, everything that was before—everything—has now passed away. Gone. There is nothing left from which to build something else.

ied afterwards by some reasonable assurance of comparative continuity. And these men, in the childhood of the race, would need it much.

Read Genesis 9:12-17.

THE SIGN

God continues to give. Now, in addition to the covenant that obligates only Him, God gives both man and Himself a visual reminder that the covenant will always be in effect.

vv12-13

Then God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am giving to be between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I put My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.”

Just a few thoughts that flow out of this passage. First, this bow (v13)—“rain-bow”; a bow associated with rain—is God’s; it is His idea, He created it, it belongs to Him.² Second, v12 includes a subtle reference to the fact that the preservation of the animals is ultimately for the benefit of man: “every living creature that is **with you**.” Of course there are those in our midst for whom this is a strong, daily truth. For others, here is a reminder that the beasts serve for food, for sacrifice, even for work. Which raises the thought-experiment: *Would God have created the beasts if He had not created man?*

Third, the phrase “all successive generations” or “perpetual generations”—Leupold: “to generations of eternity”—means that the covenant is to remain in effect as long as the earth remains. Finally, it can be no accident that this “sign of the covenant” is placed between earth and the third heaven. Just as we look up to recognize the glory of God in a beautiful sunset or sunrise painted across the sky, we look up to see the glory of God in His majestic bow. It is necessary for mere humans to have frequent reminders to look up, and away from this fallen world. Delitzsch, especially, waxes poetic as he considers this sign.

² Here in Chapter Nine God calls it only a “bow.” But the prophet Ezekiel refers to it as a “rainbow,” likening it to the radiance around Yahweh’s throne (Ezekiel 1:28). The apostle John, too, in The Revelation, uses “rainbow” to describe the same setting (Revelation 4:3; 10:1).

K&D: The fact that the rainbow, that “coloured splendour thrown by the bursting forth of the sun upon the departing clouds,” is the result of the reciprocal action of light, and air, and water, is no disproof of the origin and design recorded here. For the laws of nature are ordained by God, and have their ultimate ground and purpose in the divine plan of the universe which links together both nature and grace. “As the rainbow shines forth against a dark background which but shortly before flashed with lightnings, it symbolizes the victory of bright, gentle love over the darkly luminous wrath; growing as it does out of the interaction of sun and dark clouds, it symbolizes the readi-

ness of the heavenly to interpenetrate the earthly; extending from heaven to earth, it proclaims peace between God and man; reaching, as it does, beyond the range of vision, it declares that God's covenant of grace is all-embracing." (Delitzsch).

vv14-15

"And it will be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh."

The noun "cloud" here is a bit confusing. It is rightly translated "a cloud" (except in the ESV and NIVs) because it is indeed a singular noun; but the Hebrew word *anan* includes the idea of a cloud *mass*, even heavy mist. So we might rightly paraphrase this as "a cloud situation," or "a cloud event"—i.e., a thunderstorm.

And as we all know well, the bow generally does not appear during the thick of the rain storm, but only once it has spent its wrath and the clouds are beginning to disperse—which is perfect timing for it to demonstrate its initial, God-created purpose.

The rainbow is not party to the fierce wrath of the storm, but is the evident grace of the peaceful aftermath.

God in Genesis has just wiped out all of unbelieving humanity and all of the animal kingdom save for those in the ark; He has dramatically reshaped the planet by means of the rending of its mantle to release the destructive force of the water. He has forcefully expressed His wrath against mankind's persistent sin.

Now God assures Noah and his family that this was a one-off; He establishes a covenant—a promise—that He will never do the same again. And the bow in the sky is to be the sign of that promise. Still today, when the natural elements of God's design align themselves so, the bow in the clouds is revealed, and both we on earth and its Maker are reminded of His promise made so long ago.

We are often made uncomfortable by any suggestion—coming even from His own lips—that God might "forget" something, which in human terms is a concomitant part of *remembering* something. But here it just means that He "recalls to mind." Or as Leupold puts it, "a divine activity whereby His 'covenant terms'... will be vividly before Him, and man may take joy from the fact that God thus thinks upon what He promised." Just as it is for us. I doubt that anyone on earth, having once seen a rainbow, literally forgets that they exist. Rather, when we see one again we think to ourselves, *How beautiful! I haven't thought about rainbows for some time, and how good it is to be reminded once again of God's covenant.*

By the way, I love what Leupold says about something that I expressed in our last session—again regarding the repetition in this passage. After reading it myself at home, and after a member of our class read this passage last week, I remarked, “Talk about your repetition.” Well, it *is* repetitive, but why? Leupold sets us straight:

One may disregard the situation and man’s need of definite assurance and regard the whole promise as exceedingly verbose; or else one may rightly claim, with Delitzsch, that these words are like blows of the hammer, which makes the whole more firm and impress it more deeply.

vv16-17

“So the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

God reiterates His promise to drive it home one last time. And it is hard not to translate this covenant and its central promise into our lives today as followers of Christ Jesus—especially in the context of this week’s horrific, fiery destruction in California.

When one whittles down the narrative of Chapter Nine to its essentials—indeed, the narrative which began back in Chapter Six, where God sets the scene for the impending Inundation and His plan for saving a remnant (which He always does) of humanity and the animals through the destruction—when one searches for the essential lesson of this event, one cannot help but think about the security the believer has in Christ.

Whether it be the loss of a loved one, a family home torn apart by a tornado or hurricane, a flood that washes away everything we know and love, or a holocaust burning through entire communities; or maybe even a momentary descent into sinful behavior—whatever the personal cataclysm in a life, Christians are in possession of a strong, dependable, life-saving promise.

He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE COUNTED AS SHEEP FOR

the SLAUGHTER.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:32–39)

Let me close with something more from MacLaren.

MacLaren: [The Rainbow] ‘fills the sky when storms prepare to part,’ and hence is a natural token that the downpour is being stayed. Somewhere there must be a bit of blue through which the sun can pierce; and the small gap, which is large enough to let it out, will grow till all the sky is one azure dome. It springs into sight in front of the cloud, without which it could not be, so it typifies the light which may glorify judgments, and is born of sorrows borne in the presence of God. It comes from the sunshine smiting the cloud; so it preaches the blending of love with divine judgment. It unites earth and heaven; so it proclaims that heavenly love is ready to transform earthly sorrows. It stretches across the land; so it speaks of an all-embracing care, which enfolds the earth and all its creatures.

SESSION 57: BAD BEHAVIOR, PART ONE

Genesis 9:18-29

PREFACE

One thing has always bothered me about the Elves in the fictional *The Lord of the Rings*. They are immortal, unless they are killed, and absent that unhappy consequence capable of living thousands of years. One would think that if someone lived for that long a time, that they would be surrounded by hundreds of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, *ad infinitum*! All of Middle Earth should be *crawling* with Elves. Yet, Elrond, for one example, the lord of Rivendell, though having lived for thousands of years, has, effectively just one daughter: Arwen.

We have a similar situation in the true story of Noah. The patriarch was 600 years old at the time of the Flood; v28 tells us that after the Flood he lived another 350 years. Yet we are told that over a lifespan of 950 years Noah had only *three* sons.

Read Genesis 9:18-23.

vv18-19

There is a lot of information packed into these first two verses—but it is also easy to misinterpret some of it. Because of its brevity we must read between the lines, we must examine the original text with all its subtleties and variations—and, ultimately, form our own opinion of those things not explicitly mentioned in the text. Thus I have formed *my* interpretation, most of which is shared by others of greater scholarship, but not all.

Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth;

The way in which this is phrased may lead one to conclude that Noah had *other* sons who did *not* emerge from the ark. The next verse, however disabuses us of that conclusion.

These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was scattered abroad.

The text of v19 seems to anticipate our uncertainty, for it emphatically stresses that “these three [i.e., not any others] were *the* sons of Noah” (emphasis added) “and from these [i.e., just these three and not any others] the whole earth was scattered abroad.”

Once again we may find ourselves wondering *Why?* or *How?* My thoughts are that if this interpretation is correct, it seems reasonable that this limitation was ordained by Yahweh God. Indeed, why did He begin Creation with just one

couple? If their primary responsibility (along with Noah's sons) was to "be fruitful and multiply," then why not begin with more men and more women than just one couple—whose first son will be killed, no less! Here too, why not produce a *flock* of sons and daughters to repopulate the earth?

But God's ways are not ours; He has His reasons for establishing only three lines emerging from Noah.

Shem and Ham and Japheth;

When just their names are listed, as here, this is the order, from which most scholars conclude that Shem was the oldest, followed by Ham, and then Japheth, which is the biblical pattern. This, at first, seems to contradict v24, which refers to Ham as "his youngest" in most of our newer versions (but not the KJVs). More on that later.

...and Ham was the father of Canaan.

I have always read this to be a foreshadowing inserted by the author, Moses. Now, however, I think there is a better explanation. It makes sense that more time has passed than we might first imagine since the family of eight disembarked from the ark, and by now Canaan has been born—in fact, older than just a young child, even though Chapter Ten indicates that Canaan had three older brothers (10:6). So enough time has passed for Ham to have four sons. More than that, I am beginning to think it possible that none of the three immediate sons of Noah ever left him, but it was their respective sons that left and spread in three directions to repopulate the earth.

But back to Canaan. We will examine this more closely later, but I believe there is ample evidence in this passage (vv18-29) that Canaan was already old enough to reveal his personality and proclivities to his grandfather (vv18, 22, 25-27).

Verses 20 and 21 offer more evidence that a considerable span of time has passed since the Flood.

vv20-21

Then Noah began to be a man of the land and planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent.

It takes quite a while to plant a vineyard, harvest the mature grapes, age the wine, then get drunk on it. It's not like planting wheat and eating fresh bread the same year.

Modern science would have us believe that man began as a hunter/gatherer, and only after something like 150,000 years did he begin his transition to a more agricultural way of life. But, of course, God's word tells us that the *first* man, Adam, was a farmer:

Then Yahweh God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

The first son, Cain, was also a farmer:

And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground. (Genesis 4:2)

It was perfectly natural that Noah and his family would immediately plant crops upon leaving the ark; they had to eat. We have no evidence that, as some insist, Noah was the first to plant a vineyard and make wine. If for no other reason, considering the depths of sin and depravity that caused Yahweh to destroy man and the earth, it is hard to imagine that without benefit of intoxicating beverages. Nevertheless we have no evidence either way, and this is indeed the first explicit reference to drunkenness.

