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# BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THE “YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE” OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

## I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. **It is known by the abbreviation BDB.**
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. **It is known by the abbreviation KB.**
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. **It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.**

Where there is significant lexical variety I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

## II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on \_\_\_\_\_.”

## III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of

- A. *hapax legomena* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

- A. The Samaritan Pentateuch
- B. The Dead Sea Scrolls
- C. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic

Text (A.D. 900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). From time to time the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

## I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality, some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15<sup>th</sup> century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14<sup>th</sup> century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4b-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are

1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
5. Maccabean coins and seals
6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (vowels add later, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are quite common (*paronomasia*).

## II. Aspects of Predication

### A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged. VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—singular, plural, dual

2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (by analogy to modern western languages, the relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)
  - a. PERFECT, which denotes completed, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding, of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred.
 

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
 “The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as:  
 “The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependent upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially a Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form in this way:  
 “. . . views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).
  - b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.
 

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
 “All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says  
 “It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).
  - c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
  - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
  - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.

- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
  2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
  3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
  4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
  5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
  6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
  7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal - Niphal*; *Piel - Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

VOICE or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning.

“I have commonly found in teaching, that a student’s chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive

many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, ‘tense’ shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew’s mind.

The name ‘tenses’ as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew ‘tenses’ do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (viz. of time) which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. Moods (which are only analogies drawn from modern western languages)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
  - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
    - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
    - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
  - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*

These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
  - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*

Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; 1 Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. pp. 76-77).

D. *Waw* - Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition,

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE - There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone,” (J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*,” p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).

J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state: “When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
  - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
  - b. *halo'* - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo'*.

3. The term *'al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilti*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

#### G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
  - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
  - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
  - c. something which is possible or even probable (THIRD CLASS)
  - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
  - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by
    - (1) *'im*
    - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
    - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
  - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICLE *lu* or *lule*
  - c. the more probable condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
  - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	<i>Anchor Bible Commentaries</i> , ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	<i>Analytical Key to the Old Testament</i> by John Joseph Owens
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , James B. Pritchard
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	<i>The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation</i> (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	<i>The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts</i> (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	<i>Old Testament Passing Guide</i> by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Robert Young
ZPBE	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

## **A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?**

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

### **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

### **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS<sup>4</sup>). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS<sup>4</sup> and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
June 27, 1996

## **A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH**

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? (Evangelical Christianity affirms the trustworthiness of the Bible, but cannot agree on what it means!)

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

- (1) I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- (2) I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible cannot mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- (3) I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- (4) I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - (a) the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - (b) the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - (c) the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - (d) the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - (e) the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - (f) the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

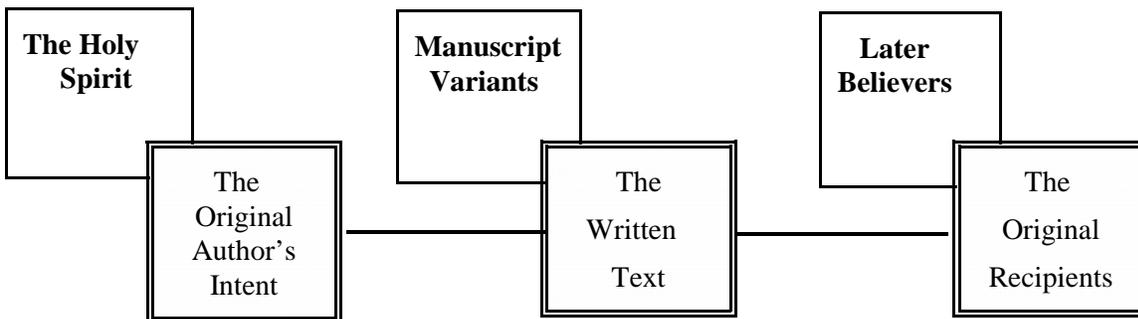
## II. Inappropriate Methods

- (1) Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- (2) Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- (3) Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- (4) Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- (5) Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a

speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me”) interpretation. At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed: (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Six areas provide at least limited verification:

- (1) historical setting
- (2) literary context
- (3) grammatical structures (syntax)
- (4) contemporary word usage
- (5) relevant parallel passages
- (6) genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms.

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- (1) The first reading cycle
  - (a) Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, preferably from a different translation theory
    - (i) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (ii) dynamic equivalent (TEV, NJB)
    - (iii) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  - (b) Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  - (c) Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme of the entire book.
  - (d) Identify the predominant literary genre
    - (i) Old Testament
      - 1) Hebrew narrative
      - 2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - 3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - 4) Law codes
    - (ii) New Testament
      - 1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - 2) Parables (Gospels)
      - 3) Letters/epistles
      - 4) Apocalyptic literature
- (2) The second reading cycle
  - (a) Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  - (b) Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  - (c) Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- (3) The third reading cycle
  - (a) Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  - (b) List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - (i) the author
    - (ii) the date
    - (iii) the recipients
    - (iv) the specific reason for writing
    - (v) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - (vi) references to historical people and events
  - (c) Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several

chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.

(d) Check your historical setting by using study aids.

(4) The fourth reading cycle

(a) Read the specific literary unit again in several translations

- (i) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
- (ii) dynamic equivalent (TEV, NJB)
- (iii) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

(b) Look for literary or grammatical structures

- (i) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
- (ii) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
- (iii) contrasting concepts

(c) List the following items

- (i) significant terms
- (ii) unusual terms
- (iii) important grammatical structures
- (iv) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences

(d) Look for relevant parallel passages

- (i) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
  - a) "systematic theology" books
  - b) reference Bibles
  - c) concordances

(ii) Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.

(iii) Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.

(e) Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion

- (i) study Bibles
- (ii) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
- (iii) Bible introductions
- (iv) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### **IV. Application of Bible interpretation**

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage cannot mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning

only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs, but it must be related to the original author’s meaning.

## V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- (1) Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- (2) Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- (3) Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff; 119:1ff).
- (4) Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- (5) Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- (1) from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- (2) on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary, but preliminary, to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- (3) H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

## VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- (1) A brief historical outline introduces each book. Check this information after you have completed “reading cycle #three.”
- (2) Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- (3) At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - (a) The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - (b) The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - (c) The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - (d) Today’s English Version (TEV)
  - (e) The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topical sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach, or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph-level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- (4) The notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - (a) literary context
  - (b) historical, cultural insights
  - (c) grammatical information
  - (d) word studies
  - (e) relevant parallel passages
- (5) At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions
  - (a) The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
  - (b) The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - (c) The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.

- (d) The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- (6) For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text
  - (a) manuscript variations
  - (b) alternate word meanings
  - (c) grammatically difficult texts and structure
  - (d) ambiguous textsAlthough the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- (7) At the close of each chapter, relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# OPENING STATEMENTS ON THE STUDY OF GENESIS 1-11

## A. How is Genesis 1-11 related to modern western science?

1. totally antagonistic
2. total agreement
3. points of similarity

Science is a research method. It is a modern phenomenon but is always changing in light of new knowledge. God as creator and God as savior are held together by the “two books,” nature (natural revelation, cf. Ps. 19:1-6) and Scripture (special revelation, cf. Ps. 19:7-11). God wrote both! They do not disagree!

## B. How does Genesis 1-11 relate to modern history?

1. Eastern and western literary genres are different. Not true or false, not right or wrong, but different. Genesis 1-11 is pre-history. It is crucial theologically, but somewhat veiled (brief literary pattern). Veiled in literary genre, veiled in historical drama, veiled as is the end of history (i.e. Revelation).
2. Christianity, as Judaism, is a historically based religion. It stands or falls on its historical events. However, some events (i.e. Gen. 1-11) are beyond our comprehension, so they are communicated in ways that humans can understand (i.e. accommodation). This is not in any way to deny their trustworthiness, but to emphasize their theological purpose. The Bible chooses to focus not on creation, but on re-creation (redemption).
3. Genesis is set within a “historical” frame of reference. We can document obvious links to secular history beginning with chapter 12 (i.e. Nuzi and Mari Tablets). However, chapters 1-3 are beyond historical confirmation and genre identification.

## C. How does Genesis 1-11 relate to literature?

1. There are parallels of chapters 1-2, 3, and 6-9 from Mesopotamian sources. Often terminology, details, and story line are similar. However, the Bible’s monotheism and the dignity of humanity are unique.
2. There are at least two dangers in approaching the Bible as literature.
  - a. As literature it is mythological, totally non-historical.
  - b. As literature it is literal, no figurative language, no eastern genres, no dramatic, parabolic events.

God has revealed Himself to a particular time and culture using human language (i.e. metaphors, analogies, and negations). It is true and trustworthy, but not exhaustive.

3. Creation is a progressive revelation truth. Genesis 1-2 are foundational, but Psalms and the NT are also crucial for a proper perspective. Each of the three sources adds to a theological understanding of the method and purpose of creation.

## D. How do we interpret Genesis 1-11?

1. How it all began and how it will all end are veiled (Genesis 1-11 and Revelation, i.e. we see through a glass darkly).
2. We have all the truths needed to respond to God and to understand the Bible. But, we do not have exhaustive, literal, complete facts. We have theologically selective and interpreted events.

3. We must view Genesis 1-11 through
  - a. literary genre
  - b. theological emphasis
  - c. historical events
  - d. modern western science/culture/biases
4. Fallen humans all stand before the Bible (i.e. God's revelation) and are judged by it. It is beyond our mental abilities, but we must be able to comprehend it in order to be able to properly respond to it. Believers interpret it differently (some poorly), but all are responsible for the truths they understand. It reveals God; it reveals human rebellion; it reveals divine redemption. Our eternities are related to these truths, not the how and when of creation and the events of Gen. 1-11. They are primarily the Who and why, which are so crucial.

God have mercy on us all (and He has)!

# INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

## I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. In Hebrew (i.e. the Masoretic Text) it is the first word of the book, *bereshith*, “in the beginning” or “by way of beginning.”
- B. From the Greek Bible (i.e. Septuagint translation), it is *Genesis*, which means “beginning” or “origin,” which was taken from Gen. 2:4a. This may be the author’s key “outline-phrase” or colophon to link the different theological biographies together as the Babylonian cuneiform writers did. This key outline phrase functions as a summation, not an introduction.

## II. CANONIZATION

- A. This is the first book of the first section of the Hebrew canon called “The Torah” or “teachings” or “Law.”
- B. This section in the Septuagint is known as the Pentateuch (i.e. five scrolls).
- C. It is sometimes called “The Five Books of Moses” in English.
- D. Genesis-Deuteronomy is a continuous account by (or edited by) Moses concerning creation through Moses’ lifetime.

## III. GENRE - The book of Genesis is primarily theological, historical narrative but it also includes other types of literary genre:

- A. Historical drama - examples: 1: 1-3
- B. Poetry - examples: 2:23; 4:2; 8:22
- C. Prophecy - examples: 3:15; 49:1ff (also poetic)

## IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The Bible itself does not name the author (as is true of many OT books). Genesis has no “I” sections like Ezra, Nehemiah, or “we” sections like Acts. Ultimately the author is God!
- B. Jewish tradition:
  - 1. Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it:
    - a. Ben Sirah’s *Ecclesiasticus*, 24:23, written about 185 B.C.
    - b. The *Baba Bathra* 14b, a part of the Talmud
    - c. Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, living about 20 B.C. to A.D. 42
    - d. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, living about A.D. 37-70

2. This was a revelation to Moses
  - a. Moses is said to have written for the people:
    - (1) Exodus 17:14
    - (2) Exodus 24:4, 7
    - (3) Exodus 34:27, 28
    - (4) Numbers 33:2
    - (5) Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24-26
  - b. God is said to have spoken through Moses to the people:
    - (1) Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
    - (2) Deuteronomy 6:1
    - (3) Deuteronomy 10:1
  - c. Moses is said to have spoken the words of the Torah to the people:
    - (1) Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
    - (2) Deuteronomy 5:1
    - (3) Deuteronomy 27:1
    - (4) Deuteronomy 29:2
    - (5) Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
    - (6) Deuteronomy 32:44
    - (7) Deuteronomy 33:1
3. OT authors attribute it to Moses:
  - a. Joshua 8:31
  - b. II Kings 14:6
  - c. Ezra 6:18
  - d. Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1-2
  - e. II Chronicles 25:4; 34:12; 35:12
  - f. Daniel 9:11
  - g. Malachi 4:4

### C. Christian tradition

1. Jesus attributes quotes from the Torah to Moses:
  - a. Matthew 8:4; 19:8
  - b. Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26
  - c. Luke 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; 24:27, 44
  - d. John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23
2. Other N.T. authors attribute quotes from the Torah to Moses:
  - a. Luke 2:22
  - b. Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:1, 15-21; 26:22; 28:23
  - c. Romans 10:5, 19
  - d. I Corinthians 9:9
  - e. II Corinthians 3:15
  - f. Hebrews 10:28
  - g. Revelation 15:3
3. Most early Church Fathers accepted Mosaic authorship. However, Ireneaus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all had questions about Moses' relationship to the current canonical form of Genesis (cf. D. 2. on page 5).

#### D. Modern Scholarship

1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly, to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers, which was a characteristic of Egyptian scribes):
  - a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
  - b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
  - c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
  - d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
  - e. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques, however, differed from country to country:
    - (1) In Mesopotamia, they were careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote: “the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign” from about 1400 B.C.
    - (2) In Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran (i.e. Dead Sea Scrolls) followed this approach.
2. Scholars of the 19th century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graff-Wellhausen). This theory was based on:
  - a. the different names for God
  - b. apparent doublets in the text
  - c. the literary form of the accounts
  - d. the theology of the accounts
3. Supposed sources and dates:
  - a. J source (use of YHWH from southern Israel) - 950 B.C.
  - b. E source (use of *Elohim* from northern Israel) - 850 B.C.
  - c. JE combined - 750 B.C.
  - d. D source (“The Book of the Law,” II Kgs. 22:8, discovered during Josiah’s reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah’s time to support his reform.) - 621 B.C.
  - e. P source (priestly rewrite of OT, especially ritual and procedure) - 400 B.C.
  - f. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was
    - (1) The High Priest (or another of his family) at the time of the writing
    - (2) Jeremiah the Prophet
    - (3) Ezra the Scribe - IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
  - g. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale’s Commentaries*, “Leviticus” pp. 15-25).
  - h. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
    - (1) Doublets, like Gen. 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given, followed by a specific account (i.e. the Ten Commandments and the Holiness Code). This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
    - (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
      - (a) YHWH - the Covenant name for deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 103).

- (b) *Elohim* - deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 104).
  - (c) Other ancient Near Eastern texts use several names to describe their high god (cf. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason L. Archer, p. 68).
  - (3) It is common in non-biblical near eastern literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (cf. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. K. Harrison, pp. 522-526).
- E. The evidence from ancient near eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style (patriarchal) oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis (cf. P. J. Wiseman's *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*). Beginning in Gen. 37, a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites' days in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moses' formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral (patriarchal) traditions. His writings have been updated by later scribes. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT have been illustrated by modern archaeology.
- F. There is an emerging theory that there were scribes (in different parts of Israel) working on different parts of the Pentateuch at the same time under the direction of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 10:25). This theory was first proposed by E. Robertson's *The Old Testament Problem*.

## V. DATE

- A. Genesis covers the period from the creation of the cosmos to Abraham's family. It is possible to date Abraham's life from secular literature of the period. The approximate date would be 2000 B.C., the second millennium B.C. The basis for this is
1. father acted as priest to family (like Job)
  2. life was nomadic following herds and flocks
  3. migration of Semitic peoples during this period
- B. The early events of Genesis 1-11 are true historical events (possibly historical drama) but undatable by current available knowledge.
1. I personally have come to accept the earth's age as several billion years (i.e. 14.6 billion for the universe and 4.6 billion for the earth, cf. Hugh Ross' *The Genesis Question and Creation and Time*).
  2. However, I also believe in the special creation of Adam and Eve at a much later period. It seems to me that Genesis is presented in some type of "historical" framework, but the historical aspect is fuzzy at the beginning (i.e. Gen. 1-3). Adam and Eve's children begin the civilizations of Mesopotamia (i.e. chapter 4). If this framework is to be maintained then Adam is a modern (*Homo sapien*) and not a more primitive *Homo erectus*. If this is true then there must be an evolutionary development in hominids (cf. *Tyndale O T Commentaries*, "Genesis" by Kidner and *Who Was Adam?* By Fazale Rana and Hugh

Ross) as well as a special creation by God at a much later point in time. I am not completely comfortable with this, but it is the best I can do with my current understanding of the Bible and science.

- C. It must be remembered when studying Genesis that the historical events are recorded by Moses who led the people of God out of Egypt in either (1) 1445 B.C., based on I Kings 6:1; or (2) 1290 B.C., based on evidence from modern archaeology. Therefore, either by oral tradition, unknown written sources, or direct divine revelation, Moses records “how it all began” focusing on “who” and “why,” not “how” and “when”!
- D. I wrote this commentary (Genesis 1-11) in 2001. I struggled greatly with the relationship between Gen. One and my own modern western culture. A new book by John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP (2009) has helped me see just how influenced I was by my own existential setting. I believe that proper hermeneutics begin with the original author’s intent but it is obvious to me that my hermeneutical theory was better than my practice. This book by Walton is a paradigm shift in thinking about Genesis 1 as relating to the origins of function, not the material origins of the universe. It is truly an eye-opener. It has convinced me of a new way to view this crucial text that bypasses the debate over science vs. faith, old earth vs. young earth, evolution vs. creation of species. I highly recommend the book to you!

## VI. SOURCES FOR CORROBORATING THE HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. Other Biblical books
  - 1. Creation - Psalms 8; 19; 33; 50; 104; 148 and the NT (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
  - 2. Abraham’s time - Job
- B. Archaeological sources
  - 1. Earliest known literary parallel of the cultural setting of Genesis 1-11 is the Ebla cuneiform tablets from northern Syria dating about 2500 B.C., written in Akkadian.
  - 2. Creation
    - a. The closest Mesopotamian account dealing with creation, *Enuma Elish*, dating from (1) NIV Study Bible, about 1900-1700 B.C. or (2) John H. Walton’s *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, p. 21, about 1000 B.C. It was found in Ashurbanipal’s library at Nineveh and other copies were found at several other places. There are seven cuneiform tablets written in Akkadian that describe creation by Marduk.
      - (1) The gods, *Apsu* (fresh water—male) and *Tiamat* (salt water—female) had unruly, noisy children. These two gods tried to silence the younger gods.
      - (2) One of *Ea* and *Damkina*’s children, *Marduk* (the chief god of the emerging city of Babylon), defeats *Tiamat*. He formed the earth and sky from her body.
      - (3) *Ea* formed humanity from another defeated god, *Kingu*, who was the male consort of *Tiamat* after the death of *Apsu*. Humanity came from *Kingu*’s blood.
      - (4) *Marduk* was made chief of the Babylonian pantheon.
    - b. “The creation seal” is a cuneiform tablet which is a picture of a naked man and woman beside a fruit tree with a snake wrapped around the tree’s trunk and positioned over the woman’s shoulder as if talking to her.
      - The conservative Professor of Archaeology at Wheaton College, Alfred J.

Hoerth, says that the seal is now interpreted as referring to prostitution. This is a good example of how artifacts from the past are interpreted differently by individuals and through time. This particular piece of evidence must be re-evaluated.

3. Creation and Flood - *The Atrahasis Epic* records the rebellion of the lesser gods because of overwork and the creation of seven human couples (from clay, blood, and saliva) to perform the duties of these lesser gods. Humans were destroyed because of: (1) over population and (2) noise. Human beings were reduced in number by a plague, two famines and finally a flood, planned by *Enlil*. *Atrahasis* builds a boat and brings animals on board in order to save them from the waters. These major events are seen in the same

order in Genesis 1-8. This cuneiform composition dates from about the same time as *Enuma Elish* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*, about 1900-1700 B.C. All are in Akkadian.

4. Noah's flood
  - a. A Sumerian tablet from Nippur, called *Eridu Genesis*, dating from about 1600 B.C., tells about *Ziusudra* and a coming flood.
    - (1) *Enka*, the water god, warns *Ziusudra* of a coming flood.
    - (2) *Ziusudra*, a king-priest, believes this revelation and builds a huge square boat and stocks it with all kinds of seeds.
    - (3) The flood lasted seven days.
    - (4) *Ziusudra* opened a window on the boat and released several birds to see if dry land had appeared.
    - (5) He also offered a sacrifice of an ox and sheep when he left the boat.
  - b. A composite Babylonian flood account from four Sumerian tablets, known as the *Gilgamesh Epic* originally dating from about 2500-2400 B.C., although the written composite form in cuneiform Akkadian, is much later (ca. 1900-1700 B.C.). It tells about a flood survivor, *Utnapishtim*, who tells *Gilgamesh*, the king of *Uruk*, how he survived the great flood and was granted eternal life.
    - (1) *Ea*, the water god, warns of a coming flood and tells *Utnapishtim* (Babylonian form of *Ziusudra*) to build a boat.
    - (2) *Utnapishtim* and his family, along with selected healing plants, survived the flood.
    - (3) The flood lasted seven days.
    - (4) The boat came to rest in northern Persia, on Mt. Nisir.
    - (5) He sent out 3 different birds to see if dry land had yet appeared.
5. The Mesopotamian literature which describes an ancient flood are all drawing from the same source. The names often vary, but the plot is the same. An example is that *Zivusudra*, *Atrahasis* and *Utnapishtim* all represent the same human king.
6. The historical parallels to the early events of Genesis can be explained in light of mankind's pre-dispersion (Genesis 1-11) knowledge and experience of God. These true historical core memories have been elaborated and mythologicalized into the current flood accounts common throughout the world. The same can also be said not only of creation (Gen.1,2) and the Flood (Gen. 6-9) but also of human and angelic unions (Genesis 6).
7. Patriarch's Day (Middle Bronze)
  - a. Mari tablets - cuneiform legal (Ammonite culture) and personal texts in Akkadian from about 1700 B.C.
  - b. Nuzi tablets - cuneiform archives of certain families (Horite or Hurrian culture) written in Akkadian from about 100 miles SE of Nineveh about 1500-1300 B.C. They record family and business procedures. For further specific examples, see John

- H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, pp. 52-58
- c. Alalak tablets - cuneiform texts from Northern Syria from about 2000 B.C.
  - d. Some of the names found in Genesis are recorded as place names in the Mari Tablets: Serug, Peleg, Terah, and Nahor. Other biblical names were also common: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Laban, and Joseph. This shows that biblical names fit this time and place.
8. "Comparative historiographic studies have shown that, along with the Hittites, the ancient Hebrews were the most accurate, objective and responsible recorders of near eastern history." R. K Harrison, *Biblical Criticism*, p 5.
  9. Archaeology has proven to be so helpful in establishing the historicity of the Bible. However, a word of caution is necessary. Archaeology is not an absolutely trustworthy guide because of
    - a. poor techniques in early excavations
    - b. various, very subjective interpretations of the artifacts that have been discovered
    - c. no agreed-upon chronology of the ancient Near East (although one is being developed from tree rings and pottery).
- C. Egyptian creation accounts can be found in John H. Walton's, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) pp. 23-24, 32-34.
1. In Egyptian literature, creation began with an unstructured, chaotic, primeval water. Creation was seen as a developing structure (hill) out of watery chaos.
  2. In Egyptian literature from Memphis, creation occurred by the spoken word of Ptah.
  3. Each of the major cities of Egypt had separate traditions emphasizing their patron deities.
- D. A new book by John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP, 2009, shows the relationship between the ANE beliefs about the divine and the cosmos in a new light. He asserts (and I agree) that it is not so much who copied who but the general cultural consensus of the whole ANE about the unity of the "natural" and "supernatural." All cultures shared this general perspective. Israel's was uniquely monotheistic but also shared the cultural perspectives.

## VII. LITERARY UNITS (CONTEXT)

- A. Outline based on Moses' use of the phrase "the generations of" (*toledoth*):
1. origins of heaven and earth, 1:1-2:3
  2. origins of humanity, 2:4-4:26
  3. generations of Adam, 5:1-6:8
  4. generations of Noah, 6:9-9:17
  5. generations of the sons of Noah, 10:1-11:9
  6. generations of Shem, 11:10-26
  7. generations of Terah (Abraham), 11:27-25:11
  8. generations of Ishmael, 25:12-18
  9. generations of Isaac, 25:19-35:29
  10. generations of Esau, 36:1-8
  11. generations of the sons of Esau, 36:9-43
  12. generations of Jacob, 37:1-50:26 (#1-11 have a Mesopotamian literary background but #12 has an Egyptian literary flavor.)

- B. Theological outline:
1. creation for humanity and of humanity, 1-2
  2. mankind and creation fall, 3
  3. results of the Fall, 4-11
    - a. evil affects Cain and his family
    - b. evil affects Seth and his family
    - c. evil affects everyone
    - d. great flood
    - e. evil still present in Noah's family
    - f. mankind still in rebellion; the tower of Babel
    - g. God's dispersion
  4. One man for all humanity (3:15), 12-50 (Rom. 5:12-21)
    - a. Abraham (12:1-3), 11:27-23:20
    - b. Isaac, 24:1-26:35
    - c. Jacob, 27:1-36:4
      - (1) Judah (the line of the Messiah)
      - (2) Joseph (double land inheritance), 37:1-50:26

## VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. How did it all begin?
1. It began with God (Genesis 1-2). The Bible's world-view is not polytheism but monotheism. It does not focus on the "how" of creation but on the "who." It is short, but so powerful in its presentation. The Bible's theology was totally unique in its day though some of the words, patterns of activities, and topics are found in other Mesopotamian literature.
  2. God wanted fellowship. The creation is only a stage for God to fellowship with man. This is a "touched planet" (cf. C. S. Lewis).
  3. There is no possibility of understanding the rest of the Bible without Genesis 1,2-4 and 11-12.
  4. Humans must respond by faith to what they understand of God's will (Gen. 15:6 and Rom. 4).
- B. Why is the world so evil and unfair? It was "very good" (1:31), but Adam and Eve sinned (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:17-21). The terrible results are obvious:
1. Cain kills Abel (chap. 4)
  2. revenge of Lamech (4:23)
  3. unlawful unions (6:1-4)
  4. wickedness of man (6:5,11-12; 8:21)
  5. the drunkenness of Noah (9)
  6. the Tower of Babel (11)
  7. the polytheism of Ur (11)
- C. How is God going to fix it?
1. Messiah will come for all humans (3:15)
  2. God calls one to call all (Gen. 12:1-3 and Exod. 19:5-6, cf. Rom. 5:12-21)
  3. God is willing to work with fallen mankind (Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, the Jews and Gentiles) and by His grace provides

- a. promises
- b. covenants (unconditional and conditional)
- c. sacrifice
- d. worship

4

#### READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vi)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

#### READING CYCLE TWO (see pp. vi-vii.)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# GENESIS 1:1-2:3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATION

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Creation	The History of Creation	The Story of Creation	The Story of Creation	The Creation of the World
(1:1-2:3)	(1:2-2:7)	(1:1-2:4a)	(1:1-2:4a)	
1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-2 1:3-5
1:6-8	1:6-8	1:6-8	1:6-8	1:6-8
1:9-13	1:9-13	1:9-13	1:9-13	1:9-10 1:11-13
1:14-19	1:14-19	1:14-19	1:14-19	1:14-19
1:20-23	1:20-23	1:20-23	1:20-23	1:20-23
1:24-25	1:24-25	1:24-25	1:24-25	1:24-25
1:26-31	1:26-28 (27)	1:26-31	1:26-2:4a	1:26-27 1:28-31
The Creation of Man and Woman	1:29-31			
2:1-3	2:1-3	2:1-3		2:1-3
	2:4-7	2:4a		2:4a

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

#### 1. First paragraph

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\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the keys in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, Three and Four.**

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Studying Genesis 1-11 is difficult because:
1. we are all affected by our own cultures and denominational training
  2. today several pressures consciously and subconsciously affect our view of “the beginnings”
    - a. modern archaeology (Mesopotamian parallels)
    - b. modern science (current theories)
    - c. the history of interpretation
      - (1) Judaism
      - (2) early church
  3. this opening literary unit of the Bible is presented as history, but several things surprise the interpreter
    - a. Mesopotamian parallels
    - b. eastern literary techniques (two apparent accounts of creation)
    - c. unusual events
      - (1) woman created from a “rib”
      - (2) a talking snake
      - (3) a boat with two of all the animals on board for a year
      - (4) mixing of angels and humans
      - (5) long life of people
    - d. several word plays on the names of the main characters (cf. K. 3)
  4. Christians need to be reminded of how the NT reinterprets Gen. 1 and 2 in light of Christ. He is the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), of both the visible and the invisible realm (cf. Col. 1:16). This new revelation shows the need to be cautious of literalism in Gen. 1-3. The Trinity is involved in creation.
    1. God the Father in Genesis 1:1
    2. God the Spirit in Genesis 1:2
    3. God the Son in the NT by progressive revelation
 This may explain the PLURALS in Genesis 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6
- B. Genesis 1-11 is not a scientific document, but in some ways modern science parallels its presentation (order of creation and geological levels). It is not anti-scientific but pre-scientific. It presents truth:
1. from an earth perspective (a human observer on this planet)
  2. from a phenomenological perspective (i.e. the five senses; the way things appear to the human observer)
- It has functioned as a revealer of truth for many cultures over many years. It presents truth to a modern scientific culture but without specific explanation of events.

- C. It is amazingly succinct, beautifully described and artistically structured.
1. things divide
  2. things develop
  3. From chaos to a physical planet teeming with life
- D. The keys to its understanding are found in
1. its genre
  2. its relation to its own day (see John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*)
  3. its structure
  4. its monotheism
  5. its theological purpose
- Interpretation must balance:
1. an exegesis of the verses
  2. a systematic understanding of all Scripture
  3. genre specificity
- It reveals the origin of physical things (“and it was good,” cf. 1:31) and the corruption of these things (cf. Chapter 3). In many ways the Christ event is a new creation and Jesus is the new Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The new age may ultimately be a restoration of the garden of Eden and its intimate fellowship with God and the animals (compare Gen. 1-2 with Rev. 21-22).
- E. The great truth of this chapter is not how or when, but the who and why!
- F. Genesis reflects true knowledge but not exhaustive knowledge. It is given to us in ancient (Mesopotamian) thought forms, but it is infallible theological truth. It is related to its day, but it is totally unique. It speaks of the inexpressible, yet it speaks truly. Basically it is a world-view (who and why), not a world-picture (how and when).
- G. Without Genesis 1-3 the Bible is incomprehensible. Notice how quickly the story moves from (1) sin to redemption and (2) humanity to Israel. Creation forms an integral but passing piece of the account of God’s choice of Israel for the purpose of world-wide redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; Exod. 19:5-6 and John 3:16; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).
- H. Your answer to the question, “What is the purpose of Inspiration and Revelation?” will affect the way you see Genesis 1. If you see the purpose as the impartation of facts about creation, you will view it one way (i.e. propositional truths). If you see it as conveying general truths about God, humanity, and sin, then possibly you will see it theologically (i.e. paradigmatic). If, however, you view the basic purpose as the establishment of a relationship between God and mankind, possibly another (i.e. existentially).
- I. This section of Genesis is surely theological. As the plagues of the Exodus showed YHWH’s power over the nature gods of Egypt, Genesis 1,2 may show YHWH’s power over the astral gods of Mesopotamia. The main subject is God. God alone did it for His own purposes.
- J. I marvel at my own ignorance! I am appalled at my own historical, cultural, and denominational conditioning! What a mighty God we serve! What an awesome God has reached out to us (even in our rebellion)! The Bible is a balance of love and power; grace and justice! The more we know the more we know we don’t know!