Nor can we substantiate the position of some that this righteous man (Genesis 6:9) had no idea drinking so much wine would result in inebriation: “In ignorance of the fiery nature of wine, Noah drank and was drunken, and uncovered himself in his tent” (K&D). We need neither excuse Noah’s excess by ignorance, or condemn him as an evil drunkard. Noah was a righteous man who sinned, and we need not invent excuses or throw stones. Noah made a mistake; end of story.

...and uncovered himself inside his tent.

The original Hebrew makes it clear that no one else caused Noah to be naked. Either in a drunken stupor he failed to cover himself, or he pushed his cloak away in his sleep—or, worse, intentionally threw off his covering. It was customary for a man to cover himself for sleep with the outer cloak he had worn during the day. (It will be this that Shem and Japheth use to cover their father.) As a response to those who would excuse the patriarch’s behavior, H. C. Leupold offers this.

Leupold: He who maintained his ground over against a wicked and godless world, neglecting watchfulness and prayer in a time of comparative safety, fell prey to a comparatively simple temptation, which should have been easy to meet. It is not the young and untried Noah who sins. It is the seasoned man of God, ripe in experience, who is here brought low.

While Noah’s behavior was indeed disturbing, even reprehensible, the more egregious offense was that of his son Ham.

v22

Then Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

There is much hiding beneath the surface of our English translations—or, perhaps better said, there *may be* much beneath the surface.

To begin, we are reminded once again that Ham is the father of Canaan. Then the verse includes two verbs that are pregnant with meaning in the Hebrew, but rendered rather sterile and innocuous in English.

First, Ham “saw” (*raah* [raw-AW]), which here does not mean that Ham passed the opening of his father’s tent and just happened to catch a quick glimpse of his naked condition; he “looked at,” he “gazed with satisfaction” perhaps with lurid “satisfaction.” Some read in this verse and v24 some form of sexual activity, and that *may* be the case, but it need not be. Even absent that, Ham’s behavior is egregiously disrespectful toward his father—especially made evident in contrast to that of his two brothers in the next verse.

Second, the verse says that he “told” his two brothers—implied, about what he just saw. Yet again, there is a strength and color behind the Hebrew *nagad* that is not revealed in the simple “told.” The word means to *conspicuously* declare, and “the circumstances suggest that it means ‘and he told with delight’” (Leupold). There is no way around the fact that at the least this was horrible—and childish—behavior by someone old enough to already have four sons of his own.

v23

But Shem and Japheth took the garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned backward, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

Here we have a righteous, respectful response to Noah’s embarrassing behavior and condition. These two men took no delight, no snide and leering fun in the fact that their father had collapsed drunk upon his bed and lay there naked as a jaybird. I take this to mean they picked up—probably from off the ground near where he lay—the cloak that should have been covering Noah. Standing next to each other while looking away from their sleeping father, they draped the garment over their inside shoulders and, keeping space between them, walked backward over Noah while letting the cloak slip off their shoulders, thus draping it over him.

Perhaps we read too much into this, but this simple act of decency seems to contain no joking ridicule (as is implied by Ham’s behavior) nor even a silent rebuke. These two sons simply wished to restore some semblance of physical dignity to their inebriated dad—along with preventing any other family members from witnessing it who might be happening upon the scene as Ham discovered it.

Verse 24 draws this uncomfortable scene to a close, and sets the scene for the prophetic proclamations that follow—which we will look at in our next session.

v24

Then Noah awoke from his wine, and he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

Let's examine this verse in its order.

Then Noah awoke from his wine,

The word translated “wine” is the Hebrew *yayin* (YIE-yin), which means just that; implied here, however, is that he awoke from sleep no longer *impeded* by the wine he had consumed. In other words, thinking relatively clearly, in contrast to before, when he had been under the wine's influence.

and he knew...

American politics, in conjunction with (supposed) journalism, has given us the saying, “What did he know and when did he know it?” This is applicable here: *What did Noah “know” and when did he know it?* To this we need to add, *How did Noah know it?*

I believe there are several possible answers to these questions—none of which can be absolutely proven. Let's consider the last question first: *How did Noah know it?* or *From what source did Noah know it?*

- Since what follows immediately is a series of prophetic utterances, it is possible that God has placed this information in his mind. He just *knew*.
- It could be that with his mind now cleared, he *remembered*; however, one would think, if this were the case, the text would use that word.
- It is also possible that Shem and Japheth *told* their father what happened. The Hebrew *yada* (yaw-DAH) usually means “and he knew,” but can also be translated “becomes known,” “detected, discerned, discovered, learned, found out”—i.e., “knowing as the result of inquiry” (Leupold).
- Finally, one possibility is that he came to know it from evidence left behind. More on this in a moment.

As to the question of *When did he know it?* the answer seems clear: upon awakening. Which brings us to *What did Noah know?* Put another way, *What did Ham do?*

...what his youngest son had done to him.

Here is the big question. Some commentators conclude from the subsequent announcement of the “curse” prophesied about Ham's son Canaan—and from the known history of Canaan's descendants—that Ham may have—emphasis *may* have—performed some sexual act upon his father. I do not subscribe to that, but it remains a possibility.

By today's behavioral standards we might find it hard to believe that Noah's harsh response would have been generated by Ham simply turning his drunken dad's exposed nudity into a childish joke to his brothers. But today's behavioral standards were not the norm in ancient times. Such behavior by Ham upon the patriarch of the family would have been considered a scandalous offense. And if Ham had indeed done some physical, homosexual action upon his father, in any other family except the last family alive on earth, he would have been summarily executed (Leviticus 20:13).

More on this in our next session.

Finally, what about this verse's reference to Ham as "his youngest son," as it does in most of our more modern versions? The order in which Noah's sons are listed would seem to indicate that Ham was the *middle* son, older than Japheth and younger than Shem.

There is the possibility that the references to Noah's sons do not follow the scriptural pattern of placing the names in age order, with the oldest first, but that would be odd, since they are so consistent. A better explanation is that the Hebrew *qatan* can also mean younger (as in the KJVs), small, young, unimportant, insignificant. It is possible this word is a reference to Ham as Noah's least important son, which is easy to believe considering the situation.

In our next session we will examine the prophecies that flow out of this unfortunate event in vv25-29.

SESSION 58: BAD BEHAVIOR, PART TWO

Genesis 9:18-29

PREFACE

Read Genesis 9:20-29.

In our previous session we looked at the unfortunate behavior of Noah, the disrespectful (at the least) behavior of Noah's middle son, Ham, and the *respectful* behavior of Noah's oldest and youngest sons, Shem and Japheth. We cannot say with any certainty just *what* Ham did to his father, only that what follows in the text—vv24-27—makes clear it was bad—perhaps even atrocious.

v24

One last note on this verse that has Noah wakening.

Then Noah awoke from his wine, and he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

I can't shake the impression that if Noah's realization—or, probably more accurate, what he was told—was that Ham had made some inappropriate remarks about his father, wouldn't the text reflect that with something like "what his youngest son had *said* about him"? Instead the text has, "what his youngest son had *done* to him." Even if both possibilities would have been considered offensive in that time and place, that choice of words with a more active verb—had done to (*asah amar*)—sounds more egregious.

On the other hand, *asah* (done to) is a very broad, flexible root that can be translated a number of ways, and, more telling, *amar* (to/unto him), while flexible as well, invariably has reference to some form of *speaking*, which would seem to point us back to something Ham *said*, rather than *did*.

So, again, we can only conclude that we don't know what transpired, except that whatever Ham did, it was wrong. The rest of this episode makes that abundantly clear.

In vv25-27 Noah prophesies regarding the future of his sons and grandsons.¹

v25

So he said, "Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers."*

¹ Please note this important distinction: Noah does not *himself* curse Canaan; he prophesies that Canaan *will be* accursed. Note as well that while his other two prophecies are for his sons Shem and Japheth, the first prophecy is not for Ham, but Ham's fourth son, Canaan.

* I have no explanation for why the LSB and NASB here translate the Hebrew *ebed* as "servant" instead of "slave," which those versions typically prefer.

And immediately we wonder, *Why is Noah “cursing” the son of Ham instead of the immediate offender, Ham himself?*

First, as stated, he is not “cursing” anyone; Noah is prophesying that Canaan and his line will be an accursed line—a prophecy future history will show was unequivocally fulfilled.

Second, the prophecy does not apply to Ham’s other sons: Cush, Mizraim (or Egypt), and Put (10:6)—just the one, Canaan, his youngest. Thus, if Noah’s prophecy were to be assigned to Ham, it would apply to all of his descendants, instead of just Canaan.

Who Were the Canaanites?

In Chapter Ten we will take a deeper dive into the descendants—the “seed”—flowing out from Noah’s three sons. But to understand Noah’s prophecy in vv25-27 we must at least look at a thumbnail sketch of the Canaanites.

The Hamites settled northern Africa (today’s Libya, Egypt, Cush, Havilah, etc.), the Sinai Peninsula, portions of the SW corner of Arabia, and the land on both sides of the Jordan, up to where the land angles west into today’s Turkey. Put succinctly, it is Canaan’s descendants—Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, etc.—which Israel will displace or conquer when they come into the Promised Land. This line will include the Moabites, and those in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. As a group they will be known for their idol worship and depravity.

In Chapter Eighteen of Leviticus Yahweh itemizes His statutes regarding moral purity, and especially nakedness. He specifically contrasts the moral purity of His laws with the behavior of the people of Canaan.

Read Leviticus 18:1-4.

The Canaanite people were notable for their perverse cultic practices, and Yahweh warned the Israelites not to adopt them.

Read Leviticus 18:21.

And, of course, archaeological evidence has revealed that during certain periods Israel did indeed sacrifice its children to the Canaanite god, Molech—even during the reign of Solomon.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and did not follow Yahweh fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. (1 Kings 11:5-7)

H. C. Leupold: In Abraham's day the measure of their iniquity was already almost full. By the time of the entrance of Israel into Canaan under Joshua the Canaanites, collectively also called Amorites, were ripe for divine judgment through Israel... The Phoenicians and the colony of Carthage surprised the Romans by the depth of their depravity. Verily cursed was Canaan!