- K. Here are the basic approaches of some helpful books:
1. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of modern science:
    - a. Bernard Ramm's *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (good scientifically and theologically)
    - b. Hugh Ross' *Creation and Time* and *The Genesis Question* (good scientifically but weak theologically)
    - c. Harry Peo and Jimmy Davis' *Science and Faith: An Evangelical Dialog* (very helpful)
    - d. Darrel R. Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds Between Faith and Biology* (evangelical approach to theistic evolution)
    - e. Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God*
    - f. Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam?*
  2. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of ancient Near Eastern parallels
    - a. R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* and *Old Testament Times*
    - b. John H. Walton's *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*
    - c. K. A. Kitchen's *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*
    - d. Edwin M. Yamauchi's *The Stones and the Scriptures*
  3. Genesis 1-2 interpreted along the lines of theology from LaSor, Hubbard and Bush's *Old Testament Survey*
    - a. "Literary device also is found in the names used. The correspondence of the name with the person's function or role is striking in several instances. Adam means "mankind" and Eve is "(she who gives) life." Surely, when an author of a story names the principal characters Mankind and Life, something is conveyed about the degree of literalness intended! Similarly Cain means "forger (of metals)"; Enoch is connected with "dedication, consecration" (4:17; 5:18); Jubal with horn and trumpet (4:21); while Cain, condemned to be a *nāḏ*, a "wanderer," goes to live in the land of *Nod*, a name transparently derived from the same Hebrew root, thus the land of wandering! This suggests that the author is writing as an artist, a storyteller, who uses literary device and artifice. One must endeavor to distinguish what he intends to teach from the literary means employed" p. 72.
    - b. the theological implication of Gen. 1-11:  
*"Implication for Gen. 1-11.* Recognizing the literary technique and form and noting the literary background of chs. 1-11 does not constitute a challenge to the reality, the "eventness," of the facts portrayed. One need not regard this account as myth; however, it is not "history" in the modern sense of eyewitness, objective reporting. Rather, it conveys theological truths about events, portrayed in a largely symbolic, pictorial literary genre. This is not to say that Gen. 1-11 conveys historical falsehood. That conclusion would follow only if it purported to contain objective descriptions. The clear evidence already reviewed shows that such was not the intent. On the other hand, the view that the truths taught in these chapters have no objective basis is mistaken. They affirm fundamental truths: creation of all things by God; special divine intervention in the production of the first man and woman; unity of the human race; pristine goodness of the created world, including humanity; entrance of sin through the disobedience of the first pair; depravity and rampant sin after the Fall. All these truths are facts, and their certainty implies the reality of the facts. Put another way, the biblical author uses such literary traditions to describe unique primeval events that have no time-conditioned, human-conditioned,

experience-based historical analogy and hence can be described only by symbol. The same problem arises at the end time: the biblical author there, in the book of Revelation, adopts the esoteric imagery and involved literary artifice of apocalyptic” p. 74.

- c. If it is true that one language was spoken in Gen. 1-10 (cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Babel of Tongues: A Sumerian Version*, “Journal of the American Oriental Society, 88:108-11), then it needs to be clearly stated that it was not Hebrew. Therefore, all of the Hebrew word plays are from Moses’ day or patriarchal oral traditions. This verifies the literary nature of Gen. 1-11.
4. I would like to make a personal comment. I love and appreciate those who love and appreciate the Bible. I am so grateful for people who take its message as an inspired, authoritative message from the One true God. All of us who study the Scriptures are attempting to worship and glorify God with our minds (cf. Matt. 22:37). The fact that we as individual believers approach the Bible differently is not an aspect of unbelief or rebellion but an act of sincere devotion and an attempt to understand so as to incorporate God’s truth into our lives. The more I study Genesis 1-11 and for that matter, much of the book of Revelation, I perceive it is true but literary, not literal. The key in interpreting the Bible is not my applying a personal philosophical or hermeneutical grid over the text but allowing the intent of the inspired original authors to fully express themselves. To take a literary passage and demand it to be literal when the text itself gives clues to its symbolic and figurative nature imposes my biases on a divine message. Genre (type of literature) is the key in a theological understanding of “how it all began” and “how it will all end.” I appreciate the sincerity and commitment of those who, for whatever reason, usually personality type or professional training, interpret the Bible in modern, literal, western categories, when in fact it is an ancient eastern book. I say all this to say that I am grateful to God for those who approach Genesis 1-11 with presuppositions that I personally do not share, for I know they will help, encourage and reach people of like personalities and perspectives to love, trust and apply God’s Book to their lives! However, I do not agree that Genesis 1-11 or the book of Revelation should be approached literally, whether it is *Creation Research Society* (i.e. young earth) or Hugh Ross’s *Reasons to Believe* (i.e. old earth). For me this section of the Bible emphasizes the “Who” and “why” not the “how” and “when” of creation. I accept the modern science’s sincerity in studying the physical aspects of creation. I reject “naturalism” (i.e. all life is a chance development of natural processes), but surely see process as a valid and demonstrable aspect of our world and universe. I think God directed and used process. But natural processes do not explain the diversity and complexity of life, current and past. To truly understand current reality I need both the theoretical models of modern science and the theological models of Genesis 1-11. Genesis 1-11 is a theological necessity for understanding the rest of the Bible but it is an ancient, literary, succinct, artistic, eastern presentation, not a literal, modern, western presentation.

Parts of the Bible are surely historical narrative. There is a place for the literal interpretation of Scripture: there was a call of Abraham, an Exodus, a virgin birth, a Calvary, a resurrection; there will be a second coming and an eternal kingdom. The question is one of genre, not reality, of authorial intent, not personal preferences in interpretation. Let all men be liars--and God be true (cf. Rom. 3:4)!!!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE AGE AND FORMATION OF THE EARTH**

- I. This area of study is biased because of the assumptions that must be made to even pursue thinking rationally about the subject. The assumptions must be the focus of an evaluation of the differing opinions expressed by cosmologists, geologists and the related sciences compared to theological understanding and interpretations.
- II. For science the apparent assumptions are:
  - A. that the rates of change (i.e. physical, chemical and biological) recorded and measured on the earth today are constant in the past (i.e. uniformitarianism, “the present is the key to the past”)
  - B. radiometric dating (called absolute dating), which is the chronological key to dating the earth and cosmic events, is bedeviled by several assumptions:
    1. the original composition of the rocks (i.e. relation of parent and daughter elements of unstable atomic elements)
    2. the exact half-life of these elements
    3. temperature also affects parent and daughter percentages in a sample (i.e. time of formation and/or volcanic magma chambers)
    4. The original source and timing of the creation of radioactive elements are not certain. Current theories state that the heavier elements are created by thermonuclear reactions in second and third generation stars and spread by supernovas.
  - C. that the six assumed sequence principles of geology (called relative dating) affect paleontology:
    1. the law of superposition—in an undisturbed sequence of sedimentary rocks, the bed layer above is younger and the bell layer below is older
    2. the principle of original horizontality—layers of rudimentary rock were deposited in a nearly horizontal plain
    3. the principle of cross-cutting relationships—when rocks are cut or offset by a fault, they must be older than the fault
    4. the principle of inclusions—rock masses adjacent to one another, one will usually have pieces of the lower one embedded in the above layer which confirms the assumption of #1
    5. the principle of correlations—rocks of similar makeup but from different areas must be matched up, when this cannot be done then similar fossils are used to show similar dates of formation
    6. the principle of fossil succession—fossil organisms succeed one another in a definite and determinable sequence:
      - a. widespread fossils
      - b. limited to a short span of geologic time
- III. Some comments by scientists
  - A. Most scientists realize that true science is a research method which seeks to correlate all known facts and anomalies into a testable theory. Some things by their very nature are not testable.
  - B. Some comments from scientists about scientific assumptions in this area

1. “The doctrine (i.e. uniformitarianism) should not be taken too literally. To say that geological processes in the past were the same as those occurring today is not to suggest that they always had the same relative importance and operated at precisely the same rate” (Tarbuck and Lutgens, *Earth Science*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. p. 262).
2. “It is important to realize that an accurate radiometric date can be obtained only if the mineral remains in a closed system during the period of its formation; that is, a correct date is not possible unless there was neither addition nor loss of parent or daughter isotopes” (*Earth Science*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. p. 276).
3. “We hasten to stress that this uniformity is an assumption that we make about nature, so is a doctrine rather than a logically proved law” (Dott and Balten, *Evolution of the Earth*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. p. 44).
4. “The decay constants that characterize radioactive decay rates, and govern the relationship between isotopic data and their corresponding radio isotopic ages are inexactly known. In consequence, the accuracy of some of the most precise dating methods, such as <sup>40</sup>Ar/<sup>39</sup>Ar technique, may be an order of magnitude or more worse than their precision (“Progress and challenges in geochronology” by Renne, Ludwig and Karner in *Science Progress* (2000), 83 (1), 107).
5. “People without training in science may not understand that any radiometric dating method can only be trusted for samples with ages close to the half-life of the element in question (Hugh Ross, *Reasons to Believe* newsletter).

IV. Assumptions are not unique to the scientific community but obviously also exist in the religious community

- A. Humans are drawn to a unifying principle or model to correlate their sense experience and provide emotional stability. In science this unifying principle has become “evolution”
  1. Theodosius Dobzhansky, “Changing man,” *Science*, 155, 409-415, “Evolution is a process which has produced life from non-life, which has brought forth man from animals, and which may conceivably continue doing remarkable things in the future.”
  2. Brian J. Alters and Sandra M. Alters, *Defining Evolution*, p. 104, “evolution is the basic context of all biological sciences...evolution is the explanatory framework, the unifying theory. It is indispensable to the study of biology, just as the atomic theory is indispensable to the study of chemistry.”
- B. For many conservative Christians the unifying theory (i.e. interpretation) has become a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3. This is true for young earth literalists (*Creation Research Society* dates the earth at about 10,000 years) and old earth literalists (*Reasons to Believe* dates the earth in light of modern geology at 4.6 billion years). One’s interpretation of Scripture becomes a lens through which all else is viewed and evaluated. One cannot fault subjective assumption, for all human knowledge is at some level pre-suppositional. However, the evaluation of one’s presuppositions is crucial for a proper evaluation of their “truth” statements.
- C. Fundamental Christianity is trying to clothe itself in “scientific” argument when the central issue is a hermeneutical methodology. This is not to imply that “modern evolutionary science” is not pre-suppositional or that its conclusions are not shaped by an a priori world-view. We must be careful and analytical of both. There seems to be evidence

on both sides. I must ask myself to which view am I naturally, emotionally or educationally drawn (i.e. self-fulfilling assumption)?

V. Personal conclusion

- A. Since I am a theologian, not a scientist, it was crucial for me to read and assimilate as much as I could from modern uniformitarian science. I am not personally agitated by “evolution” but by “naturalism” (one definition made popular by Carl Sagan is, “the universe is all that was, all that is and all that will be”).

I realize this is a bias but my unifying theory is supernaturalism and special creationism but I do not deny or feel threatened by evolution. My basic perspective is that there is a personal God Who initiated and directs the process for a purpose! For me “intelligent design” becomes a reasonable theory (cf. M. J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* and William A. Demski, ed. *Mere*

*Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*). It is the “randomness” of evolution and the “agentlessness” of naturalism that causes me personal pain and confusion. Process is an obvious part of life. I must be sure that I do not embrace what is comfortable without evaluation. I have tried to identify my assumptions:

1. Genesis 1-3 (and for that matter, much of the book of Revelation), is not intended by its original inspired author to be taken literally. “How it all began” and “How it will all end” is veiled (and must be for fallen mankind) in literary genre.
  2. Evolution is obvious at certain levels (“horizontal evolution,” “micro-evolution,” evolution within species) but not the only unifying factor for life on this planet nor the development of the universe. There is mystery here! I feel personally comfortable with the Bible (i.e. special revelation) telling me the “Who” and the “why” and nature (i.e. natural revelation), that is, modern scientific research, telling me the “how” and the “when” based on developing models and theories.
  3. Even the ultimate reality of “theistic evolution” would not cause me to reject any of my faith assumptions. See Darrel R. Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the World's Between Faith and Biology* and Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God*. I do have faith assumptions (as do you)! My world-view is biblical Christianity. My world-picture is a growing and changing understanding.
- B. The “real” age of the earth is not an issue in my theology except:
1. The apparent “Big Bang” concept of universal organization of matter which asserts a beginning to the universe seems to limit the possibilities of an unlimited time for evolutionary development (i.e. naturalism).
  2. The starts and stops in the fossil records may imply a “punctuated equilibrium” which asserts that evolutionary change occurs in spurts (possibly God's on-going creative acts) and not necessarily only gradual change over time.
  3. An old earth and a recent special creation of humanity is a pre-suppositional model I choose to embrace until I understand more from my study of the Bible, archaeology and modern science. The order of these shows my bias (but we all have them)!
  4. Science is not an enemy to me, nor a savior! It is so exciting to live in this age of increasing knowledge! It is so comforting to be a hermeneutically informed believer! Integration of faith and reason, or the Bible and Science, with credibility, is a wonderful possibility!

## VI. Present assumptions as to the age of the earth

- A. The radiometric dating of moon rocks and meteors has been consistent at 4.6 billion years. They contain the same elements as the planets of this solar system so the inference is that our sun and its associated planets, comets and asteroids were formed at this time. The oldest earth rocks have been radiometric dated at 3.8 billion years.
- B. A date for the supernatural creation of the first human pair (*Homo sapiens*) is a more difficult issue but it is in the tens of thousands degree range, possibly 40,000. See Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, *Who was Adam?*.

Time is only an issue to those of us created in a chronological sequential time frame. God is not affected by the passing of time. I believe the earth and its environment was created over time for the specific purpose of providing a “place” for God to fellowship with His highest creation, who was created by Him in His image. The only source for these beliefs is an inspired Bible. I cling to it and allow modern science to increase my understanding of the physical aspects of God’s creative activity!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.**

**1:1 “In the beginning”** *Bereshith* (BDB 912) is the Hebrew title of the book. We get *Genesis* from the Septuagint translation. This is the beginning of history but not of God’s activity (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:5,25; Eph. 1:4; Titus 1:2; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). R. K. Harrison says it should be translated “by way of beginning” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 542 footnote 3). John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* says it introduces a period of time (p. 45).

▣ **“God”** *Elohim* (BDB 43) is a PLURAL form of the general name for God in the ancient Near East, *El* (BDB 42). When referring to the God of Israel the verb is usually (6 exceptions) SINGULAR. The rabbis say that it speaks of God as creator, provider and sustainer of all life on planet earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 104). Notice how often this word is used in chapter 1.

I believe that this verse is an independent clause: Ibn Ezra says that it is a dependent clause with the emphasis on v. 2 while Rashi says that v. 2 is a parenthesis and the emphasis is on v. 3. Modern dispensational commentators say that v. 1 is a dependent clause in order to support their view of a previous fall (the gap theory). Notice that there is no explanation of the origin of God. It does emphatically assert that God created matter and did not fashion existing matter (Greek cosmology). In *Enuma Elish*, (Babylonian creation account), like Greek thought, Spirit (which is good) and matter (which is evil) are co-eternal. The Bible does not discuss or reveal the origin of God. He has always existed (cf. Ps. 90:2). There is surely mystery here. Mankind simply cannot grasp the fullness of God!

This discussion of clauses is theologically significant. The Jewish Publication Society of America

has translated Gen. 1:1 a temporal clause, “When God began to create the heaven and the earth—the earth being unformed and void. . .” This translation might conclude that God and matter are co-eternal like Greek cosmology (cf. “Creation and Cosmology” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1059). The Sumerian account of creation, *Enuma Elish*, begins with “when in the beginning. . .” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

▣ **“created”** *Bara* (cf. 1:1,21,27; 2:3,4) is the Hebrew VERB (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* PERFECT) used exclusively for God’s creative activity. Its basic meaning is to fashion by cutting. God willed into being everything but Himself. Psalm 33:6,9; Heb. 11:3 and II Pet. 3:5 present creation (cosmology) by God’s spoken word (*fiat*) from nothing (*ex nihilo*), although water is never said to be created (cf. Gen. 1:2). Greek (gnostic) and Mesopotamian philosophies emphasize an eternal dualism between “spirit” and “matter.” Whatever *bara* implies it accentuates God’s activity and purpose!

The Bible asserts that creation has a beginning point. Twenty-first century science would characterize this as the “big bang.” Naturalism can now not assert an unlimited regression back in time. However, it is probable that Genesis 1 refers to the beginning of a functioning earth, not the material beginning of matter (John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*).

▣ **“the heavens”** The word “heavens” (BDB 1029) may be used in several senses: (1) it refers to the atmosphere of the earth as in vv. 8 and 20; (2) it may refer to the entire cosmos (i.e. all material existence); or (3) it may refer to the creation of all things visible (material) and invisible (angels, heaven as God’s throne). If option three is true then a parallel would be Col. 1:16. If not, then Genesis 1 focuses only on the creation of this planet. The Bible emphasizes a geocentric perspective (i.e. creation seen as a spectator on this planet would have observed it). Some would assert that Gen. 1 is addressing the creation of the universe (i.e. sun, moon, stars, and galaxies, while Gen. 2-3 focuses on this planet and the creation of mankind. This is surely possible because chapters 2-4 form a literary unit. In both (i.e. Gen. 1 and 2-4) creation is geocentric (i.e. earth focused).

▣ **“the earth”** The term (BDB 75) can refer to a specific land, country or the whole planet. Genesis 1 is admittedly geocentric (cf. v. 15). This fits the theological purpose of the chapter, not science. Remember that the Bible is written in the language of description for theological purposes. It is not anti-scientific, but pre-scientific.

**1:2 “The earth was”** This VERB (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT) can only very rarely be translated “became.” Grammatically and contextually “was” is preferable. Don’t let your (i.e. dispensational premillennial) pre-suppositional theology of two falls (the gap theory) affect the exegesis of the text.

▣	
NASB	<b>“formless and void”</b>
NKJV	<b>“without form, and void”</b>
NRSV, NJB	<b>“a formless void”</b>
TEV	<b>“formless and desolate”</b>
NIV	<b>“formless and empty”</b>
REV	<b>“a vast waste”</b>
SEPT	<b>“invisible and unfurnished”</b>
JPSOA	<b>“unformed and void”</b>

These two terms are found in BDB 1062, KB 1688-1690 and BDB 96, KB 111. Does this imply water only? The earth is changing form (i.e. tectonic plates) continually (i.e. one original continent

called Pangea became several continents). The question again is the age of the earth. These words appear together in Jer. 4:23. They are used in the Sumerian and Babylonian accounts of creation but in a mythological sense. This state of creation shows that God used a progressive process to an inhabitable earth (cf. Isa. 45:18). These two words describe, not the beginning of matter, but a state of undeveloped non-functioning orderly system (John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* p. 49). It is not ready for humanity!

▣ **“darkness”** This term (BDB 365) does not represent evil, but original chaos. God names the darkness in v. 5 as He does the light. These two terms, though often used in the Bible to denote spiritual realities, here are representing original physical conditions.

▣ **“the deep”** The Hebrew term is *tehom* (BDB 1062 #3, KB 1690-91). A similar, but different, Semitic root is personified as *Tiamat* in the Sumerian and Babylonian creation myths as the monster of chaos and the mother of the gods, wife of Apsu. She tried to kill all lesser gods that came forth from her. Marduk killed her. Out of her body Marduk fashioned heaven and earth in the Babylonian Genesis called *Enuma Elish*. The Hebrews believed that water was the beginning element of creation (cf. Ps. 24:1; 104:6; II Pet. 3:5). It is never said to have been created. However, the Hebrew term is masculine, not feminine and it is unrelated etymologically to Tiamat.

There are passages in the OT which describe YHWH in conflict with personified watery chaos (cf. Ps. 74:13-14; 89:9-10; 104:6-7; Isa. 51:9-10). However, these are always in poetical, metaphorical passages. Water is a crucial aspect of creation (cf. 1:2b,6-7).

▣

<b>NASB, NKJV,</b>	
<b>TEV, NIV</b>	<b>“the Spirit of God”</b>
<b>NRSV, JPSOA</b>	<b>“a wind from God”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“a divine wind”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“the spirit of God”</b>
<b>SEPT</b>	<b>“a breath of God”</b>

The Hebrew term *ruach* (BDB 924) and the Greek term *pneuma* (cf. John 3:5,8) can mean “spirit,” “breath” or “wind” (cf. John 3:5,8). The Spirit is often associated with creation (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:29-30; 147:14-18). The OT does not clearly define the relationship between God and the Spirit. In Job 28:26-28; Ps. 104:24 and Prov. 3:19; 8:22-23 God used wisdom (a feminine noun) to create all things. In the NT Jesus is said to be God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:1-3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3). As in redemption, so too, in creation, all three persons of the Godhead are involved. Genesis 1 itself does not emphasize any secondary cause.

▣

<b>NASB, TEV</b>	<b>“moving”</b>
<b>NKJV, NIV</b>	<b>“hovering”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“swept”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“sweeping”</b>

This term (BDB 934, KB 1219, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) developed the connotation of “brooding” or “active hovering” (cf. JB). This is a mother bird word (cf. Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 31:5; 40:31; Hos. 3; 11:4). It is not related to Phoenician cosmology which asserts that the earth came from an egg, but a feminine metaphor for God’s active parental care, as well as the development of His creation at this early stage!

**1:3 “God said”** This is the theological concept of creation by the spoken word, using the Latin word *fiat* (cf. 9,14,20,24,29; Ps. 33:6; 148:5; II Cor. 4:6; Heb. 11:3). This has often been described as “out of nothing matter came into being using,” by God’s command, using the Latin phrase *ex nihilo* (cf. II Macc. 7:28). However, it is probable that Genesis 1 is not about the original creation of matter but the organizing of existing matter (cf. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, p. 54ff).

This power of the spoken word can also be seen in:

1. the patriarchal blessing
2. God’s self accomplishing redemptive word, Isa. 55:6-13, esp. v. 11
3. Jesus as the Word in John 1:1 and
4. Jesus as returning with a two-edged sword in His mouth (cf. II Thess. 2:8; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:6; 2:12,16; 19:15,21). This is an idiomatic way of creation by God’s will through thought and word. What God wants, occurs!

▣ **“Let there be”** These are JUSSIVES (cf. vv. 3, 6[twice], 9[twice in meaning, not form], 11, 14, 20[twice in meaning not form], 22, 24, 26[in meaning not form]).

**1:4 “God saw that the light was good”** (vv. 4,10,12,18,21,25,31) All creation was good (cf. 1:31). Evil was not part of God’s original creation, but a perversion of the good. “Good” here probably means “fits its purpose” (cf. Isa. 41:7) or “intrinsically without flaw” (BDB 373).

▣ **“God separated”** This VERB (BDB 95, KB 110, *Hiphil IMPERFECT*) is characteristic of how God develops His creation. He divides (KJV) and starts new things (cf. vv. 4,6,7,14,18).

▣ **“light”** Remember that there is no sun yet. Be careful not to be dogmatic about the time sequence (i.e. 24 hours for the earth to rotate which has not been constant throughout earth’s history).

Light (BDB 21) is a biblical symbol of life, purity, and truth (cf. Job 33:30; Ps. 56:13; 112:4; Isa. 58:8,10; 59:9; 60:1-3; John 1:5-9; II Cor. 4:6). In Rev. 22:5 there is light with no sun. Also notice that darkness is created (cf. Isa. 45:7) and named by God (cf. v. 5) which shows His control (cf. Ps. 74:16; 104:20-23; 139:12).

John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (p. 55ff), based on verses 4 and 5, asserts that this means “a period of light,” not the origin of the sun.

**1:5 “God called”** (vv. 8,10) This naming shows God’s ownership and control.

▣ **“There was evening and there was morning”** This order could reflect the existence of darkness before the creation of light. The rabbis interpreted this as the day as a unit of time beginning in the evening. There was dark and then there was light. This is reflected in Jesus’ day also where the new day began at twilight, in the evening.

▣ **“day”** The Hebrew term *yom* (BDB 398) can refer to a period of time (cf. 2:4; 5:2; Ruth 1:1; Ps. 50:15; 90:4; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 4:2; 11:2; Zech. 4:10) but usually it refers to a 24-hour day (i.e. Exod. 20:9-10).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: YOM**

Theories of the meaning of *yom* (day) taken and adapted from Dr. John Harris’ (Dean of the School of Christian Studies and Professor of OT at East Texas Baptist University) OT Survey I Notebook:

1. The Literal Twenty-Four Hour Period Theory

This is the straightforward approach (cf. Exod. 20:9-11). Questions arising from this approach:

- a. How was there light on day one when the sun was not created until day four?
- b. How were all the animals (especially those original to other parts of the world) named in less than one day? (cf. Gen. 2:19-20)?

2. The Day-Age Theory

This theory attempts to harmonize science (particularly geology) with scripture. This theory states that the “days” were “geological ages” in length. Their length is unequal, and they approximate the various layers described in uniformitarian geology. Scientists tend to agree with the general development of Gen. 1: vapor and a watery mass preceded the separation of land and sea prior to the appearance of life. Vegetable life came before animal life, and mankind represented the latest and most complex form of life. Questions arising from this approach:

- a. How did plants survive for “ages” without the sun?
- b. How did pollination take place in plants if insects and birds were not made until “ages” later?

3. The Alternate Age-Day Theory

The days are in fact twenty-four hour periods, but each day is separated by ages in which what was created developed. Questions arising from this approach.

- a. The same problems arise as in the Day-Age Theory.
- b. Does the text indicate “day” to be used both as twenty-four hours and as an era?

4. The Progressive Creation-Catastrophe Theory

This theory goes as follows: between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2, there was an indefinite period of time in which the geological ages took place; during this period, the pre-historic creatures in the order suggested by the fossils were created; around 200,000 years ago, a supernatural disaster occurred and destroyed much of the life on this planet and made many animals extinct; then the days of Genesis 1 occurred. These days refer to a re-creation, rather than to an original creation.

5. The Eden-Only Theory

The creation account refers only to the creation and physical aspects of the Garden of Eden.

6. The Gap Theory

Based on Gen. 1:1, God created a perfect world. Based on Gen. 1:2, Lucifer (Satan) was placed in charge of the world and rebelled. God then judged Lucifer and the world by utter destruction. For millions of years, the world was left alone and the geological ages passed. Based on Gen. 1:3-2:3, in 4004 B.C.E., the six literal twenty-four hour days of re-creation occurred. Bishop Ussher (a.d. 1654) used the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to calculate and date the creation of humanity ca. 4004 B.C.E. However, genealogies do not represent complete chronological schemes.

7. The Sacred Week Theory

The writer of the book of Genesis used the concept of days and a week as a literary device to put across the divine message of the activity of God in creation. Such a structure illustrates the beauty and symmetry of God’s creative work.

8. The Cosmic Temple Inauguration

This is a recent view by John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, IVP, 2009, which

sees the six days as a “functional ontology, not a material ontology. They describe God ordering or setting up a functioning universe for mankind’s good. This fits the other ancient cosmologies. For example, the first three days would represent God providing “seasons (i.e. time),” “weather (i.e. for crops)” and food. The repeated phrase “it is good” would denote functionality.

The seventh day would describe God entering His fully functional and inhabited “cosmic temple” as its rightful own, controller and director. Genesis 1 has nothing to do with the material creation of matter but the ordering of that matter for a functioning place for God and humans to fellowship.

The “days” become a literary device to communicate the ANE’s general consensus that:

1. there is no distinction between the “natural” and the “supernatural”
2. Deity is involved in every aspect of life. Israel’s uniqueness was not her general world-view but the following
  - a. her monotheism
  - b. creation was for mankind, not for the gods
  - c. there is no conflict between the gods nor the gods and humanity in Israel’s account.

She did not borrow her creation account from others but shared their general world-view.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-8**

**“Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.**

**1:6** This verse has two *Qal* JUSSIVES (“Let...”) From the verb “be” (BDB 224, KB 243). The same construction is in verses 14 and 22.



**NASB, NET**

**JPSOA**

**“an expanse”**

**NKJV**

**“firmament”**

**NRSV, TEV**

**“dome”**

**NJB**

**“vault”**

This term (BDB 956, KB 1290) could mean “to hammer out” or “to stretch out” as in Isa. 42:5. This refers to the earth’s atmosphere (cf. 1:20) depicted metaphorically as an air vault or inverted bowl above the surface of the earth (cf. Isa. 40:22).

▣ **“waters”** Fresh water and salt water are important elements in extra-biblical creation accounts, but in the Bible they are controlled by God. There is no distinction in Gen. 1 made between salt water and fresh water. The water in the atmosphere is divided from the water on the earth. Analysis of Gen. 1 shows that God separates several things as a process to an inhabited earth (light from dark, water above from water below, water below from dry land, sun time from moon time).

▣ **“separated the waters”** God is in control of watery chaos (BDB 95, KB 110, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE). He sets their boundaries (cf. Job 38:8-11; Ps. 33:6-7; Isa. 40:12).

**1:7 “and it was so”** Whatever God willed occurred and occurs (cf. 1:9,11,15,24,30).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-13**

**<sup>9</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>There was evening and there was morning, a third day.**

**1:9-10** The initial two VERBS (BDB 876, KB 1082 and BDB 906, KB 1157) are both *Niphal* IMPERATIVES used as JUSSIVES. Does this imply one continent (i.e. Pangaea)? The earth is changing form (i.e. tectonic plates) continually. The question again is the age of the earth. Notice also God controls all natural phenomenon. There are no nature gods!

**1:9 “let the dry land appear”** This is similar to the original holy hill of Egyptian cosmology. Another example of this sharing of a common world-view throughout the ANE would be humans created from clay. This is common to the creation accounts of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Israel.

**1:11-12** This was not meant to be a technical description for the origin of all plant life. It seems to refer to three types of plants: grasses, grains, and fruit. The animals will eat the first and second; humans will eat the second and third. God is preparing the earth step by step as a stage or platform on which to fellowship with and sustain His highest creation, mankind.

There have been several modern scientific theories as to the order of the development of plant life. Some scientists would assert this very order. But we must be careful because scientific theories change. Christians do not believe the Bible because science and archaeology confirm a matter. We believe it because of the peace we have found in Christ and the Bible’s own statements of inspiration.

**1:11 “Let the earth sprout”** This is a *Hiphel* JUSSIVE of the verb “sprout” (BDB 205, KB 233).

▣ **“after their kind”** Creation is structured (cf. vv. 12,21,24,25; 6:20; 7:14) so that once created, plants, animals and humans can reproduce and adapt in and of themselves. God created life to adapt. At this level, evolution to varying conditions surely occurred through time (micro-evolution or horizontal evolution).