When Noah states that Canaan will be “a servant of servants,” or “slave of slaves” it means that his people will become, as in the NIVs, “the lowest of slaves.” There is nothing lower than the slave of a slave. And the prophecy of v25 goes on to state that Canaan shall be this even “to his brothers.”

Less than a century later, King Solomon forced the remaining Amorites into slavery: “All the people who were left of the Amorites . . . who were not of the people of Israel—their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves” (1 Kings 9:20-21). The Amorites are last mentioned in Amos 2:10. It is assumed they either died out or were absorbed into the culture of Israel. (GotQuestions.org)

This is one example of how some of the descendants of Canaan, Ham's son, would become slaves/servants of their “brother” Shem's descendants.

v26

In contrast to that for Canaan, Noah's prophecy then bestows *blessings* on Shem and Japheth.

And he said,
“Blessed be Yahweh,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

In truth the literal blessing here is for “*Yahweh*, the God of Shem.” But those who know God's word recognize as well that Shem will be blessed *because* of Yahweh. Out of Shem will come Abraham (11:10-26) and Isaac and Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. It will be Israel that receives the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Law; to Israel will be bequeathed the land promised by Yahweh.

And let Canaan be his servant.

And there is a fascinating fulfillment to the last line of this verse.

Read 2 Samuel 21:1-2.

The Gibeonites were descended from the Amorites, who were, in turn, descended from Canaan, son of Ham. Joshua 9 tells the story of the craftiness of the Gibeonites who, while all those around them are being defeated by the incoming Israelites (such as at Jericho and Ai), they decide to fool the Jews rather than fight them. The Gibeonites present themselves to Joshua as poor vagabonds from a far away land and cut a covenant with Israel. When their deception is found out, because of the covenant Joshua cannot destroy the Gibeonites; instead they make them slaves to serve Israel.

“So now, you are cursed, and you shall never be cut loose from being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.” (Joshua 9:23)

So here, once again, we have the descendants of Canaan cursed, and serving the descendants of Shem.

v27

Verse 27 is the best of all, for it speaks of us Gentiles.

“May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

May God enlarge Japheth,

This prophecy, too, has been resoundingly fulfilled, for out of the three sons of Noah, it is Japheth’s line that had the furthest reach, extending NW into Europe, N into Turkey (Ottoman Empire), the Balkans, and E into today’s Iran and Iraq (Mesopotamia), Russia and beyond. But it is the second line that is most inte: resting.

And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;

The apostle Paul, employing the same imagery Christ did of branches connected to the vine (John 15), describes how the disobedience of Israel paved the way for Gentiles to be grafted into God’s vine.

Read Romans 11:16-21.²

As we learned in the study of the *Last Things*, Christians are not, as some believe, a “new” Israel; Israel is Israel and remains God’s chosen people, and Christians are followers of Christ Jesus, recognizing Him as the prophesied Messiah, while Israel—officially, at least—still waits for the Messiah, rejecting Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise.

The book of The Revelation makes clear that Israel remains special to God, and there will be a remnant that comes to faith in Jesus as the true Messiah during the Eschaton. They will be grafted back into the vine from which they had previously been severed, as Paul states further down in Romans 11.

² Admittedly the metaphors get mixed between John 15 and Romans 11—vine to olive tree—but the principle and application are the same.

And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.
(Romans 11:23)

Whether Jew or Gentile, there is only one “vine,” and it stands as a pretty good metaphor for “the tents of Shem.” Salvation has come to earth through Israel; as Jesus Himself stated it to the Samaritan woman in John 4, “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). As D. A. Carson expresses it, “Just as the Jews stand within the stream of God’s saving revelation, so also can it be said that they are the vehicle of that revelation, the historical matrix out of which that revelation emerges.”

Humanly speaking, Jesus was a Jew; He is descended directly from the Shem line out of Noah. For Japheth to “dwell in the tents of Shem” is another way of saying the Gentiles (or Greeks) from the Japheth line shall be the branches grafted into the salvation vine of Christ Jesus (John 15:6).

In biblical and Semitic imagery and custom, to “dwell in someone’s tent” is to become part of the family, to not just share in the hospitality of the family, but to have a share in its blessings.

vv28-29

And Noah lived 350 years after the flood. So all the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

In keeping with the lifespans of the early patriarchs, Noah lived a good long life—twenty years longer than Adam, and well into the life of Abraham.

CONCLUSION

If we summarize this passage, on the one hand we have gained little insight into the events:

- Why did Noah get drunk? Who can say.
- Why was he naked? Not a clue.
- What did Ham do to his father? Don’t know.
- Was Canaan already demonstrating character traits that would point to the prophecy of his curse? Can’t say.

On the other hand, we have seen how and why the descendants of these three sons of Noah will be interwoven for millennia, with eternal consequences—all because of the simple events of this one day in Noah’s tent: an old man gets drunk, and one of his sons shows disrespect to him as a result.

There is one more thing we do not know after all this: Were the prophecies of vv25-27—the curse and the blessings—the *result* of these men’s actions, or were these men just demonstrating behavior God had already ingrained into their future?

Can’t say.

SESSION 59: DIASPORA, PART ONE

Genesis 10:1-5

PREFACE

We now find ourselves at the beginning of the end of our study. For I suggest that we consider Chapter Ten and the first half of Chapter Eleven as of a piece. Both together comprise the history of human civilization from the Flood—from Noah through his three sons—until the dispersal of mankind into a multilingual world of separate tribes and nations.

K&D: ...two events [“the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of men over the face of the earth”] that were closely related to one another, and of the greatest importance to the history of the human race and of the kingdom of God. The *genealogy* traces the origin of the tribes which were scattered over the earth; the *confusion of tongues* shows the cause of the division of the one human race into many different tribes with peculiar languages. (emphasis added)

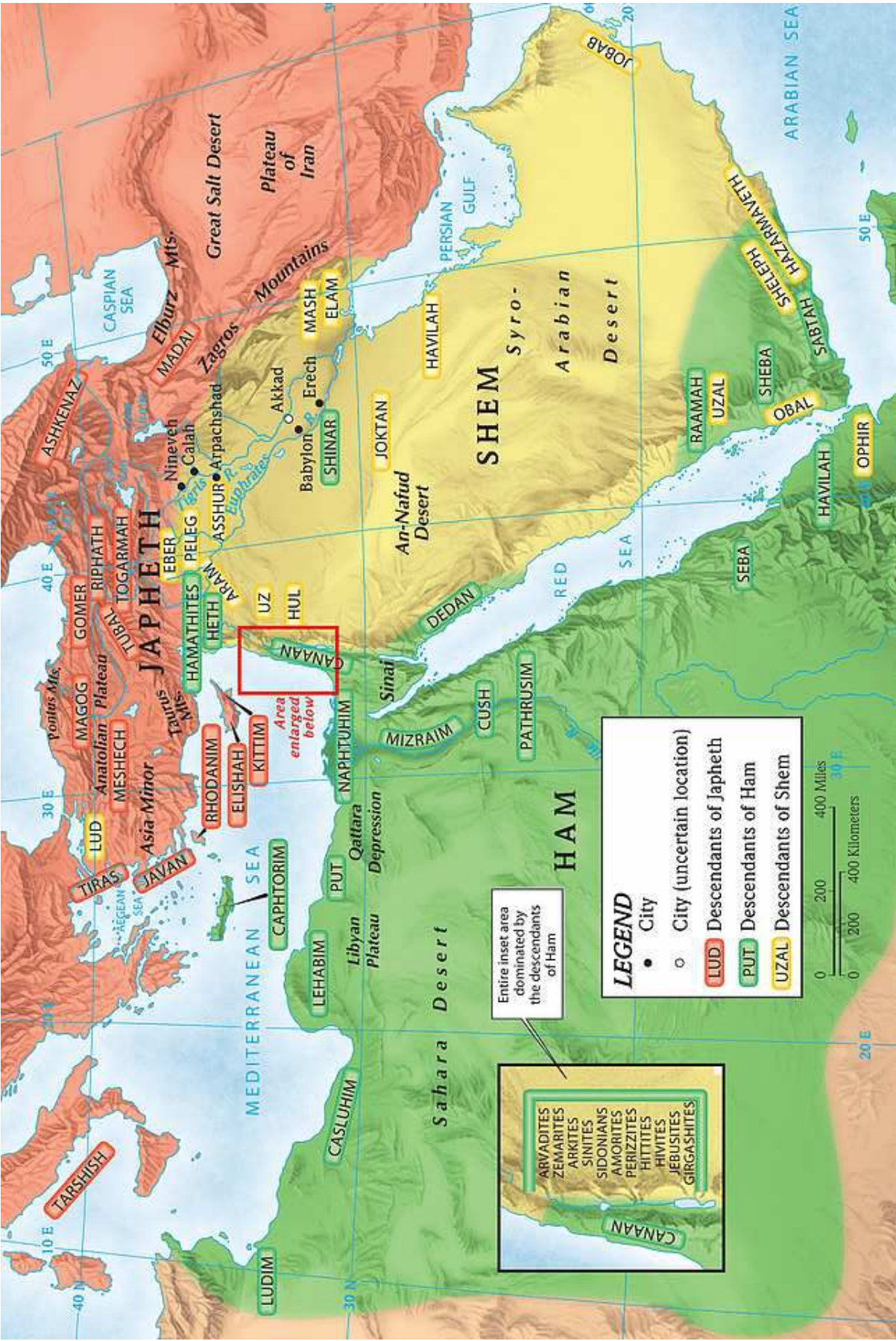
This chapter is cued up in Genesis 9:19, where Moses writes, after listing the three sons, “These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was scattered abroad.” And on this rare occasion the author of holy Scripture has organized his topic as I would have if I here him. In v2 he begins with the son whom—in the eyes of the Hebrew Moses—was of the *least* importance: Japheth. His descendants will be itemized from v2 to v5. From v6 to v20 Moses itemizes the line that will be, for the most part, the *enemy* of Israel: the line descending from Ham.