There is a growing trend in theology toward the concept of progressive creation which implies that God may have created mankind (1) in stages or (2) Adam and Eve were created at a later stage, fully developed (cf. writings of Bernard Ramm and Hugh Ross).

In contrast to the ancient Near East where fertility was worshiped as twin gods, this shows the source of life as God, not a sexual act. In many ways this creation account diminishes the gods of the ancient Near East (water; light/dark; heavenly bodies; forces of nature; and fertility gods) as the plagues of the Exodus depreciated the gods of Egypt. The sole initiator is the one and only God!

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1: 14-19

<sup>14</sup>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; <sup>15</sup>and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. <sup>17</sup>God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

**1:14 “for signs and for seasons and for days and years”** The heavenly lights were to mark feast days (cf. 18:14; Lev. 23; Deut. 31:10) and cycles of rest, work, and worship (cf. Ps. 104:19-23). The sun was created to divide the calendar and each day into segments of time to help humans fulfill all their responsibilities (i.e. physical and spiritual).

**1:16 “the two great lights. . .He made the stars also”** God is creator of the heavenly bodies (cf. Isa. 40:26). They are not deities to be worshiped (Mesopotamian astral worship, cf. Deut. 4:19; Ezek. 8:16) but physical servants (cf. Ps. 19:1-6). This is a theological statement!

**1:17-18** The parallel structure of the Hebrew implies three purposes in addition to v. 14.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:20-23

<sup>20</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

**1:20-23** Invertebrates appear in the Cambrian Period suddenly and in abundance of forms. There is no physical evidence of a gradual development.

The verbs “swarm” (BDB 1056, KB 1655) and “fly” (BDB 733, KB 800) used in verse 20 are both IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES.

**1:20 “living creatures”** This same word, *nep̄esh* (BDB 659), is used of humans (cf. 2:7) and animals (cf. 2:19; Lev. 11:46; 24:18). It represents life force (cf. Ezek. 18:4) related to and dependent on this planet.

▣ **“birds”** Literally this is “flying things” (BDB 733) because in Deut. 14:19-20 it can also refer to insects.

**1:21 “created”** This is the term *bara* (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* IMPERFECT) as in Gen. 1:1. It implies divine creation. “Man and the animals” are “made” in 1:24-25 which implies out of previously existing matter (i.e. dirt). However *bara* is used for “man” in 1:27 (three times).

This special term is used of (1) the universe (or earth) in 1:1; (2) of the sea creatures in 1:21; and (3) of mankind in 1:27.



NASB, NRSV,                   “the great sea monsters”  
 TEV, NJB                       “great sea creatures”  
 NKJV, NIV                     “great whales”  
 LXX, KJV,                     “great sea-serpents”  
 JB

This may refer to *leviathan* (BDB 1072, cf. Ps. 104:26; 148:7; Job 41:ff). Sometimes the word is associated with Israel’s enemies: (1) Egypt, Isa. 51:9; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2 (sometimes referred to as “Rahab” cf. Ps. 89:10; Isa. 51:9) and (2) Babylon, Jer. 51:34. Often it is associated with cosmic/spiritual enemies, Job. 7:12; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1. The Canaanite creation account makes this a god fighting against Baal but in the Bible it is a good creation of the one true God.

▣ **“every winged bird”** This includes everything that flies, birds and insects (cf. Deut. 14:19-20).

**1:22** As the plants were made to reproduce, so too, the animals. God wants His planet filled with life (series of *Qal* IMPERATIVES [and one JUSSIVE], cf. 1:28; 9:1,7). This was one of the rebellion issues (i.e. unwillingness to separate and fill the planet) of the Tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 10-11).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is science related to the Bible?
2. The real questions are the who and why of creation, not the how and when. If this is true, how then should we interpret Genesis 1-2?
3. How did God create the physical world? Should we push *fiat, ex nihilo* if this is poetry?
4. What is the major thrust of Gen. 1?
5. How is the Bible like/unlike other creation accounts?

## SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

- A. *Objectives Sustained* by Phillip Johnson
- B. *Darwinism on Trial* by Phillip Johnson
- C. *Creation and Time* by Hugh Ross
- D. *The Creator and the Cosmos* by Hugh Ross
- E. *The Genesis Question* by Hugh Ross

- F. *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* by Bernard Ramm
- G. *The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith* by Malcolm A. Jeeves
- H. *Coming to Peace with Science* by Darrel R. Falk
- I. *The Language of God* by Francis S. Collins
- J. *Who was Adam?* By Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO GENESIS 1:24-2:3

### INTRODUCTION

- A. In the past two centuries, OT scholars have often asserted that Genesis records two creation accounts by different authors, using different names for God. However:
  - 1. this may be typical eastern literary form of a general account followed by a more specific account
  - 2. Genesis 1:1-2:3 may be a summary account of the creation of this planet and Gen. 2:4-25 to the creation of the first couple.
  - 3. this may reflect the different aspects of God's character (i.e. rabbinical)
    - a. *Elohim* - creator, provider and sustainer of all life
    - b. *YHWH* - savior, redeemer and covenant God of Israel
- B. There seems to be a distinction made between God creating out of nothing and created things bringing forth. Example: God created in v. 21 yet in v. 20 the water produces; in v. 25 God made yet in v. 24 the earth produced. Augustine noticed this distinction and postulated two acts of creation: (1) matter and spiritual beings and (2) their organization and diversification.
- C. This passage clearly teaches that humans are like the higher land animals: (1) both have *nephesh*, 1:24 and 2:7; (2) both were created on the sixth day, 1:31; (3) both were created from the ground, 2:19; (4) both eat plants for food, 1:29-30; (5) both procreate. However, humans are also like God: (1) special creation, 1:26; 2:7; (2) made in the image and likeness of God, 1:26; and (3) have dominion, 1:26,28.
- D. Genesis 1:26 "Let us . . ." (cf. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; 19:24; Isa. 6:8) has been greatly discussed. Several theories have emerged:
  - 1. The plural of majesty (but no early example in the Bible or in rabbinic literature)
  - 2. God speaking of Himself and the heavenly court of angels, I Kgs. 22:19
  - 3. Points toward plurality in God, and therefore, foreshadowing of the Trinity, 3:22;11:7; Isa. 6:8; 61:14. It is to be noted that (a) Elohim is PLURAL and (b) divine persons are mentioned in Ps. 2:2; 110:1,4; Zech. 3:8-9,11.
- E. Theories as to the meaning of image and likeness:
  - 1. Irenaeus and Tertullian:
    - a. Image—physical aspects of humanity
    - b. Likeness—spiritual aspects of humanity

2. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and John of Damascus
  - a. Image—nonphysical characteristics of man
  - b. Likeness—aspects of man that can be developed such as holiness or morality, and if not developed then are lost.
3. The Scholastics (Thomas Aquinas)
  - a. Image—mankind’s rational ability and freedom (natural)
  - b. Likeness—original righteousness and supernatural gifts that were lost at the fall.
4. The Reformers
  - a. All basically denied any distinction between the terms (Gen. 5:1; 9:6).
  - b. Luther and Calvin both express this concept in different terms, but basically expressed the same truth.
5. I think that they refer to our (1) personality; (2) consciousness; (3) language skills; (4) volition; and/or (5) morality.

F. Special Topic: Natural Resources

**SPECIAL TOPIC: NATURAL RESOURCES**

I. Introduction

- A. All creation is the backdrop or stage for God’s love affair with mankind.
- B. It shares in the fall (cf. Gen. 3:17; 6:1ff; Rom. 8:18-20). Also, it will share in eschatological redemption (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:20-22; Rev. 21-22).
- C. Sinful, fallen mankind has raped the natural environment with selfish abandon. Following is a quote from *The Canon of Westminster* by Edward Carpenter.
 

“ . . . man’s relentless assault, in a global context, upon the universe around him—that is on God’s creation—an attack on the air which he pollutes; the natural waterways which he befouls; the soil which he poisons; the forests which he hews down, heedless of the long-term affects of this wanton destruction. This attack is piecemeal and uncoordinated. Scant regard is paid to any balance of nature and consequently little sense of responsibility for what one generation owes to another.”
- D. not only are we reaping the result of pollution and exploitation of our planet, but our posterity will reap even more severe, non-reversible consequences.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Genesis 1-3

- a. Creation is a special place created by God for fellowship with mankind (cf. Gen. 1:1-25).
- b. Creation is good (cf. Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25), yea, very good (cf. Gen. 1:31). It is meant to be a witness to God (cf. Ps. 19:1-16).
- c. Humanity is the crowning purpose of creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).
- d. Humanity was meant to exercise dominion (Hebrew, “to tread”) as a steward to God (cf. Gen. 1:28=30; Ps. 8:3-8; Heb. 2:6-8). God is and remains the Creator/Sustainer/ Redeemer/Lord of creation (cf. Exod. 19:5; Job 37-41; Ps. 24:1-2; 95:3-5; 102:25; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Isa. 37:16).

- e. Mankind's stewardship of creation can be seen in Gen. 2:15, "to cultivate it and preserve and protect it" (cf. Lev. 25:23; I Chron. 29:14).
- 2. God loves creation, especially animals.
  - a. Mosaic laws for proper treatment of animals
  - b. YHWH playing with Leviathan (cf. Ps. 104:26)
  - c. God cares for animals (cf. Jonah 4:11)
  - d. Eschatological presence of nature (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 21-22)
- 3. Nature, to some extent, glorifies God.
  - a. Psalm 19:1-6
  - b. Psalm 29:1-9
  - c. Job 37-41
- 4. Nature is one means by which God shows His love and loyalty to the covenant.
  - a. Deut. 27-28; I Kings 17
  - b. Throughout the prophets
- B. New Testament
  - 1. God is seen as creator. There is only one Creator, the Triune God (Elohim, Gen. 1:1; the Spirit, Gen. 1:2; and Jesus, the NT). All else is created.
    - a. Acts 17:24
    - b. Hebrews 11:3
    - c. Revelation 4:11
  - 2. Jesus is God's agent of creation
    - a. John 1:3,10
    - b. I Cor. 8:6
    - c. Col. 1:16
    - d. Heb. 1:2
  - 3. Jesus speaks of God's care for nature in an indirect way in His sermons
    - a. Matt. 6:26,28-30, birds of the air and lilies of the field
    - b. Matt. 10:29, sparrows
  - 4. Paul asserts that all humans are responsible for their knowledge of God in creation (i.e natural revelation, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; Rev. 21-22).

### III. Conclusion

- A. We are bound to this natural order!
- B. Sinful mankind has abused God's gift of nature as they have all the other good gifts of God.
- C. This natural order is temporal. It is going to pass away (II Pet. 3:7). God is moving our world to a historical nexus. Sin will run its course, but God has determined its bounds. Creation will be redeemed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:24-25

**<sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.**

**1:24 "Then God said,"** *Elohim* (BDB 43) is the ancient plural name for God which dominates chapter 1. The etymology is uncertain. The rabbis say that it shows God as creator, provider and sustainer of all life on planet earth. The PLURAL seems to be theologically significant when connected with 1:26; 3:22; 11:7 and the plurality of the word "one" which is found in the great prayer of monotheism (Shema), Deut. 6:4-6. When used of the God of Israel the VERB is almost always SINGULAR. The term *elohim* in the OT can refer to (1) angels (cf. Ps. 8:5); (2) human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8,9; Ps. 82:1); or (3) other gods (cf. Exod. 18:11; 20:3; I Sam. 4:8). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

▣ **"Let the earth bring forth"** This (BDB 422, KB 425) is a *Hiphil* JUSSIVE. There is a distinction made in Gen. 1 between God creating by the spoken word out of nothing and that which He created, reproducing (i.e. adapting). Compare verses 20 and 21 and verses 24 and 25.

▣ **"living creatures after their kind"** Verses 24-25 describe the land animals both large and small, domestic and wild. Notice the term "living creatures" (BDB 659 and 311) is based on the term *nephesh* which is the word used for humans in Gen. 2:7. It is obvious that the uniqueness of mankind is not found in the term *nephesh*, often translated in Greek as "soul."

▣ **"creeping things"** Literally this refers to "gliding," or "sliding" (BDB 943). This is the same word that is used in v. 21, "that moves." It seems to refer to all animals which do not walk on their legs or that they have such short legs that they are unnoticeable.

▣ **"and it was so"** God's desires became reality! See note at 1:7.

**1:25 "and God saw that it was good"** God's creation was good (BDB 373) and is proclaimed to be "very good" in 1:31. This may be a Hebrew idiom meaning adequate for an assigned purpose. Theologically it may also speak of the absence of sin from God's original creation. Sin is the result of rebellion, not creation.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-31

**<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule 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." <sup>27</sup>God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup>Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; <sup>30</sup>and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have***

**given every green plant for food"; and it was so. <sup>31</sup>God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**

**1:26 “Let Us make”** The form (BDB 793, KB 889) is *Qal* IMPERFECT, but is used in a COHORTATIVE sense. There has been much discussion over the PLURAL “us.” Philo and Eben Ezra say it is “the plural of majesty,” but this grammatical form does not occur until much later in Jewish literary history (NET Bible says it does not occur with VERBS, p. 5); Rashi says that it refers to the heavenly court (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Isa. 6:8), but this cannot imply that angels had a part in creation, nor that they have the divine image. Others assume that it is an incipient form of the concept of a Triune God.

Interesting is the fact that in the Mesopotamian accounts of creation the gods (usually linked to individual cities) are always contending with one another but here not only is monotheism evident but even in the few PLURAL expressions there is harmony and not capricious discontent.

▣ **“man”** This is the Hebrew word “Adam” (BDB 9), which is an obvious play on the Hebrew term for ground, *adamah* (cf. v. 9). The term may also imply “redness.” Many scholars believe that this refers to humanity being formed out of the red clods or clay of the Tigris/Euphrates River valley (cf. 2:7). Only in these opening chapters of Genesis is the Hebrew term “Adam” used as a proper name. The Septuagint uses the word *anthropos* to translate this term which is a generic term referring to men and/or women (cf. 5:2; 6:1,5-7; 9:56). The more common Hebrew term for man or husband is *ish* (BDB 35, cf. 2:23 the etymology is unknown) and *ishah* (BDB 61) for woman or wife.

At this point in my theological understanding it is very difficult to relate the Bible’s account of the creation of the original pair with the fossil remains of several types of bi-pedal *Homo erectus*. Some of these ancient grave sites include the burial of items apparently connected to a belief in an after life. I am not offended by evolution within species. If this is true, then Adam and Eve are primitive humans and the historical time-frame of Gen. 1-11 must be radically expanded.

Possibly God created Adam and Eve at a much later period of time (i.e. progressive creationism), making them “modern” humans (*Homo sapiens*). If so, then their relationship to Mesopotamian civilization demands a special creation sometime close to when culture begins. I want to emphasize that this is just speculation at this point in time. There is so much moderns do not know about the ancient past. Again, theologically, the “who” and “why,” not the “how” or “when” are crucial!

▣ **“in Our image, according to Our likeness”** The term “image” can also be found in 5:1,3; 9:6. It is often used in the OT to denote idols (KB 1028 II). Its basic etymology is “to hew into a certain shape.” There has been much discussion in the history of interpretation to identify the exact meaning of image (BDB 853, KB 1028 #5) and likeness (BDB 198). Comparable Greek terms are found in the NT to describe humanity (cf. I Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; James. 3:9). In my opinion, they are synonymous and describe that part of humanity that is uniquely capable of relating to God. The Incarnation of Jesus shows the potential of what humanity could have been in Adam and will be one day will be through Jesus Christ. See *Who was Adam?* By Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, p. 79.

▣ **“let them rule”** This is literally “trample down” (BDB 853, KB 1190, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense). This is a strong term that speaks of mankind’s dominion over nature (cf. Ps. 8:5-8). This same concept is found in v. 28. The two terms, “rule” in vv. 26 and 28, and “subdue” in v. 28 have the same basic etymology which means “to tread upon” or “trample.” Although these VERBS seem hard they reflect the image of God’s reign. Mankind has dominion over the created earth because of his/her relationship to God. They were to reign/dominate as His representatives, in His character. Power is not the theological issue, but the way it is exercised (for self or for the good of others)!

Notice the PLURAL, which implies mutual dominion of male and female (cf. 5:23). Also notice the PLURAL IMPERATIVES of v. 28. The submission of the woman only comes after the Fall of chapter 3. The real question is, “Does this submission remain after the inauguration of the new age in Christ”?

**1:27 “God created”** There is a threefold use (*Qal* IMPERFECT followed by two *Qal* PERFECTS) of the term *bara* (BDB 127) in this verse, which functions as a summary statement as well as an emphasis on God’s creation of humanity as male and female. This is printed as poetry in NRSV, NJB and acknowledged so in NIV footnote. The term *bara* is only used in the OT for God’s creating.

▣ **“in His own image”** It is extremely interesting that the PLURAL of v. 26 is now a SINGULAR. This encompasses the mystery of the plurality, yet the unity, of God. God’s image (BDB 853) is equal in men and women!

▣ **“male and female He created them”** Our sexual aspect relates to the needs and environment of this planet. God continues to separate (see note at 1:4). Notice the mutuality here, in 2:18 and 5:2. Our divine image allows us to uniquely relate to God.

**1:28 “God blesses them . . . Be fruitful and multiply”** Part of God’s blessing (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERFECT) was procreation (cf. Deut. 7:13). This blessing was both on the animals (cf. v. 22) and on man (cf. v.28;9:1,7). In the Mesopotamian creation accounts the noise of the overpopulation of humans is the reason for the gods’ destruction of humanity. The Genesis account urges population growth. It is surprising that one of the first acts of rebellion (cf. Gen. 10-11) was mankind’s reluctance to separate and fill the earth.

▣ **“subdue it and rule”** There are two commands in the Hebrew text which are parallel to “Be fruitful and multiply” (series of three *Qal* IMPERATIVES). This makes both human sexuality and human control God’s will.

Both the Hebrew verbs, “subdue” (BDB 461, KB 460) and “rule” (BDB 921, KB 1190), can have a negative (i.e. cruel domination) connotation. The specific context must determine whether the meaning is benign or aggressive.

**1:29** The plant kingdom is divided into three different groups. The food chain begins with photosynthesis in plants. All earthly animal life depends on the miracle of plant life. In this verse, mankind is given the grains and the fruits for his food (cf. 2:16; 6:21), while the third group, the grasses, is given to the animals. It was not until after the flood that humans were allowed to eat flesh (cf. Gen. 9:3). This may be connected with the fact that there was no harvest possible that year. It is theologically inappropriate to draw universal dietary food laws from Gen. 1.

It is also possible that this description is only related to the Garden of Eden. Death and carnivores go back to the earliest fossils relating to the Cambrian layer 500,000 years ago where the fossilized record of life begins with profusion.

**1:30 “I have given every green plant for food”** The thrust of this statement is that all life is based on the process of photosynthesis (i.e. the food chain).

**1:31 “it was very good”** This is an extremely important conclusion to creation because in later gnostic Greek thought, matter is evil and spirit is good. In this Greek system (as well as some Mesopotamian texts) both matter and spirit are co-eternal which serves as their explanation of the problems on earth.

But the Hebrew account is very different. Only God is eternal and matter is created for His purpose. There was no evil in God’s original creation, only “freedom”!

▣ **“there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day”** It is important to note that, like the third day, the sixth day has two creative acts, so there are eight creative acts in six days. The rabbis begin the new day at twilight which is based on this phrase, “evening and morning.”

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. <sup>2</sup>By 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. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.**

**2:1 “the heavens”** Here this term (BDB 1029) refers to the atmosphere above the earth. In some contexts it refers to the starry heavens beyond the atmosphere.

▣ **“and the earth were completed, and all their hosts”** God’s physical creation had reached maturity (BDB 477, KB 476, *Pual* IMPERFECT, v. 1 and *Piel* IMPERFECT, v. 2). It was now ready for human habitation. Each level of creation has its proper inhabitants (i.e. “hosts” BDB 838). This does not specifically refer to the creation of angels (unless 1:1 includes it). This text is dealing with physical creation.

The Hebrew term “hosts,” in some contexts, refers to (1) Mesopotamian idolatry connected to the heavenly lights (i.e. sun, moon, planets, comets, constellations (cf. Deut. 4:19) or (2) YHWH’s angelic army (cf. Josh. 5:14), but here to all the different kinds of created life.

**2:2 “By the seventh day God completed His work”** This is very anthropomorphic but does not imply that God was tired or that He ceased permanently from His active involvement with creation and mankind. This is a basic pattern set for mankind who needs regular rest and worship.

▣ **“He rested”** This is the same Hebrew root as “Sabbath” (BDB 991, KB 1407, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 20:11; 31:12-17). Deuteronomy 5:15 gives another reason for the Sabbath for sociological reasons, not theological reasons as in Exod. 20:8:11.

This term is used in several different ways, particularly in the NT book of Heb. 3:7-4:11 and its interpretation of Ps. 95:7-11. In Hebrews this term “rest” applies both to the Sabbath rest, the Promised Land, and fellowship with God (heaven). God sets the example for His special creation, mankind. Regular fellowship between God and mankind is the unstated, but contextually central, purpose of creation!

▣ **“the seventh day”** Days 1-6 begin with evening and close with morning (cf. 1:31), but the seventh day’s morning is never mentioned. Therefore, the rabbis and also the NT author of Hebrews (3:7-4:11) use this to conclude that God’s rest is still available (cf. Ps. 95:7-11).

**2:3 “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it”** The term “sanctified” means “made holy” (BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERFECT). This term is used in the sense of setting something apart for God’s particular use. Very early God established a special, regular day for Himself and humanity to commune. This does not mean that all days do not belong to God, but one is uniquely set aside for communion, worship, praise, and energizing rest.

The origin of the seven day week is shrouded in antiquity and mystery. One can see how the month is related to the phases of the moon and how the year is related to seasonal changes, but a week has no obvious source. However, every ancient culture that we know of seems to have known about it when their written history began.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WORSHIP**

### I. Introduction

#### A. Some important questions

1. What is worship?
2. When and how did it begin?
3. What is its content?
4. Who participates?
5. Where and when is it done?

B. These questions will form the outline for our study. It must be remembered that there is no definitive answer to these questions, but there are scriptural implications and historical developments.

### II. What is Worship?

A. The English term comes from a Saxon term, “weorthscipe,” which denoted someone to whom honor and respect were due.

B. The major OT terms are:

1. *‘Abodah*, which is from a Hebrew root that means “to serve” or “to labor” (BDB 715). It is usually translated “the service of God.”
2. *Hishtahawah*, which is from a Hebrew root that means “to bow” or “to prostrate oneself” (BDB 1005, cf. Exod. 4:31).

C. The major NT terms follow the Hebrew terms.

1. For *‘abodah* there is *latreia*, which is the state of a hired laborer or slave.
2. For *hishtahawah* there is *proskuneo*, which means “to prostrate oneself,” “to adore,” or “to worship.”

D. Notice that there are two areas which worship impacts.

1. our attitude of respect
2. our lifestyle actions

These two must go together or else major problems result (cf. Deut. 11:13).

### III. When and How Did it Begin?

A. The OT does not specifically state the origins of worship, but there are several hints in Genesis.

1. God’s institution of the Sabbath in Gen. 2:1-3 is later developed into the major weekly worship day. In Genesis it states that God set a precedent for mankind’s rest and worship by His actions and attitudes toward this weekly time segment.
2. God’s killing of the animals to provide the fallen couple’s clothes to endure their new fallen environment in Gen. 3:21 seems to set the stage for the use of animals for mankind’s needs, which will develop into the sacrificial system.

3. Cain and Abel's sacrifice of Gen. 4:3ff seems to have been a regular occurrence, not a one-time event. This is not a disparaging passage on vegetable offerings or a prescription for animal sacrifice, but a vivid example of the need for a proper attitude toward God. It does show that somehow God communicated His acceptance and rejection.
4. The godly Messianic line of Seth is developed in Gen. 4:25ff. It mentions the covenant name of God, YHWH, in v. 26 in an apparent worship setting (this passage must be reconciled with Exod. 6:3).
5. Noah states a distinction between clean and unclean animals in Gen. 7:2. This sets the state for his sacrifices in Gen. 8:20-21. This implies that sacrifices were well established at an early period.
6. Abraham was well acquainted with sacrifice, which is obvious from Gen. 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:9. It forms his response to God's presence and promises. Apparently his descendants continued this practice.
7. The book of Job is in a patriarchal setting (i.e. 2000). He was familiar with sacrifice as is seen in Job 1:5.
8. The biblical material seems to clarify that sacrifice developed out of mankind's awe and respect for God and God's revealed procedures on how to express this.
  - a. Ten Commandments and Holiness Code
  - b. Tabernacle Cultus

#### IV. What is its Content?

- A. It is obvious that mankind's attitude is the key in sacrifice (cf. Gen. 4:3ff). This personal element has always been a pillar in revealed biblical faith (cf. Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13; 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15).
- B. However, mankind's reverent attitude was codified into ritual very early.
  1. rites of purification (related to a sense of sin)
  2. rites of service (feasts, sacrifice, gifts, etc.)
  3. rites of personal worship (public and private prayers and praise)
- C. When we address the question of content it is important that we notice the three sources of revelation (cf. Jer. 18:18).
  1. Moses and the cultus (priests)
  2. The sages of Wisdom Literature
  3. The prophets

Each of these has added to our understanding of worship. Each focuses on a consistent and vital aspect of worship.

  1. form (Exodus - Numbers)
  2. lifestyle (Ps. 40:1ff; Mic. 6:6-8)
  3. motive (I Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:22-26; Hos. 6:6)
- D. Jesus follows the OT pattern of worship. He never ridiculed the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17ff), but He did reject the Oral Tradition as it had developed by the first century.
- E. The early church continued with Judaism for a period (i.e. up to the rabbinical revival and reforms of A.D. 90) and then began to develop its own uniqueness, but generally on a synagogue pattern. The centrality of Jesus, His life, His teachings, His crucifixion and His

resurrection took the place of the OT cultus. Preaching, baptism, and the Eucharist became focal acts. The Sabbath was replaced with the Lord's Day.

#### V. Who Participates?

- A. The patriarchal culture of the ancient near East sets the stage for man's leadership role in all areas of life, including religion.
- B. The Patriarch acted as priest to his family in both sacrifice and religious instruction (Job 1:5).
- C. For Israel the priest assumed the religious tasks in public, corporate worship setting, while the father retained this place in private worship settings. With the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.) the Synagogue and the rabbis developed into a central position in training and worship. After the Temple's destruction in A.D. 70, rabbinical Judaism, which developed from Pharisees, became dominant.
- D. In the church setting the patriarchal pattern is preserved, but with the added emphasis on women's giftedness and equality (cf. I Cor. 11:5; Gal. 3:28; Acts 21:9; Rom. 16:1; II Tim. 3:11). This equality is seen in Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18. This equality is damaged by the rebellion of Gen. 3, but is restored through Christ.

Children have always been fellowshipped into the worship setting through their parents, however, the Bible is an adult oriented book.

#### VI. Where and When is Worship Done?

- A. In Genesis humanity reveres the places where they have met God. These sites become altars. After crossing of the Jordan several sites develop (Gilgal, Bethel, Shechem), but Jerusalem is chosen as the special dwelling place of God connected with the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Deut.).
- B. Agricultural times have always set the state for humanity's gratitude to God for His provision. Other special sensed needs, such as forgiveness, developed into special cultic days (i.e. Lev. 16, Day of Atonement). Judaism developed set feast days—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23). It also allowed for special opportunities for individuals (cf. Ezek. 18).
- C. The development of the synagogue provided structure to the concept of Sabbath worship. The church changed this to the Lord's Day (the first day of the week) apparently on Jesus' repeated pattern of appearing to them on Sunday evenings after the resurrection.
- D. At first the early church met daily (Acts 2:46), but this apparently soon was dropped for private worship during the week and corporate worship on Sundays.

#### VII. Conclusion

- A. Worship of God is not something humans invented or instituted. Worship is a felt need.
- B. Worship is a response to who God is and what He has done for us in Christ.
- C. Worship involves the whole person. It is both form and attitude. It is both public and private. It is both scheduled and extemporaneous.
- D. True worship is an outgrowth of a personal relationship.
- E. The most helpful NT theological passage on worship is probably John 4:19-26.

▣ **“made”** This is literally “making.” God’s creative acts continue (BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). God created organic creatures to develop. The repeated phrase “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” reflects God’s design and plan. God created living creatures (including mankind) which reproduce themselves after their kind. The very act causes variations.

# GENESIS 2:4-25

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Creation of Man and Woman	(1:1-2:7)	The Creation of Man and Woman	The Garden of Eden	Paradise, and the Test of Free Will
2:4-9		2:4b-9	2:4b-6	2:4b-7
	Life in God's Garden		2:7	
	2:8-9		2:8-9	2:8-9
2:10-14	2:10-14	2:10-14	2:10-14	2:10-14
2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17
2:18-25	2:18-25	2:18-25	2:18-20	2:18-23
			2:21-24	(23)
(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	2:24
			2:25	2:25

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### BACKGROUND

- A. I personally reject the J (YHWH), E (Elohim), D (Deuteronomy), P (Priests) theory of source criticism which asserts separate authors for several OT books of the Pentateuch (cf. Introduction to Genesis, Modern Scholarship, D.). For more information on this subject read Josh McDowell's *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict* or H. C. Leupold's *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1.

- B. Genesis 2:4-25 is a specific theological expansion of Genesis 1:1-2:3. This is a common Hebrew literary technique. Theologically chapter two sets the stage for chapter three.
- C. Genesis 1:31 crowns the beginning of our world with God's intention, "goodness"; 2:1-3 should go with chapter 1 because 1:1-2:3 which is a literary unit.
- D. Theologically 2:4-25 is more related to chapter 3 than chapter 1. It sets the literary stage for Eve's temptation and sin with its devastating consequences for the whole planet (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 8:18-23).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-9**

**<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. <sup>5</sup>Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. <sup>6</sup>But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. <sup>8</sup>The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. <sup>9</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight 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.**

**2:4 "This is the account"** Literally it is "these are the generations" (BDB 41 plus 410). This phrase is the author's way of dividing Genesis into literary segments (cf. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,8; 37:2, i.e. this is the author's way of outlining his book). Some scholars see it as introducing a section (i.e. Derek Kidner) while others see it as closing a section (i.e. R. K. Harrison and P. J. Wiseman). It seems to do both. It is possible that 1:1-2:3 deals with the creation of the cosmos and 2:4-15 focuses on the creation of mankind which is contextually related to chapters 3 and 4.

▣ **"day"** The Hebrew term *yom* (BDB 398) is usually used of a 24-hour period of time. However, it is also used of a longer duration as a metaphor (cf. 2:4; 5:2; Ruth 1:1; Isa. 2:11,12,17; 4:2; Ps. 90:4). Possibly v. 4a is a subtitle heading and 4b starts the discussion. See Special Topic at 1:5.