Finally the author Moses charts what to him and the focus of the remainder of the Pentateuch will be the most important family line: that of Shem, from v21 to v31. These three chronicles are followed by v32, to close the three family trees and prepare the reader for the first nine verses of Chapter Eleven:

These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

And before we launch into this concluding section with all its unpronounceable names, and the impression it gives that Noah and his three sons are the root of all mankind, we need to remind ourselves that Noah was not the root, but was the human bridge that spanned the Flood for the line of men out of Adam.

Out of Adam came his third son, Seth, to whom Enosh was born (5:6); and the line continued on to Methuselah, then Lamech, whose son was Noah. Noah was the “bridge over troubled waters” (as it were) that safely carried Adam’s blood into the reconfigured, post-Flood world.



Tribal Map for Noah's sons Descendants

Finally, though we might imagine that even as Noah's line is dispersed across the earth, Cain's line is already there. But no, any surviving descendants of this one who was banished into "the land of Wandering, east of Eden," have long since been drowned by the Flood.

v1

The first verse contains two important clues regarding these men. First, it makes clear that these three are the only sons of Noah.

Now these are the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth,
the sons of Noah;

Second, it also makes clear that the sons born to these three out of Noah were born only after the Flood.

and sons were born to them **after** the flood. (emphasis added)

There will be plenty of omissions in the lists of descendants in Chapter Ten; not every individual or tribe or nation will be mentioned. But Scripture specifies that there are no omissions at the beginning. One man, Noah, had only three sons, and *their* sons were born only after the Flood. There were only eight human beings in the ark (7:13).

JAPHETH: VV2-5¹

The line from Japheth may have been of least importance to Moses, but it is of particular interest to us—most of whom descend from European stock. It is interesting, however, that in only the second generation from Japheth is found a distinctive *Jewish* reference.

v2

The [immediate] sons of Japheth were

Gomer, (GO-mer)

Magog, (maw-GOGUE)

Madai, (maw-DEYE)

Javan, (yaw-VAWN)

Tubal, (too-BAWL)

Meshech, (MEH-shek)

Tiras. (tee-RAWCE)

Keep in mind that placing these names upon a map is not unlike trying to assign specific dates to ancient people or events. After any references are found in Scripture, much of the mapping out of these descendants is based not on historical accounts—for save for the occasional reference in Scripture, there is precious little—but is based instead on linguistics and, especially, etymological similarities. Compounding the confusion is the fact that over time, and as a

¹ See the reddish Northern area of the map included on the previous page.

people move from one place to another—or are chronicled by one group or another—the spelling of the names will inevitably change.

Gomer: identified with the Cimmerians (Greeks), settling S of the Black Sea.

Magog: From Josephus we learn (and it is generally accepted) that Magog settled what would become the land of the Scythians, a mountainous region around the Black and Caspian seas. This name is mentioned in Ezekiel 38:2, which, along with Ezekiel 39:17-20 prophesies something the fulfillment of which many believe is recorded in Revelation 19:17-21.

Read Ezekiel 38:1-3.

Read Ezekiel 39:4-6.

The fulfillment of these prophecies—the awful “supper of God”—is recorded in Revelation 19.

Read Revelation 19:17-21.

Gog and Magog are mentioned one last time, almost as an afterthought, at the defeat of Satan after the Millennium.

Read Revelation 20:7-10.

Most consider the name Gog to refer to a man, a leader, while Magog refers to a place, a kingdom. But let’s not miss that line in Ezekiel 38 and 39, “...O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” These two names are almost always linked in Scripture and extra-biblical texts—and, of course, we recognize these names as sons of Japheth.

Tubal: associated with the E portion of Asia Minor.

Meshech: Herodotus called these people the *hooci*. They dwelt across the Anatolian Plateau from Tubal, at the SW corner of the Black Sea.

Madai: The Madai will become the Medes, far SE of Magog and Tubal, and SW of the Caspian Sea. The name “Medes” (as in “the Medes and Persians”) appears frequently in Scripture.

Javan: The name “Javan,” is distinctly related to the Greek *iwuan*—the Ionians—the name, after Alexander the Great, that was applied to all Greeks. It is found repeatedly in the OT. Javan settled in Western Asia Minor, near the Aegean Sea.

Tiras: seems to refer to Pelasgians of the Aegean Sea, a pirate nation known as *torohnoi*, who terrorized the whole neighborhood. They may be identified with the later Etruscans of Italy.

Now the next two verses list the sons of just two from this generation: Gomer and Javan.

v3

The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath [ree-FATH] and Togarmah [toe-gar-MAH].

The eldest son of Gomer, **Ashkenaz**, does not have a Jewish name, but his is a name that will be associated with a particular group of Jews much later. Now, I am going to do you the gracious courtesy of not itemizing the uncertain and confusing history of this place name; it would quickly put you to sleep and, besides, would gain us nothing.

This name is found in just two other places in Scripture: in First Chronicles 1:6, in a second listing of Adam's descendants, and in the prophecy of Jeremiah against Babylon.

Read Jeremiah 51:26-27.

Our map places the land of Ashkenaz E of his father Gomer, in the mountain range off the western shore of the Caspian Sea. Cutting through all the confusion of source, we land in the mid-twentieth century, when "Iranian-speaking Jews in the Caucasus (the so-called Juhuris) and Turkic-speaking Jews in the Crimea prior to World War II called themselves 'Ashkenazim'." From the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

In time, all Jews who had adopted the "German rite" synagogue ritual were referred to as Ashkenazim to distinguish them from Sephardic (Spanish rite) Jews. Ashkenazim differ from Sephardim in their pronunciation of Hebrew, in cultural traditions, in synagogue cantillation (chanting), in their widespread use of Yiddish (until the 20th century), and especially in synagogue liturgy.

Today Ashkenazim constitute more than 80 percent of all the Jews in the world, vastly outnumbering Sephardic Jews. In the early 21st century, Ashkenazic Jews numbered about 11 million. In Israel the numbers of Ashkenazim and Sephardim are roughly equal, and the chief rabbinate has both an Ashkenazic and a Sephardic chief rabbi on equal footing. All Reform and Conservative Jewish congregations belong to the Ashkenazic tradition.

Riphath and **Togarmah** are clustered closer around their father: Riphath around the river Rhebas, and Togarmah associated with Cappadocia in today's Turkey.

v4

We now close the Japheth line with the sons of Javan.

The sons of Javan were Elishah [el-ee-SHAW] and Tarshish [tar-SHEESH], Kittim [kit-TEEM] and Dodanim [doe-dah-NEEM].

Note that those last two names are plural, thus denoting not the individual, but the people called by that name.

Since Javan became the Ionians, these names and tribes were all kin to the Greeks. On our map **Elishah** is located on the isle of Cyprus, in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and there is a large percentage of scholars that consider the powerful Bronze Age kingdom of Alashiya (or Alasiya), cited in multiple texts, including Josephus and the Tell-el-Amarna tablets, as centered on Cyprus, which was known in antiquity for its rich copper resources. In fact, most scholars recently identify the entire island of Cyprus with the kingdom of Alashiya, which, etymologically, is very close to the name of Noah's grandson, Elishah.

Our map places **Tarshish** alongside the SW coastline of Italy, but Leupold associates it with Tartessus in southern Spain. Frankly, no one knows where it was located, but wherever it was in antiquity it seemed to be an important location of sea-going trade, mentioned over twenty times in the OT.

"**Kittim** is a plural noun referring to those who dwelt on the east coast of Cyprus [and so located on our map]. This name, too, is found rather frequently in the Scriptures"—e.g., Numbers 24:24; Jeremiah 2:10; Ezekiel 27:6 (Leupold).

Dodanim, (or **Rodanim** in the 1 Chronicles name list) is another plural noun, referring not to an individual but to a people. And it is not a stretch, etymologically, to associate this, as our map does, with the Greek island of Rhodes, just off the SW coast of Asia Minor.

v5

From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his tongue, according to their families, into their nations.

The statement in v5 summarizes vv2-4, in the language of the KJV, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands..."—not literally what we would term an island (land surrounded by water), but literally, as our other versions have it, "the coastlands of the nations," that is, these were all settled, the various families, tribes, and nations in an approximate line along the coastline of the Mediterranean.

The word translated "tongue" (only in the LSB) or "language" is *lashon*, referring to the physical tongue as the instrument of speech. By contrast, "language" in 11:1 translates *sapa* (saw-FAW), which refers to the lips. The various versions that make *lashon* in 10:5 "language" are not doing their readers any favor—in fact it injects confusion, for 11:1 says flat out that "...the whole earth had the same language and the same words." So the reader sees a contradiction between the two passages.

“Tongue” in 10:5 means *idiom* or *dialect*, not literally a different language as French is different from English. Thus in Chapter Eleven it states that though people may be making different sounds with their tongues and lips, different *flavors* of speech—as a New Yorker speaks in one flavor of English and someone from Alabama another—they each can understand the words of the other (usually).

So by Genesis 11:1, the families from Japheth can understand the words of the families of Ham and Shem, but they all might be *shaping* those words differently.

In our next session we will examine the descendants of Ham, the enemies of Israel.

SESSION 60: DIASPORA, PART TWO

Genesis 10:6-20

PREFACE

As with Japheth, we are now presented with the immediate sons of Ham, Noah's grandsons through Ham, with Cush (presumably the oldest) listed first.

v6

The sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.

In Session 58 we discussed Canaan, the most immediate threat to Shem's descendants, for Canaanites were the ones who settled in the land Yahweh will promise to Israel, and will have to be dislodged from that land before Israel under Joshua can inhabit it. But the most insidious and persistent threat the Canaanites will pose to Israel will be as a result of Israel's disobedience in not wiping them out totally. Because of this, the remnants of the Canaanites will continue as a corrupting and eroding influence to Israel's faith, and obedience to Yahweh.

v7: SONS OF CUSH

The sons of Cush were Seba [seh-BAH] and Havilah [khav-ee-LAH] and Sabtah [sab-TAH] and Raamah and Sabteca [sab-teh-KAW];

Five sons are listed for Cush; these five would be great-grandsons of Noah. Now the author Moses breaks out—in an almost perfunctory manner—two sons of just one of these five: Raamah.

and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Let's back up to these five great-grandsons and take just a quick look at where this family settled. The sons of Cush are, for the most part, Ethiopian tribes.¹

Seba: associated with the ancient city of Meroe, in upper Egypt on the Nile.²

Havilah: located just S of Seba; the name means "sandland." We will see this name again in v29, so this first is of Hamitic extraction, while the second is Semitic.

Sabtah: is another Ethiopic group that is identified with the city of Sabatha across the Red Sea in the SW corner of Arabia.

Raamah: is also located in that region of Arabia, present-day Yemen.

Sabteca: unless my eyes deceive me, is not located on our map; this is be-

¹ See the green, mostly Southern area of the map included on page 317.

² References to upper and lower Egypt can be confusing, since lower Egypt lies to the N, while upper Egypt lies to the S. This is because the Nile flows from S to N, toward the delta that spills into the Mediterranean Sea.

cause this is a branch of the Ethiopians that settled east of the Persian gulf.

As for the sons of Raamah,

Sheba: is probably the most well-known name; perhaps Moses selects it out because, like his uncle Nimrod, will become famous—or infamous—in the annals (e.g., “queen of Sheba”). This name is found in a number of places—twice even in this chapter: here a descendant of Ham, and in v28 a descendant of Shem. Some of these “Shebas” scholars want to associate, along with Raamah, with the Sabbeans in SW Arabia. It is thought that it was from here the queen of Sheba came bearing spices, gold and precious stones (1 Kings 10).

Dedan: we know next to nothing about, but chances are good he is associated with the region, trade, and descendants of his brother Sheba.

Moses reserves the most space for one more son of Cush: Nimrod (Nim-RODE).

VV8-9: NIMROD

Now Cush was the father of Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Yahweh.”

Nimrod was not a nice guy. As we know from our study of Chapter Six and the Nephilim, Nimrod was not the first “mighty one on the earth.” But he was probably the first to really run with it, and thus the first to build an empire. He was an evil strong-man.

Nimrod was not necessarily a “mighty hunter” of meat for the evening meal. He may have been that too, but the reference here is of someone who hunts down men.

We also are not to read “before Yahweh” as meaning someone doing Yahweh’s bidding, or acting in obedience to Yahweh; it is better to read this “in the face of Yahweh.”³

³ In the modern sense of “getting in someone’s face.”

K&D: Nimrod was mighty in hunting, and that in *opposition* to Jehovah; not before Jehovah in the sense of, according to the purpose and will of Jehovah... The name itself, Nimrod from “we will revolt,” points to some violent resistance to God. It is so characteristic that it can only have been given by his contemporaries, and thus have become a proper name.

David Guzik: The context shows that this is not a compliment of Nimrod. The idea is that Nimrod was an offense **before the face of God**. (emphasis added)

James Montgomery Boice: This is not talking about Nimrod’s ability to hunt wild game. He was not a hunter of animals. He was a hunter of

men—a warrior. It was through his ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom of the Euphrates valley city states was consolidated.

v10-12

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went out to Assyria and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

Some of these place names cannot be located, but we see on our map the regional name of Shinar, and around it Erech, Babylon, Akkad (Accad/Accadians); then traveling up the Tigris we see Calah and Ninevah.⁴

Here is the first empire, and it begins with Babel/Babylon. We may deduce from the text that since v11 says that Nimrod *built* Nineveh, he may not have literally *built* Babel, but just conquered an existing city and made it his own.⁵

In the Revelation we have a graphic, even repulsive picture of what the Lord God and His Christ think of Babylon.

Read Revelation 17:1-6.

Babylon is portrayed here and elsewhere in Scripture as not just a place of sin and evil, but the *generator* of sin and evil on earth.

Read Revelation 18:1-5.

v13-14

Moses now moves onto the next son of Ham: Mizraim.

Mizraim was the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.

As stated earlier, the name “Mizraim” is synonymous with Egypt. Except for Anamim (which is not located on our map) all the other names (which are all plural) are scattered about in and around the N and W coastlines of Africa, with Mizraim (which is *not* plural) noted along the Nile. Except for Egypt itself, little credence can be given to their various locations on this map; no one really knows, but it makes sense that they would be in the general vicinity of Egypt.

On our map, Caphtorim is located on the island of Crete in the Mediterranean. This may or may not be its location.

⁴ Interestingly, we also see in the same region the city name of Arpachshad, which was the name of one of *Shem's* sons—not *Ham's*. We might wonder what a Shemite is doing in the middle of Hamites, but it would be more accurate to ask what is Nimrod's kingdom (Hamite) doing in the middle of territory settled by the Shemites?

⁵ K&D offers a logical explanation for the last phrase of v12, “that is the great city.” Grammatically, it follows that the four places formed a large composite city, a large range of towns, to which the name of the (well-known) great city of Nineveh was applied, in distinction from Nineveh in the more restricted sense, with which Nimrod probably connected the other three places so as to form one great capital.

wv15-18

Now we return to Canaan and his descendants, and as we see not just in the text, but in the inset of our map, Canaan was the father of a whole lot of “ites.”⁶

⁶ I need to modify something I wrote back in Session 58. In my discussion of Canaan, I said that it was the Canaanites that settled the vast swath of green we see on our map. What I should have said was the Hamites settled this area—only part of which (especially the eastern shore of the Mediterranean) was settled by the Canaanites.

Canaan was the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were scattered.

In Session 58 we focused on the *nature* of the Canaanites, and how his people played into prophecy fulfilled down the road. Here we will pay closer attention to their dispersal with the other tribes. And as we see on the map, for the sons of Canaan there was little dispersal at all. Compared especially to the other tribes, they all clustered into a rather tight area hugging the eastern shore of the Mediterranean: today’s Syria to the N, Lebanon, and Israel; then across the Jordan to the kingdom of Jordan.

Except for the Hamathites and the Hethites in the N, all of Canaan’s descendants are clustered in the land promised to Israel by Yahweh.

Of course it is easy to forget that what God actually promised to Abram was far beyond just Canaan. In Genesis 15:18 we read,

On that day Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram, saying,
“To your seed I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river,
the river Euphrates...”

wv19-20

The border of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their tongues, by their lands, by their nations.

These two verses conclude the line coming out of Ham, and offer a general look at the parcel of land settled by this Canaanite family. Although the original purpose of the map included on the next page is to show where the twelve tribes settled, I chose it because it includes most of the place names in the text.

Following the text, it begins with **Sidon** up at the very top; many associate the Sidonians with the mysterious Phoenicians. Then down to “**Gerar, as far as Gaza.**” We see Gerar just under the J in Judah; the city of Gaza would be roughly where we see on this map Raphia, near the bottom of the Judean coastline. **Sodom and Gomorrah** are usually placed around the bottom of the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of Edom and Moab. Somewhere in this region would be also

the unlocated **Admah**, **Zeboiim** and **Lasha**, this last identified by some with Calirrhoe, a place with sulphur baths, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.



In our next session we will look at the last of the three sons, from whom will come Israel—Shem.

SESSION 61: DIASPORA, PART THREE

Genesis 10:21-32 (with 11:10-32)

PREFACE

We have examined the line descending from Noah's son Japheth; likewise his son Ham. We now conclude Chapter Ten with a look at the line emerging from what Moses—and presumably, we—consider the most important of the three: Shem, father of the Semites, including, eventually, Israel. It makes perfect sense that the author of Genesis would address these three lines in order of ascending importance, ending with this one, for, first, it is his *own* line; second, it is the line that will be followed for the remainder of his book (the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible) and, indeed, the rest of God's word to the end of The Revelation. In v21 he gives away his agenda.

v21

Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber [AY-ber], and the older brother of Japheth, children were born.

The phrase “the older brother of Japheth” harmonizes with the other times the brothers are listed by name; Shem was the firstborn, always listed first when all three names are included.¹ The comparison here is made to Japheth, rather than Ham, probably because these two brothers and their descendants have more in common with each other than does Ham—whose line through Canaan was the one prophesied to be cursed, while Shem and Japheth were prophesied blessings. Here he is mentioned last because his line is the most important to the author—and because it then cues up the narrative of the rest of his five books.

The phrase “the father of all the children of Eber” is a reference to Shem's great-grandson through Arpachshad and Shelah. The name Eber presages the name “Hebrew”; it means “across,” or “passing over,” here by extension “the region across the Euphrates River”—thus, referring to more than just the Israelites. As we will see, Eber and his father Peleg did indeed come from across the Euphrates.

Verse 22 gives us the immediate sons of Shem, who, Chapter Eleven tells us lived to be 600 years old and “had other sons and daughters.”

v22

The sons of Shem were Elam [ay-LAHM] and Asshur [ah-SHOOR] and Arpachshad [ar-pahk-SHAD] and Lud [LOOD] and Aram [a-RAHM].

Some of the sons of Shem did not travel far, initially at least, from where the ark came to rest; others traveled a more ambitious route.

¹ The NIVs and KJVs have it “whose older brother was Japheth” and “the brother of Japheth the elder,” respectively. It can be translated either way—the NIVs and the LSB include margin notes “or...” The historical and biblical convention is to list the eldest son first, and Shem is always listed first when the other names are included. This is the rationale behind the LSB, NASB, and ESV versions.

Elam: is the country east of the lower Tigris River; the Assyrians call it Elamtu, which means “highland.”

Asshur: settled between the upper Tigris and Euphrates, and became Assyria—sometimes referred to even today as Asshur by some modern Assyrians.

Arpachshad: settled along the upper Tigris.

Lud: had other thoughts and settled far to the west to the Aegean Sea, near the site of today’s Istanbul, in far western Turkey, possibly becoming the Lydians in Asia Minor.

Aram: settled on the upper Euphrates, NE of the Canaanites.

The author Moses discards all but Aram—who is quickly dispensed with in v23—so he can focus his attention on the most important son, Arpachshad.

v23

The sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.

I could not find Gether anywhere on the map on page 317, and no mention of him beyond this list and the one in 1 Chronicles; but Uz and Hull (pronounced OOTS KHOOL, respectively) are located just NE of the Canaanites; Mash (MAHSH) is located opposite, on the far eastern boundary of the Shemite region.

vv24-25

Arpachshad was the father of Shelah [SHEH-lakh]; and Shelah was the father of Eber [AY-ber]. Now two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan [yok-TAWN].

We know nothing of Shelah; he was the father of Eber, and in the latter’s two sons we have an important split into two very different (even opposing) families—much like that which will occur later between Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau. Through Peleg will come Abraham; through Joktan, Babylon.