▣ **"the LORD God"** This is literally YHWH Elohim which combines the two most common names for God. This is the first time they are used together. Many modern scholars have assumed two authors for Gen. 1 and 2 because of the use of these divine names. However, the rabbis assert that they refer to the characteristics of deity: (1) Elohim as creator, provider and sustainer of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 19:1-6) and (2) YHWH as savior, redeemer and covenant making deity (cf. Ps. 19:7-14). It theologically implies the ever living, only living God. The Jews became afraid to pronounce this holy name lest they break the commandment about taking God's name in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adon* (husband, owner, master, lord) whenever they read the text aloud. This is why in English YHWH is translated LORD.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

### A. *El*

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
  - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
  - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself”), Gen. 16:13
  - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain”), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
  - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
  - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant”), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
  - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
  - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father
  - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
  - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
  - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
  - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
  - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
  - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
  - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
  - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
  - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
  - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
  - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
  - n. “retribution: in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)

### B. *Elyon*

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
  - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
  - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
  - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
  - d. *El* - Num. 24:16

- e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
- 3. It is often used by non Israelites.
  - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
  - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
  - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
  - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (plural), *Eloah* (singular), used primarily in poetry

- 1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
- 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
- 3. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6)
- 4. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Ps. 14 (*elohim*) is exactly like Ps. 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

- 5. Although plural and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the singular verb to denote the monotheistic usage.
- 6. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
  - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
  - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
  - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
- 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is plural! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
  - a. Hebrew has many plurals, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the plural is used to magnify a concept.
  - b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
  - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH

- 1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Gen. 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the

universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD ” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
- b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
- c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
- d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
- e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
- g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g. Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever living, only living One”
- h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67)

The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form

- (1) *Yah* (e.g. Hallelu - yah)
- (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g. Isaiah)
- (3) *Yo* (names, e.g. Joel)

3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.

4. As with *El*, often YHWH is combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations terms, here are some.

- a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
- b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
- c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
- d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
- e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
- f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3, 11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
- g. *YHWH - Ro'I* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1

- h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“earth and heaven”** The order of these words is reversed from v. 1 but why is uncertain.

**2:5 “shrub of the field”** This refers to wild plants (cf. Gen. 21:15; Job 30:4,7).

▣ **“plant of the field”** This refers to cultivated, domestic plants.

**2:6 “a mist”** This (BDB 15, KB 11) is the Akkadian term for (1) flood or (2) flow of subterranean water. This possibly means that watering occurred by flooding (“used to rise,” BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal IMPERFECT*). The Arabic parallel is fog which is the origin of the translation “mist.” We would say a heavy dew.

This again may have reflected the circumstances in the Garden of Eden alone. Geology seems to confirm the ancient results of water on the earth’s surface long before the special creation of Adam and Eve.

**2:7 “formed”** Literally this means “to mold clay” (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal IMPERFECT*, cf. Jer. 18:6). This is the third term used to describe God’s creative action in relation to mankind (“make,” 1:26 (BDB 793, KB 889); “created,” 1:27 (BDB 135, KB 153) and “formed,” 2:7). The NT reveals that Jesus was God’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

▣ **“man of dust from the ground”** Man is the Hebrew term, Adam (BDB 9), which meant (1) a pun on the term “red” (cf. Exod. 25:5; 28:17; Num. 19:2; Isa. 63:2; Zech. 1:8) or (2) “ground” (*adamah*, cf. v. 6), possibly alluding to “red clay clods.” This reflects the lowliness and frailty of humanity. There is a dialectical tension here between mankind’s exalted place (made in the image and likeness of God) and lowly frail condition! Animals are formed the same way in v. 19. It is also possible that it refers to mankind’s origin from the dust (cf. Gen. 3:19; Ps. 103; Eccl. 12:7). This denotes mankind as clay and God as potter (cf. Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:20-23).

▣ **“breathed. . .the breath of life”** The VERB “breathed” (BDB 655, KB 708) is a *Qal IMPERFECT*. The NOUN “breath” (BDB 675) shows that God took special care with the creation of mankind. However, humans still physically function as do all the animals on the planet (i.e. breathe, eat, excrete, and reproduce). Humans uniquely can relate to God, yet we are intricately bound to this planet. There is a dual aspect to our nature (spiritual and physical).

▣ **“man became a living being”** Humans become a *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711-713), but so do the cattle (cf. 1:24; 2:19). The uniqueness of humanity is God’s personal forming and breathing. Humans do not have a soul, they are a soul! We are a unity of the physical and the spiritual. We will always have a bodily expression except for the intermediate state between death and resurrection (cf. I Thess. 4:13-15).

Was Adam a primitive man or a modern man? How is he related to other hominids of antiquity? Stone-age men were present in the Mt. Carmel region 200,000 years ago. When was Adam created? Is he the end of development or is he first of a special creation?

**2:8 “garden”** This term (BDB 171) is used in the sense of an enclosed park. The Septuagint translates it with a Persian word, “paradise.”

▣ **“in Eden”** In Hebrew *Eden* means “delight” or “happy land” (BDB 727 III, KB 792 II). Notice the garden is not called “Eden,” but located in Eden. This is obviously a geographical location, a place name. The related Sumerian term can mean “fertile plain.” The description in vv. 8, 10-14 is very detailed which is meant to convey its precise location but its geographical location is unknown. Most commentators place it (1) at the mouth of the modern Tigris and Euphrates Rivers or (2) at the head waters of these rivers.

However, the names of all the rivers do not fit modern geography. How much of the earth was changed by the Flood is uncertain. The similarities of the Mesopotamian and biblical accounts would logically put the garden in Mesopotamia but this is only speculation. See *Who was Adam?* By Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, p. 46.

**2:9 “tree of life. . . tree of the knowledge of good and evil”** This last clause may be a parenthesis (cf. NET Bible, p. 7). Genesis 3:3 implies that there was only one tree, while 3:22 implies two trees. The tree of knowledge of good and evil has no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature. This tree was not magical, but it seemed to offer to humans a way to be independent from their creator God or at least promised that they might gain knowledge and insight equal to or in competition with God. This is the essence of sin. It is also possible that it offered Eve a way to dominate Adam, which violated the created mutuality.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-14**

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

**2:10 “rivers”** These were “branch streams” (BDB 625).

**2:11 “Pishon”** Literally this is “gush” (BDB 810). This may refer to an ancient waterway or canal in southern Mesopotamia called “Pisanu.”

▣ **“flows around”** This literally means “winds through” (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE).

▣ **“Havilah”** Literally this means “sandy land” (BDB 296). This is not the one located in Egypt but linked to Cush in 10:7. The term is used again in 10:29 for a sandy land in Arabia.

**2:12 “bdellium”** This is possibly an aromatic tree gum (BDB 95). The meaning for this term and the next one are uncertain. Some have suggested that this should be translated “pearls” (cf. Helen Spurrell and James Moffatt’s translation).

▣ **“onyx”** All ancient terms for jewels are very uncertain (BDB 995). This stone was one of the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:9). The jewels of Eden are used metaphorically in Ezek. 28:13.

**2:13 “Gihon”** Literally this is “bubble” (BDB 161). This may refer to an ancient waterway or canal in southern Mesopotamia called “Guhana.”

▣ **“Cush”** This term is used in three ways in the OT: (1) here and 10:6ff to refer to Kassites to the east of the Tigris Valley; (2) Hab. 3:8; II Chron. 14:9ff; 16:8; 21:16 to refer to northern Arabia; and (3) usually used to refer to Ethiopia or Nubia in north Africa (BDB 468).

**2:14 “Tigris”** This is literally “Hiddekel” (BDB 293).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, TEV “Assyria”

NJB “Ashur”

JPSOA, NIV “Asshur”

The Term (BDB 78) can refer to (1) a people (e.g. Num. 24:22,24; Hosea 12:2; 14:4) or (2) a land (cf. Gen. 2:14; 10:11; Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 9:3; 10:6). In this context #2 fits best.

▣ **“Euphrates”** Literally this is “perath.” It is often called “The River” (cf. Gen. 15:18; I Kgs. 4:21,24).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup>but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."**

**2:15 “to cultivate it and keep it”** Work was mankind’s task before the fall and not a result of sin. The term “cultivate” means “to serve” (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT), while “keep” is “to protect” (BDB 1036, KV 1581, another *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). This is part of the responsibility of human dominion. We are to be stewards, not exploiters, of the resources of this planet.

In the Sumerian and Babylonian mythologies mankind is always created to serve the gods but in the Bible Adam and Eve are made in the image of God, to have dominion over creation. This is the only work they are assigned to do and it has nothing to do with God’s needs!

**2:16 “From any tree in the garden you may eat freely”** This is a *Qal* infinitive absolute COMBINED with a *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same root (BDB 37, KB 40), used for emphasis. God’s command was not burdensome. God was testing (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:22-25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Judg. 2:22; II Chron. 32:31) His highest creation’s loyalty and obedience.

**2:17 “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”** This was not a magical tree. It contained no secret physical ingredient in its fruit to stimulate the human brain. It was a test of obedience and trust.

Notice that the tree held out strengths and weaknesses. It is amazing to me what humanity has produced from the physical resources of this planet. Mankind is an awesome creation with potential for both good or evil. Knowledge brings responsibility.

▣ **“evil”** This is the Hebrew term *ra* which meant “to break up” or “ruin” (BDB 948). It combines the act and its consequences (cf. Robert B. Girdlestone’s *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 80.)

▣ **“the day”** In light of Eve and Adam continuing to live after they ate, this is a use of “day” as a period of time, not 24 hours (BDB 398).

▣

NASB            **“you will surely die”**  
NKJV            **“you shall surely die”**  
NRSV            **“you shall die”**  
TEV             **“you will die the same day”**  
NJB             **“you are doomed to die”**

This is an INFINITE ABSOLUTE and a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, “dying to die” (BDB 559, KB 562) which is a Hebrew grammatical way of showing emphasis. This is the same as v. 16. This structure carries several possible translations (cf. *Twenty-Six Translations of the Old Testament*). Obviously death refers to spiritual death here (cf. Eph. 2:1), which results in physical death (cf. Gen. 5). In the Bible three stages of death are described: (1) spiritual death (cf. 2:17; 3:1-7; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 5:12-21; 7:10-11; Eph. 2:1,5; Col. 2:13a; James 1:15); (2) physical death (cf. Gen. 5); and (3) eternal death, called “the second death” (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8). In a real sense this refers to all three.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-25**

**<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." <sup>19</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD 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. <sup>22</sup>The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.**

**<sup>23</sup>The man said,  
"This is now bone of my bones,  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man."**

**<sup>24</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

**2:18 “it is not good for the man to be alone”** This is the only place in these opening chapters of the OT where “not good” is used. God has made us to need someone, even beyond fellowship with Him! Man could not fulfill his role to rule over creation without the companionship of woman, nor could he fulfill the command to multiply and fill the earth.



**NASB** “a helper suitable for him”  
**NKJV** “a helper comparable to him”  
**NRSV** “a helper as his partner”  
**TEV** “a suitable companion to help him”  
**NJB** “a helper”

This means “one who complements or completes” (BDB 740 I, KB 811 I). The NET Bible has “indispensable companion” (p. 8). This term is often used to describe God’s help (cf. Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:4, 7, 29; Ps. 33:20; 115:9-11; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5). Notice the mutuality between male and female as in 1:26-27 and the PLURAL IMPERATIVES of 1:28. Submission does not come until after the Fall (cf. 3:16). This specific account of the creation of woman is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature.

An interesting word study is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 92-94, where Walter Kaiser asserts the translation “a power (or strength) corresponding to man” (or equal to man).

**2:19 “God formed every beast”** Some have taken this to assert that God created the animals after Adam in what they call the second creation account (cf. Gen. 2:4-25). The VERB (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal IMPERFECT*) could be translated “had formed” (cf. NIV). The time element in Hebrew VERBS is contextual.

Dr. Rich Johnson, Professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University, commented to me in a review of this commentary:

“The meaning of the IMPERFECT with a waw conversive, which this verb is, is the simple past tense. It is the way Hebrew structures a sequence of events. A series of this kind of verb tells events in the order in which they occur. You refer here to the presuppositions of interpreters affecting the translation. Here, it is the presupposition of the NIV translators that have led them to mistranslate this verse and also 2:8, ‘Now the LORD God had planted a garden...’. The NIV translators have assumed that this chapter must match chapter one and have overruled the normal rules of reading Hebrew narrative to accommodate that assumption. The urgent question is where they got that assumption. This verb is translated as a simple past by the KJV, ASV, ERV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, ESV, NEB, REB, the NET translation, Youngs’ Literal translation, the Jewish Publication Society translation, the TANAKH, the New American Bible, and the New Jerusalem Bible. The NIV is the odd one.”

**▣ “to see what he would call them”** The VERB “call” (BDB 894, KB 1128) is used three times in vv. 19 and 20. Names were very important to the Hebrews. This shows mankind’s authority and dominion over the animals.

Does this refer to (1) all the different animals in the whole world, (2) original beginning types of animals or (3) the animals of Mesopotamia?

**2:21** This verse reinforces the unique relationship between man and woman, Adam and Eve (cf. v. 23). It may be a Hebrew idiom for closeness and intimacy. The Hebrew word for “rib” is translated elsewhere as “side” (BDB 854, KB 1030 I).

It is interesting that in his book, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 555-556, R. K. Harrison asserts that the Hebrew term for “rib” here means “an aspect of the personality” which would form an analogy with Adam made in the image and likeness of God to also include aspects of personality.

It is also interesting that a “rib” is part of the creation of woman in the Sumerian creation account: from *enki* came *nin-ti* (cf. D. J. Wiseman’s *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology*). In this context the Sumerian word for rib (i.e. *ti*) also means “to make alive.” Eve will be the mother of all living (cf. 3:20).

It must be remembered that Moses is writing (editing or compiling) these chapters at a much later date. These are Hebrew word plays, but Hebrew was not the original language used.

**2:22 “brought her to the man”** The rabbis say that God acted as best man.

**2:23 “Woman. . .Man”** This verse is poetry. Literally this is *Ishah* (BDB 35). . . *ish* (BDB 35), an obvious sound play (especially “her name *Ishah*”). Adam also names (or at least describes Eve’s similarity to himself) Eve. The etymology is uncertain. Usually *adam* refers to humanity and *ish* to a specific individual.

**2:24 “leave his father and his mother”** This VERB (BDB 736, KB 806) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, possibly used in a JUSSIVE sense. The importance of the family causes the comment to be read back into this early account. Moses is reflecting on his own day and the importance of the family unit in an extended family living situation. Marriage takes precedence over in-laws!



NASB	“cleave”
NKJV	“be joined”
NRSV	“clings”
TEV	“is united with”
NJB	“becomes attached to”

This is a Hebrew idiom of loyalty, even intimacy (BDB 179, KB 209, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Ruth 1:14; Matt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31).

▣ **“one flesh”** This shows the complete union and priority relationship of married couples. The SINGULAR form of “one” speaks of the joining of the two persons.

**2:25 “both naked and were not ashamed”** This should go with chapter 3. The implication of the phrase is that Adam had nothing to hide from himself, his spouse, his God (BDB 101, KB 161, *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT). Therefore it is an idiom of innocence. Things will soon change!

The fact that the man and woman were naked (BDB 736, ADJECTIVE) implies a very controlled environment. This may lend itself to the view that the Garden of Eden was a protected and later, special creation, different from the rest of the planet (i.e. progressive creationism).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is there a distinction made in Genesis 1 between God creating and the things which He has made producing? If so, what does this imply?
2. How is man like the animals? How is man like God?
3. Are women made in the image of God or only of the image of Adam?
4. What does it imply that man is to subdue and rule the created order?
5. How does the phrase “Be fruitful and multiply” relate to the population explosion?
6. Is it God’s will that man be vegetarian?
7. Is it improper for man to worship on Sunday instead of Saturday in light of Gen. 2:2,3?
8. Why are chapters 1 and 2 so similar, yet different?
9. Why is Adam translated both as a proper name and a generic one?
10. Why is the geographical site of Eden given in such detail?
11. Name the three forms of biblical death.
12. What does verse 18 say about us as sexual beings?
13. Does “helper” imply mutuality?