The name Peleg even means “division” or “stream,” and the text emphasizes this by explaining that “in his days the earth was divided”—“divided” here a variant of his name, and meaning to split or divide, make a furrow, to cleave.

Peleg is found, along with his father Eber, in the upper reaches of the Shemite region, nudging up against the Japheth region—today’s turkey. His brother Joktan, however, settled in the heart of this region, and his offspring would appear to become the founders of many Arabic tribes—as seen by the placement of their names (listed in vv26-29) on our map in Session 59.

v30

Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.

We don't really know where these place names should be located, but probably somewhere in southern Arabia.

vv31-32

Chapter Ten closes with two summary verses, much as the author did previously after Ham's descendants (10:20). Now he adds, in v32, the larger summary statement for *all* the sons of Noah.

These are the sons of Shem, according to their families,
according to their tongues, by their lands, according to their
nations. These are the families of the sons of Noah, according
to their generations, by their nations; and out of these the
nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

Even as this verse states what *must* be true—that all humanity, all tribes around the globe emerged from Noah and his three sons—we are still left with nagging questions, among which, *How do we account for such far-flung tribes as the Inuit, Mongols, Chinese, Pacific island natives, American Indians, etc.?* Probably the best we can deduce is that since the Inundation, Noah's sons and grandsons, and daughters and granddaughters, carried within them the seeds of all the variants we see today across the earth. After all, the typical Anglo-Saxon in mid-America may be just as much a variant from Noah as may be someone from the steppes of Mongolia. Every one of us is the product of his or her ancestors—both near and far.

At the close of each chapter in his commentary, H. C. Leupold includes "Homiletical Suggestions," much as Spurgeon does in his wondrous work on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*—that is, suggestions for how to preach or teach the passage just discussed. I was amused by Leupold's remarks at the end of Chapter Ten. Instead of bullet-point recommendations for three-point sermons, he offers this:

Leupold: It may very well be questioned whether a man should ever preach on a chapter such as this. It could be expounded in adult Bible class study, and even then a summary view of the whole chapter and its purpose might meet all needs. Perhaps the section v. 8-11 could be used on occasion to set forth the story of the origin of the kingdoms of this world and their basic character. But such a sermon might have too little gospel content and be largely negative in character, showing what the kingdom of God is not.

In this spirit, I think we should not close Chapter Ten without looking at the continuation of Shem's line in the second part of Chapter Eleven. Because there we find not just Israel, but the gospel. Our next two and final sessions of

this study will focus on the *first* part of Chapter Eleven, vv1-9, but right now let's skip over that to v10.

Right away we see that even though life spans remain high in comparison to today, they are diminishing in comparison to the earliest days. Thus Shem, the father of the Semites, will live for 600 years. And in v10 we get what may be for some of us a more accurate picture of the family in the ark. How many of us (perhaps after Hollywood's depiction) have thought of Noah and his wife accompanied by relatively young—by our standards—couples in the ark.

v10: These are the generations of Shem. Shem was 100 years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;

So now we know that Noah's firstborn son was 98 years old during the year-long Inundation, and was 100 when Shem was born.

TO ABRAM/ABRAHAM

The purpose of this generational list is to move the reader from Noah and his sons, and their immediate descendants, to Abram and, eventually, Israel. And thus it is exclusively focused on this line. Whereas Chapter Ten included some of the respective brothers, this passage is only interested in tracing from Noah and Shem to Abram. In that, it is more akin to most generational lists scattered throughout the OT and NT, which typically follow a specific line, ignoring the rest. For this purpose, the phrase Moses will employ repeatedly here is "he became the father of other sons and daughters." That will suffice for the rest of each generation, for they are not pertinent to the purpose of the passage.²

One other general note: Notice how with each subsequent generation the age at death decreases, from Shem living 600 years, to Terah living 205 years (11:32). Look again at v21 in Chapter 10.

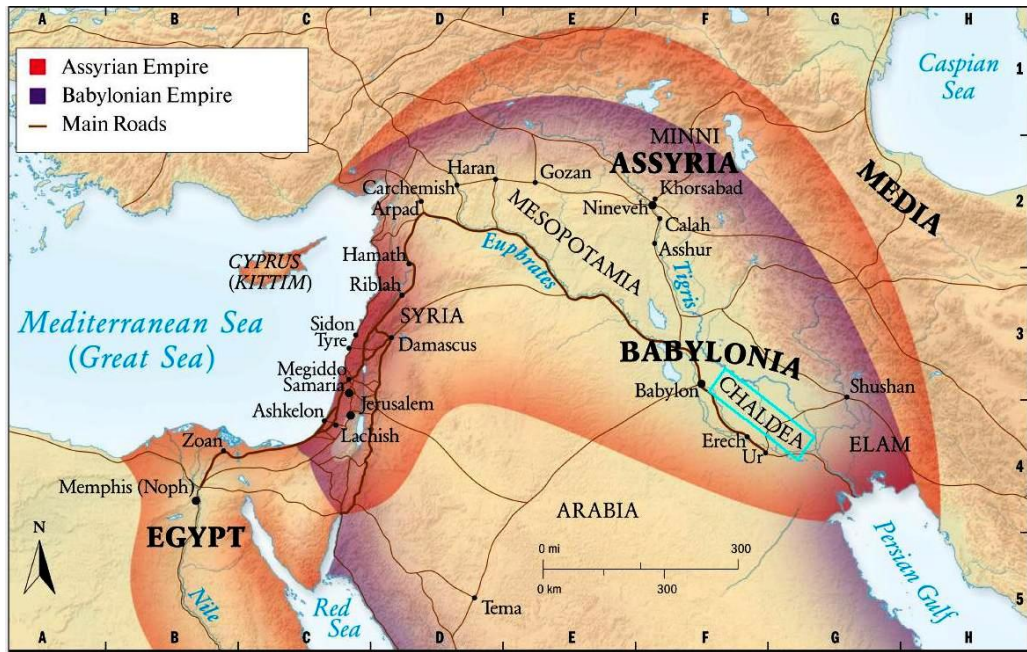
Read Genesis 10:21.

Earlier I pointed out that the phrase "the father of all the children of Eber" is a reference to Shem's great-grandson through Arpachshad and Shelah. The name Eber presages the name "Hebrew"; it means "across," or "passing over," here by extension "the region across the Euphrates River"—thus, referring to more than just the Israelites. Now we can see that Eber—the "Hebrews"—did indeed come from across the Euphrates. **Look at the map on the next page.** It is not included on this map, but Eber settled in the region just NE of Haran and N of Gozan, which would place him "across the Euphrates" from the perspective of Canaan/Israel. From Eber to Abram (seven generations) the line worked its way down the Euphrates to Ur of the Chaldeans.

Read Genesis 11:31-32.

² Refer to the family tree included on the next page. This is a streamlined way to see the line from Noah and Shem advancing to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Note: In the chart the name "Cainan" is inserted between "Arphaxad" and "Salah" (Shelah); this name is included in Luke 3:36, but not in Genesis or the 1 Chronicles list.



But that route would be straight across hundreds of miles of barren desert, whereas, taking the route they did, would mean a much more pleasant journey, following the fertile crescent through Haran.

As the text tells us, the family settled in Haran for a while, and Terah dies

there. Some time after his father dies, Yahweh tells Abram it is time to leave—time to complete his journey (12:1-3)—and he traveled as far as Shechem, which would be about in the middle of today's Israel, above Bethel and Jerusalem (called Jebus at the time).

So from this we see that Eber's name was indeed fitting, for his descendants—just seven generations later—did settle on the other side of the Euphrates.

To CHRIST

Now turn to Matthew 1.

We are familiar with the beginning of this line from Abraham to Jesus the Christ: Abraham → Isaac → Jacob (Israel) → Judah... We are also familiar with the ending of the line: “Joseph the husband of Mary” (Matthew 1:16); Joseph did not supply the seed that impregnated Mary, but legally Jesus was in his line—the kingly line through David (1:6).

There is controversy over whether the genealogical line given in Luke 3 represents Mary's line, as opposed to Joseph's. But the writer to the Hebrews clearly and poetically establishes the case for Jesus being “after the order of Melchizedek”—that is, both king and priest.

Read Hebrews 7:14-17.

Here the preacher repeatedly quotes from Psalm 110:4 to make the case for Christ alone being the true Messiah—both king and priest, descended from Judah and the kingly house of David, as well as “priest forever,” as the eternal advocate between man and God.

Over the past few weeks we have traced through countless unpronounceable names from Noah and his three sons to Christ Jesus the Son of God—from Noah to Moses and the Law, to salvation in Christ through His gospel—all according to the plan God set down long before the first man was even created.

SESSION 62: GETTING THINGS IN ORDER

Genesis 11:1-9

PREFACE

Over the last few weeks we have laboriously worked our way through Chapter Ten, with its many lists of Noah's descendants. We have systematically considered the distribution of *families* after the Flood, but we have paid scant attention to *time*—that is, *when* did all this distribution of families take place? So to approach this epochal moment in the history of man that we find in Chapter Eleven—the distribution of *languages*—we must back up just a little and find its place and time in antiquity.

Not unlike the composition of its brother, The Revelation, the composition of Genesis does not follow a strict chronological path in its narrative. One passage might overlap another, or even predate an earlier passage, or postdate one coming after. Ancient writers did not always compose their narratives in a strictly linear fashion—one to which we are more accustomed. This does not represent inaccuracy; it is just a different way to compile the various pieces of history. While not inaccurate, it can present a challenge for us in interpreting the larger picture.

So let us see if we can work out the chronological placement of Chapter Eleven in relation to Chapter Ten.

Coming after Chapter Ten, we immediately assume that the story related in Chapter Eleven occurred *after* the dispersal of Noah's descendants in Chapter Ten. But that is not the case.

Leupold makes two statements that, at least initially, gave me pause:

1. "The time of this event [the erection of the tower of Babel] is about one hundred years after the Flood, since Peleg...was born one hundred years after the Flood."
2. "...it must be recalled that practically the whole human race participated in this project [the building of the tower]."

Let's look at these statements in turn, but we must combine our conclusions for each to determine the chronology of these two chapters.

PELEG

As I pointed out in our previous session, an important division occurs in the two sons of Eber: Peleg and Joktan. Through Peleg will come Abraham; through Joktan, Babylon.

I found it interesting that in Chapter Ten, Moses does not include the line out of Peleg—even though he is the most important branch—yet includes a long list of Joktan's sons. Sailhamer helped clarify this for me—which also helps us understand how the two chapters work together.

According to the list in 11:10-26, we see that the arithmetic confirms Leupold's first statement.

Read Genesis 11:10.

Working through the subsequent years for each generation, we come up with Peleg being born 101 years after the Flood. Why is this important for our understanding of the Babel narrative? Leupold makes the logical conclusion that the "division" in 10:25 refers to the division and dispersal of 11:7-9.

Read Genesis 10:25.

Read Genesis 11:7-9.

So looking solely at the chronology, the *dating* of this, the conclusion is that the events chronicled in Genesis 11:1-9 occurred about 100 years after the Flood. Is that sufficient time for the various families to populate the earth as seen in the map we have been using? I think not. Is it sufficient time for the sons of Noah to migrate from Ararat to the Shinar region and begin building the city that would become Babylon? Yes.

"The Whole Human Race"

As to Leupold's second statement, it makes sense if we agree with the first. It is estimated by people smarter than I that in those one hundred years the population of the earth would have grown to about 30,000 persons—certainly enough to found a city, and sufficient to begin construction of "a tower," but insufficient to populate the coverage we see in our map on page 317.

I want to return to 10:10 and Nimrod for just a moment.

Read Genesis 10:10-11.

In Session 60 I said,

Here is the first empire, and it begins with Babel/Babylon. We may deduce from the text that since v11 says that Nimrod "built" Nineveh, he may not have literally built Babel, but just conquered an existing city and made it his own.

We don't know the age of Nimrod, only that he was a grandson of Ham; his name is set apart from his five (listed) brothers, probably because of the larger impact he had on civilization. But we don't know if he was an older or younger brother. It could very well be that Nimrod conquered the city that had been founded by the line from Shem through Arpachshad, Eber, and Peleg. Now, one more look at v25 in Chapter Ten.

Read Genesis 10:25.

Verse 30 tells us that this line's
settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the
hill country of the east.

This is followed in v2 of Chapter Eleven with
And it happened as they journeyed east, that they found a
plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

Sailhamer: [Verse 30 gives us] the location of the settlement of the
[Joktan] line, but narratively it serves to connect the line of Joktan
with the account of the building of Babylon that follows [11:4]. The
link is made by means of the key term “mountain of the east” [or “hill
country of the east”]. The narrative is less interested in the exact loca-
tion than it is in the association with the “eastward” of 11:2, the loca-
tion of the “plain of Shinar” where the city of Babylon was built.

¹ e.g., 3:24—Adam and Eve's
banishment from the Gar-
den—and 4:16—Cain's banish-
ment to Nod.

Here once again we have two different translations with which to contend. The LSB, NASB, and NIVs have in v11:2, “they journeyed east” or “eastward”; the ESV and KJVs have, “from the east.” Each translation of the Hebrew can be grammatically correct, but the context of this passage, along with translations of the same in earlier passages in Genesis¹ would seem to make “eastward” correct here. (Both Leupold and Sailhamer agree that it should be “eastward,” that is, *to* the east, not *from* the east.)

As we can see from the map on page 317, Shinar from Ararat is actually more south than anything else, but is also just slightly SE.

In addition to the grammar, consistently in Genesis, “when man goes ‘east,’ he leaves the land of blessing...and goes to a land where the greatest of hopes will turn to ruin” (Sailhamer).

One more piece of evidence: How does Chapter Ten end?

These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their
generations, by their nations; **and out of these the nations
were separated on the earth after the flood.**
(emphasis added)

In v25 Peleg's name means “division” (a noun); in this verse, v32, the word translated “separated” or “spread out” means “divided” (*parad*, a verb). After examining all this minutia, let's now put this all together into a narrative form.

The Narrative

After a little over a year of the Inundation, the ark comes to rest on a mountain in the Ararat region.

The family of eight disembarks; Shem is the oldest son of Noah at 98 (11:10) and Noah is about 601 years old (7:6). We do not know how long the three sons and their immediate families remained in the Ararat region, but approximately 100 years later we find all of Noah's descendants in the region of Shinar. We get this time span by counting the generations from Arpachshad—probably not Shem's oldest son—to Peleg (11:10-17), “for in his days the earth was divided” (10:25)—and all, of course, speaking the same language.

This would mean that the various branches of the family did not disperse across the globe from Ararat, but from Babel/Babylon. And, frankly, if one looks at the map, Shinar presents as a far more central location than Ararat for the eventual distribution of the descendants.

And now we are ready to dig into Chapter Eleven.

Read Genesis 11:1-4.

Let's begin with a very good summary quotation from H. C. Leupold.

Leupold: If, then, the account as a whole shows the confusion of tongues to be the outgrowth of human presumption and disobedience, the practical lesson of the story must be primarily this, that the present resultant confusion that is upon us must serve as a constant reminder of the inclination of the human heart to arrogance and disobedience. The multiplicity of languages upon the face of the earth is a monument not to human ingenuity but to human sin.

v1

Now the whole earth had the same language and the same words.

Before we can understand the change that will occur at the command of Yahweh, we need to understand what was in place prior to that.

The word translated “language” is *sapah* (saw-FAH), meaning, literally, “lip”. This may be a reference to dialect, or sound, expressing that, for example, “the lips of all were shaped alike in uttering words” (Leupold). The word translated “words,” or “speech” is *dabarim* (da-BAWR in the plural), and I think is best understood to mean “vocabulary”—all used the same words to express a thought.

v2

And it happened as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

I admit: This business of east or west in this passage is slippery, hard to hold on to. Perhaps v10:30 is more critical to this than we might originally think.

Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.

The emphasis there seems to be more about *location*, than *direction*. For example, if we live somewhere in North America, and we intend to visit a friend who lives in South Korea, this means we will be traveling to the “Far East.” If we travel west to Europe first, to visit another friend in France, before continuing on to South Korea, we have traveled in a westerly direction but our ultimate destination is to the Far East. That is what I believe v10:30 is saying—i.e., *The sons of Joktan settled in “the hill country of the east.”*

We must also admit that, in contrast, v11:2 seemingly speaks of *direction* rather than *location*—although one might also stretch it to read as if it fits our above illustration.

At the same time, however, if the KJVs and the ESV are correct (“from the east”—i.e., traveling from the east in a westerly direction), then we must ask: precisely from *where*?

Ultimately the question of direction must give way to geography: the ark landed in Ararat, and the people migrated from there to the Plain of Shinar. Period.

...and settled there.

If one goes to Iraq today, one might wonder what about this region could have possibly attracted these people to it. Except for the areas near the two rivers, it is little more than barren desert. Today’s Baghdad is on the Tigris, rather than the Euphrates, but it is the same general area.

But we forget: that area has not always looked as it does today. This area *would* have been inviting, being far more fertile than it is today.

v3

Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and they had tar for mortar.

Mud brick was and remains a common building material in the Middle East. I remember, when we were in Egypt in the early eighties, driving past a miserable hovel near the side of the road made of mud brick—or perhaps even just dried mud—still occupied by a family.

Mud bricks would typically have been *sun* dried, and did last for surprisingly considerable periods in a region with little rain. In fact Linda and I saw ruins of walls still standing in some temple precincts, constructed from unfired mud bricks.

The bricks mentioned in v3, however, are not sun dried, but kiln dried—burned thoroughly. The text is literally “let us burn to a burning,” which everyone interprets to mean “bake them thoroughly,” as the NKJV has it. So these

would be more akin to modern bricks, sufficiently hardened to be used for substantial construction.

Unlike the immediate Mediterranean area, such as Canaan, Greece, Crete, or Cyprus, there was not sufficient stone for construction, hence the need for bricks. Lacking also the material for mortar, they again used what was available: bitumen, or tar.

v4

And they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

With these materials they built a city and began work on a central tower—a ziggurat (see the image below), a temple dedicated for worship to the local god. This would not be a pyramid in the Egyptian 4th Dynasty fashion or design, but somewhat similar to the design of the very first pyramid for the 3rd Dynasty king Djoser (c.2686-2613 BC), a *stepped* pyramid.

But the Egyptian pyramids were only elaborate and massive tombs; the ziggurat would be a majestic place of worship—not a tomb, but a temple.

In our next session we will finish our look at the first nine verses of Chapter Eleven—and complete our study of the *First Things*.



SESSION 63: A CONFUSED CONCLUSION (FINAL)

Genesis 11:1-9

PREFACE

Let's begin by reading the entire passage for this final session.

Read Genesis 11:1-9.

In our previous session I covered many of the mechanical details of the first four verses:

- the difference between “language” and “words” in v1;
- the controversy over east or west in the versions of v2;
- the building materials of v3;
- and the purpose and design of the “tower” built in v4.

Now let's dig a little deeper into v4, for it is the apex of the passage—and the source of most myth and misunderstanding of the Babel narrative.

v4

And they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name,”

Why did St. Louis, Missouri, construct the “Gateway Arch”? Why did Bemidji, Minnesota, build the gargantuan statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox? Answer: To make a name for themselves and attract tourists.

Living in a country—indeed, a *world*—in which there are thousands upon thousands of cities, we might wonder, *What's the big deal about building a city?* But if it is true that this is taking place approximately one hundred years after the Flood, it makes perfect sense.

The ark landed in a mountainous region, and it would follow that they would immediately build rude shelters for the members of Noah's family. As the families began to grow, more shelters would be built, but it could very well have been that the setting was not suitable for a larger city—or even village. So at some point they decided to go looking for a more suitable location, one with room to grow and spread out.

They headed SE, probably following the two main rivers that descended in a southerly direction. Eventually, like the Mormons heading west and finding their “promised land” in Utah, the descendants of Noah deemed the plain of Shinar a suitable place to settle.

There is nothing wrong with a people seeking out a new home and building a community. But this verse is ripe with a picture of a self-centered people, a people who—remember, still within human memory of their being saved by Yahweh from the devastating Inundation—a people who are thinking more about “ourselves” (twice) than they are nurturing a humble relationship with God.

There is nothing in this verse to indicate that the tower had as its purpose to “reach up to God” or even replace Him. It clearly is meant to exalt themselves (“let us make for ourselves a name”), and the text just says that the top of this “tower” would be lofty—no doubt higher than anything ever made—certainly post-Flood. There is nothing in this verse that even suggests that it is the size or height of the tower that Yahweh finds objectionable. *Shamayim* (“heavens”) is the word we have seen before; it can mean God’s heaven, space, or just the sky overhead. Its root just means to be lofty.

I find the most literal version of this verse in the NKJV:

And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose **top is in the heavens**; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (emphasis added)

I would suggest that it doesn’t even mean they were building an edifice to a *new* god. Ziggurats *will* be used as a temple to a pagan god, but the purpose stated here is simply to build something impressive that will make a name for the city’s inhabitants. So even though the building materials are the same, perhaps it is a bit presumptuous to call this a ziggurat; it may be simply an impressive, tall building to mark this city out as something special, and unique for the time. There is no evidence whatsoever to imagine the tower was of extraordinary, astronomical, nose-bleed height.

“...lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

It is not immediately evident what this portion of the statement has to do with their self-centered arrogance and rejection of God. But it does indeed become evident when we are reminded of God’s blessing and command to Noah.

Read Genesis 9:1, 6-7.

The people of this new city—just a few generations after the Flood and the explicit call from God to populate the earth—were saying, *No, we’re not going to do that. We want to stay right here in one place and make ourselves famous as we worship ourselves. Our tall tower will stand as a monument to ourselves and our fame.*

v5

Then Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

Here is another of the Bible’s anthropomorphisms for Yahweh God. He need not “come down” to see what man is doing on earth, but the text emphasizes his level of intent interest.

We should not assume that “had built” implies completion. The perfect form of the Hebrew *bana* means “had built to this point.” The NIVs capture this with “were building.”

v6

And Yahweh said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they have begun to do. So now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.”

While it may take us a moment to recognize their transgression, Yahweh spots it right off. The phrase “one people” is more evidence for the timeline we established in our previous session. One cannot look at the vast distribution of the various tribes, as illustrated in the map we have been using for several weeks, and see them as “one people” having “the same language” (lip). No, this scene in Chapter Eleven certainly predates that dispersal.

I am not comfortable with any of our modern versions of v6—especially the word “impossible” in “now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.” That sounds to me uncomfortably close to “they will be gods”—which is not at all what Yahweh is saying. I favor Leupold’s translation:

And Yahweh said: Behold, the people are one and they all have one language, and this is merely the beginning of what they do, and now from nothing that they devise to do will they desist.

The Hebrew word translated “impossible” in our modern versions is *yib-baser* (yib-baw-TSAR); it means to clip off, and is commonly used for harvesting grapes—i.e., clipping the cluster from the vine—hence to cut off, restrain, withhold. William Wilson softens “impossible” slightly by translating this, “nothing will be too hard for them, whatever they may purpose to do.” The NKJV is best, in my opinion, with “now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.” We might put this in our contemporary vernacular with, “Look at what they have already accomplished; there will be no holding them back now.”

Now in vv7-8 we have the steps of Yahweh to halt, to restrain, this insular people.

v7

Using language that echoes Genesis 1:26 (“Let Us make man in Our image...”), He first “confuses their language.”

“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s language.”

As I have pointed out, here “language” is *sapah* (saw-FAH), meaning, literally, “lip”. This may be a reference to dialect, or sound, expressing that, for example, “the lips of all were shaped alike in uttering words” (Leupold). For example the English word “bread” in French is pronounced *peh* (spelled “pain”); two very different sounds for the same vocabulary (“same words”, 11:1).

Now the triunity of God (“Us”) will go down to “confuse their language”; interesting word translated “confuse.” *Balal* (bah-LAL) is a root meaning to mingle, to mix together with oil, even to overflow with oil; by this mingling together one “confuses” the mixture—“to confound language by its pronunciation, or rather by the introduction of strange words, miraculously caused” (William Wilson).

v8

The result of this confusion of language was that all work on the city and the tower ground to a halt—of course: none of the workers could understand the others.

So Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

We may imagine that once their language was confused they had no other recourse than to go their separate ways, migrating eventually as individual language groups to regions far and wide. And it may be that that was the earthly, human sequence; but the emphasis in the text is that “Yahweh scattered them.” And I’m not sure what to conclude from it, but I find the order of the two components of this verse interesting: First, Yahweh scatters the people, and, second, they stop building the city. One would think the order would logically be reversed.

But in any case, the result is an unfinished city and tower, and most if not all its citizens scattered to the four winds. This is the moment, I believe, that the various groups spread out to inhabit the locations we have seen on our map.

v9

Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

These people built the city and its tower for the expressed purpose of “mak[ing] a name for [them]selves” to the ultimate purpose of avoiding being “scattered over the face of the whole earth.” How did God express His displeasure with their intent? He made the “name” of their city—Babel/Babylon—a byword in the annals of history as well as future prophecy, to stand for all eternity as the name given to corruption and evil, and a rejection of God’s blessings. Later, to Abram, Yahweh will say, in effect, *I will be the one to make you a name:*

And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing; (Genesis 12:2)

Then, to top it off, Yahweh did precisely what the people of Babel were trying to avoid: He scattered them across the earth.

If I am correct in the narrative order of chapters ten and eleven—setting the migration from Ararat to Shinar first, followed by the dispersal we see in our map—then this makes Babel/Babylon, as it were, the “navel” of this world. And how apt: It would be hard to imagine or contemplate a world more culturally, morally confused than ours is today.

IN CONCLUSION

The story of Babel in Chapter Eleven serves as a concise summary and conclusion for this first narrative of the Bible: the *First Things*. For what was their offense that drew Yahweh’s judgment? They wanted to go their own way; they wanted to make a name for themselves; they wanted to set *themselves* on a pinnacle, rather than God—who just a short time before God alone had saved their family from a world-wide Inundation.

This has been the intent of man from the very beginning. Yahweh Elohim offered His creation sublime paradise, only to have the first couple fling it back in his face by believing the lie of Satan over the promise of God. He punishes Adam and Eve, but graciously withholds immediate death. Their firstborn son Cain makes a mockery of the Lord’s sacrifice and out of jealousy and anger murders his own brother. Again Yahweh graciously exiles Cain instead of killing him outright. And in spite of that grace, Cain and his descendants turn away from Yahweh.

So God gives Adam and Eve another son—Seth—a new and righteous line from which will later spring Noah, “a righteous man, blameless among those in his generations” (Genesis 6:9), and a fresh start for mankind—another chance for man to be obedient and accept the blessings of God.

But by the time of Noah, humanity has become so corrupt that there is no recourse but to wash it all away and begin again (6:11-13). After the Flood, even as Yahweh accepts the burnt offering from Noah’s altar and promises to never again wipe out “every living thing as I have done,” He also admits to Himself that “the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (8:20-21).

If God were one of us, this would be a turning point in the story—the sudden realization that no matter what good things are offered him, man will always gravitate toward evil. But of course, God is *not* one of us, and He is not just learning something He had never realized before. No, all this nauseating insistence of man to go his own way—to make a “name” for himself, rather than honor the name of Yahweh—was baked into the cake, as it were, from the beginning.

Man will stick to this pattern of behavior

- through Noah, his sons, the founding of cities of rebellion against God, Ninevah and Babel/Babylon;
- through Israel refusing to obey Yahweh's laws of blessings and good;
- through Israel's rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah; and
- through our own times, and man's determination that his way is better than God's, that he has no need for a Savior; and yes,
- through even our own sin and small rebellions against the blessings of God in a righteous life.

In these opening chapters of God's word the pattern is set: His repeated offering of blessings by living in accord with His will being repeatedly rejected in favor of rebellion, sin, depravity, evil. This is the pattern set by our corporate parents; this is what is now bred into every human being born after them.

In God's most dramatic and precious gift to man—His own Son—man finally has the means by which he can have a relationship with his Maker. But until the day man loses the fallen flesh in which he was born, we still struggle *against* that flesh that calls us to go our own way, to set *ourselves*—just like the people of Babel—as the pinnacle of fame and importance.

AN AFTERWORD

We take away from this study the wonder and glory of God's creative genius, His longsuffering, His grace demonstrated from the very beginning. We also take away the disappointing behavior of His *human* creations. These are included in the narrative for our benefit—just as the repeated betrayals of Israel are included—to stand as negative examples for us today, as to what happens to a life that is disobedient, even antagonistic, toward his Maker.

For no apparent reason other than divine influence, I awoke the Friday morning before teaching this final session to the strains of that old classic, *Trust and Obey*, ringing through my head. And it would not go away—which is often a sign that God is telling me something. Here, I believe, is what we should put in our pocket and take home with us from this study of the *First Things*.

*When we walk with the Lord
in the light of his word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will,
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.*

*But we never can prove
the delights of his love
until all on the altar we lay;
for the favor he shows,*

*for the joy he bestows,
are for them who will trust and obey.*

*Then in fellowship sweet
we will sit at his feet,
or we'll walk by his side in the way;
what he says we will do,
where he sends we will go;
never fear, only trust and obey.*

(John H. Sammis; 1887)

We Christians like to use the word “faith” a lot; the concept of faith is almost always synonymous with “trust,” and an integral part of trust is “obedience” to the one in whom we are placing our trust. All of this speaks to God’s sovereign rule over our lives, and “the glory He sheds on our way” in turn. We have a share in His glory by obeying Him.

The reward is not just glory, but *joy*—as the familiar refrain declares:

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

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BIOGRAPHY

We are David and Linda Lampel, and we live in a large country house in the rural area outside Winterset, Iowa, in the middle of the United States. Our home is surrounded by fields of corn and soybeans, and by dense woods that are home to deer, raccoons, possums, wild turkeys, woodchucks, coyotes, and myriad birds of all shapes and colors.

The tranquility and beauty of this place contribute to what we do. In fact, we believe that the Lord brought us to this home because He knew that here we would best be equipped to serve Him and His people.

Both of us work at home—Dave with his writing and teaching, and Linda (now retired) with her baking, needlework, and crocheting projects that are given to charities. Now that she has been unshackled from the business world, Linda has expanded our gardens, and has returned to baking all our bread—and spending more time with our family of cats.

The Lord has given us a good life, and we are most grateful to Him—especially for our 54 years together as husband and wife.