# GENESIS 3:1-24

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Cain and Abel	The Temptation and Fall of Man	The Temptation Story	Human Disobedience	The Fall
3:1-7	3:1-8	3:1-7	3:1 3:2-3 3:4-5 3:6-7	3:1-7
3:8-19	3:9-19	3:8-19	3:8-9 3:10 3:11 3:12 3:13a 3:13b	3:8-13
(14-16)	(14-16)	(14-16)	God Pronounces Judgment	
(17b-19)	(17b-19))	(17b-19)	3:14-15	3:14-16 (14-16)
3:20-21	3:20-24	3:20-21	3:20-21  Adam and Eve Are Sent Out of the Garden	3:17-19 (17-19) 3:20-24
3:22-24		3:22-24	3:22-24	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## INTRODUCTION

A. Genesis 3 is pivotal in understanding the problem of evil and suffering in our world. It is surprising that the majority of rabbis do not utilize this text in their discussions of evil, sin, and human rebellion.

B. The effect of mankind's willful rebellion against a loving, caring, providing, fellowshiping God has affected not only their religious life but also their own personhood, their family life, and their world.

Notice the high price that God Himself personally paid in order for humanity to exercise freedom. God's joy and original purpose for/with creation was radically affected (but not permanently) by human rebellion. If we assume the goodness and loving provision of God, the rebellion of humanity (and possibly the angels) is seen in its radical disrespect and self-centeredness. God's continuing love and promise of salvation (cf. 3:15) also becomes more radical in its gracious character!

C. Although this chapter has common motifs with other ancient Near Eastern texts, its presentation is monotheistic and not dualistic.

## ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF SIN

A. Biblical material

1. It is my theological assumption that Satan's created purpose was (1) to offer to God-conscious creatures an option which would lead to independence and then accusation, Job 1-2; Zech. 3; or (2) Genesis 3 presupposes a previous angelic rebellion in God's creation or at least a clear slandering of God to humans through angelic agency.

2. Mankind is affected by temptation.

3. The Bible does not specifically discuss the origin or purpose of "evil."

a. Some later Jewish writings asserted that sin began from Gen. 3 (in Satan, then in humanity)

b. Other Jewish inter-biblical writings assert that sin began in Gen. 6 (in "the sons of God")

c. After Jesus' day false teachers combined Judaism with Greek thought and asserted that evil was inherent in physical matter (i.e. Greek gnostic thought, cf. Col.; Eph.; I Tim.; II Tim.; and Titus)

4. It is assumed that evil has a purpose or it would not exist. Yet there is an obvious intensification of evil and Satan from the OT to the NT (cf. *The Theology of the OT* by A. B. Davidson, pp. 300-306). In the OT Satan is not an enemy of God (except possibly in this chapter) but always an enemy of humanity. The rabbis say the evil one was jealous of God's love and care for mankind.

5. Adam's sin affects all of creation (i.e. which is the Hebrew concept of corporality cf. Gen. 3:14-24; Rom. 5:12-21; 8:18-23).

- B. Historical-Theological development (taken from *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof).
1. The rabbis deny original sin and opt for the two intents (good versus evil). The OT does not discuss Gen. 3 at length (nor do the rabbis).
  2. Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202) is the first church father to discuss Adam's sin and its consequences. This view of the fall of mankind through Adam's sin became dominant in the Western Church (i.e. Augustine). It apparently was used to combat gnosticism which posited the problem of evil in matter itself.
  3. Origen (A.D. 182-251) maintained that each human sinned voluntarily in a previous existence (Platonic).
  4. The Greek fathers (Eastern Church) of the third and fourth centuries de-emphasized Adam's part in the problem of evil in our world. This developed into Pelagianism (from an English monk) which denied any link at all.
  5. The Latin fathers (i.e. the western church), following Augustine, stressed the place of Adam in the problem of evil, sin, and suffering in our world.
  6. During the Protestant Reformation the major reformers followed Augustine, while Arminius developed a semi-Pelagian reaction to dogmatic Calvinism.
  7. The philosophers and theologians asserted several theories of sin:
    - a. Kant—some unknown, unexplainable something in the supersensible sphere
    - b. Leibnitz—due to the inherent limitations of the material cosmos
    - c. Schleiermacher—due to the sensuous nature of man
    - d. Ritschl—due to human ignorance
    - e. Barth—involved with the mystery of predestination
    - f. Whitehead—sin is inherent in this world system. It functions to develop both God and man.
  8. The major thrust of the Bible is the redemption of mankind from sin and evil, wrought by a personal, loving God through Christ. Sin's origin is never discussed.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE FALL**

1. The Fall affected all mankind as clearly expressed in Paul's discussion of Rom. 5:12-21.
 

Romans 5:12-21 is a discussion of Jesus as the second Adam (cf. I Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49; Phil. 2:6-8). It gives emphasis to the theological concept of both individual sin and corporate guilt. Paul's development of mankind's (and creation's) fall in Adam was unique and different from the rabbis while his view of corporality was very much in line with rabbinical teaching. It showed Paul's ability under inspiration to use, or supplement, the truths he was taught during his training in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (cf. Acts 22:3).

The doctrine of original sin from Gen. 3 was developed by Augustine and Calvin. It asserts that humans are born sinful. Often Psalm 51:5; 58:3; and Job 15:14; 25:4 are used as OT proof-texts. The alternate theological position that humans are morally and spiritually responsible for their own choices and destiny was developed first by the rabbis and then in the church by Pelagius and Arminius. There is some evidence for their view in Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15; and Jonah 4:11; John 9:41; 15:22,24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 4:15. The thrust of this theological position would be that children are innocent until an age of moral responsibility (for the rabbis this was 13 years old for boys and 12 years old for girls).

There is a mediating position in which both an innate evil propensity and an age of moral responsibility are both true! Evil is not only corporate, but a developing evil of self and sin (life apart from God). The wickedness of humanity is not the issue (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12,13; Rom. 3:9-18,23), but the when, at birth or later in life?

2. “A new heaven and a new earth” become the NT eschatological theme.

“A new heaven and a new earth.” This Greek term for “new,” *kainos*, emphasizes quality, not chronological time (cf. 2:17; 3:12; 5:9; 14:3; 21:1,2,5). This was an OT theme, a recreated earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; 65:17; 66:22; Rom. 8:18-25; II Pet. 3:10,12). All believers are citizens of this new Kingdom (cf. Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 12:23) and share this new creation (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24). A parallel theological concept would be the “city of God not made with human hands” of Heb. 11:10,16; 12:22; 13:14.

The new creation will be like the initial creation. Heaven will be a restored Garden of Eden. God, mankind, the animals, and all natural creation will fellowship and rejoice again! The Bible begins with God, mankind and the animals in perfect fellowship in a garden (cf. Gen. 1-2). The Bible ends with God and mankind in a garden setting (cf. Rev. 21-22) and by prophetic implication, the animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-8; 65:25). Believers are not going to heaven; the new Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven (cf. Rev. 21:2) and coming to a recreated and cleansed earth. God and mankind are together again (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; 8:8,10; Rev. 21:3).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup>but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" <sup>4</sup>The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! <sup>5</sup>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." <sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

**3:1 “Now”** This is not temporal but simply a literary technique for introducing a new stage in the drama of creation. We do not know how long Adam and God were together or how long Adam, Eve, and God were together before this account.

▣ **“the serpent”** See Special Topic following. A serpent is also an enemy in the Gilgamesh Epic (cf. 11:287-289) who steals the plant that gives eternal life.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SERPENT

- A. The term “serpent” is *Nachash* (BDB 638). It has several possible etymologies:
1. *Kal Stem* - “to hiss”
  2. *Piel Stem* - “to whisper” as in sorcery or divination
  3. From 4:22 -“to shine” possibly related to the term “bronze”
  4. From Arabic root -“to creep”
- B. The definite article is present which shows one particular snake or personified entity.
- C. The literalness of the serpent is bolstered by:
1. It is listed as just one of the beasts of the field that God had created.
  2. Its punishment in 3:14 as a literal animal.
  3. It is alluded to specifically in the NT, II Cor. 11:3 and I Tim. 2:13-14.
- D. The serpent was specifically identified with Satan in:
1. The inter-testamental book of “Wisdom,” 2:23-24. “For God created man to be immortal; . . . nevertheless, through envy of the Devil came death into the world.”
  2. Irenaeus (about A.D. 130-202)
  3. Revelation 12:9; 20:2
  4. This identification is absent from the OT itself because it does not discuss Genesis 3 at any length. It is not even mentioned or interpreted in any other OT book.
- E. Why Satan is not specifically named—The emphasis of the text is on mankind’s responsibility not on supernatural temptation. In Romans 1-3 where man’s sinfulness is presented and 4-8 where its effects are noted, Satan is never mentioned.

▣ **“crafty”** There are two possible puns (this term sounds close to “naked” of 2:25) related to this term (BDB 791, KB 886): (1) “crafty” or “wise” and (2) “prudent” (e.g. Pro. 1:4; 8:5,12; 12:16,23; 13:16; 14:8,15,18; 22:3; 27:12). This does not seem to be a negative term applied to the serpent but simply a recognition of his characteristics (cf. Matt. 10:16). This is possibly why the evil one chose to incarnate this particular beast.

▣ **“any beast of the field”** This shows that the serpent was simply one of the many created animal forms.

▣ **“the LORD God”** The first term “LORD” is the covenant name of God, YHWH, from the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). The second term “God” is the Hebrew term *Elohim* which is the PLURAL form of the general term for God in the ancient Near East, El. The rabbis say that YHWH stands for God’s covenant mercy while *Elohim* stands for God as creator. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

▣ **“And he said”** There has been much speculation about an articulate serpent (note the personal pronoun). We do not know the relationship between humans and animals before the fall although it must have been a friendly one. However, I assume that speech is part of the image of God in mankind and

is, therefore, not normal for animals. This same fellowship is going to be restored in an eschatological setting (cf. Isa. 11:6-11). I assume that the snake was indwelt by Satan and therefore it is his voice that is heard. What is theologically surprising is that Eve was not surprised!

▣ **“the woman”** There has been much speculation among commentators as to why Eve was apart from Adam, even though the verbs used by Satan are PLURAL. In 3:6 it implies Adam may have been present through part of the dialog. Some have asserted that it is symbolic of her seeking self-identity. Others believe that Satan tempted her because she did not hear God’s commands directly (cf. 2:16-17). All of this is speculation.

▣ **“Indeed, has God said”** The rabbis say that Satan could not use the term YHWH because he was unfamiliar with the mercy of God. However, there seems to be an intensification of wickedness in the person of Satan in the Bible (cf. *The Theology of the Old Testament* by A. B. Davidson, pp. 300-306).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL**

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons:

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to God, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy developed in inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influences rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups:

1. human accusers - I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6
2. angelic accusers - Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1
3. demonic accusers - I Chr. 21:2; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2

Only later in the inter-testamental period is the serpent of Gen. 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. I Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is the strong monotheism of Israel (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

One avenue of possible information has been focusing on (1) Job 1-2 where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e. angels) in God’s presence (cf. Zech. 3) or (2) Isa. 14; Ezek. 28 where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim in his *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII (pp. 748-763) and XVI (pp. 770-776) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch angelic being opposed to YHWH as well as mankind. The two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahura Mazda* (the good god) vs. *Angra Mainyu* (the evil god), battled for supremacy with the earth as the battleground. Out of this conflict may have developed within Judaism a dualism between YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation with the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Lk. 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **“You shall not eat from any tree of the garden”** This Hebrew phrase is very specific but it seems to be related to an affirmation, not a question. The serpent is simply beginning a dialogue with the woman in connection with God’s prohibition to the tree in the midst of the garden.

**3:2** Eve states God’s provision of all of the other trees as food (cf. 2:16). But the serpent brushes this aside to focus in on God’s prohibition of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

**3:3 “but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden”** From Gen. 2:9 we learn that there are two trees in the midst of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Apparently at the proper time the fruit of both of these trees would have been given to mankind, but mankind’s grabbing self-assertion takes this out of the plan of God (how opposite is Jesus’ reaction in Phil. 2:6-11). The tree of life is common to all ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, however, the tree of knowledge of good and evil is unique to the Bible. There is nothing magical about the fruit. It was

the way that God was using it, not anything inherent in the physical qualities of the fruit itself, that made it significant.

▣ **“or you will die”** This term (BDB 559, KB 502) is used three times in vv. 3 and 4. It is uncertain what Eve understood about death for none of the animals had died. However, this may have been somehow communicated to the man and woman. The Bible knows of three kinds of death: (1) the spiritual death which occurs in Gen. 3; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 7:10-11; Eph. 2:1; James 1:15; (2) the physical death which results, Gen. 5; and (3) the eternal death as a consequence of man’s stubborn, rebellious heart (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8).

**3:4 “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die!’”** This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT from the same root (BDB 559, KB 562) used for emphasis. Satan has first of all attacked God’s veracity; now he attacks the truth of God’s word. And, in v. 5, he will attack God’s benevolence and goodness toward humankind. The Hebrew form of this sentence is in a striking intensified form. Satan denies God’s statement.

**3:5 “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened”** There was limited truth in what Satan said, but it was a tragic half-truth (cf. Titus 1:15). This seems to be a translators literary (metaphorical) use of “day,” as meaning “whenever.” Literally the Hebrew phrase is “that when.”

The VERB “opened” (BDB 824, KB 959, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. v. 7) implies an agent, possibly the power of the tree or the evil one.

▣ **“you will be like God”** This word for God is the term *Elohim*. See Special Topic at 2:4. It is used in this context for God Himself and this is how many translations interpret this phrase. However, this term can also be used of the angels (cf. Ps. 8:5,6; 82:1,6 [quoted in Heb. 2:7]; 97:7); it can be used of a “spirit being” (cf. I Sam. 28:13) and it can be used of Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9). It seems more logical that this is a promise of being like the angels, the spiritual beings who are present with God or possibly the heavenly council (cf. 3:22). It is ironical that mankind tried to grasp from God what was already his. Humanity is a higher spiritual order than the angels (cf. Heb. 1:14; 2:14-16; I Cor. 6:3).

**3:6 “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise”** Here we see the threefold development from the temptation to the actual act of sin. The rabbis say that the eyes and ears are windows of the soul and what we let in grows in our heart until the fateful act is committed.

▣ **“and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate”** There has been much speculation about this verse. The rabbis assert that Adam ate so that he would not be separated from his wife. This is also asserted by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. However, it seems from the context, that Eve acted toward Adam as the serpent had toward her, along with the experiential evidence that she had already eaten and was not dead. The rabbis even assert that the serpent used this same technique with Eve; that he forced her to touch the fruit and said, “See, you did not die.” Possibly she told Adam, “See, I’m not dead.”

**3:7 “and they knew that they were naked”** This has been used by many commentators to assert a sexual nature to the temptation (cf. II Cor. 11:3, “the serpent seduced Eve”). The rabbis even say that the serpent sexually seduced Eve, but this seems to be reading biases into the text. Their new knowledge was not the blessing it was cracked up to be (cf. Titus 1:15).

▣ **“sewed fig leaves together”** The traditional stance that Eve ate an apple is highly speculative. The rabbis say that she ate a fig from the same tree from which they took the leaves to clothe themselves. However, “the fruit” could be a date or some other kind of fruit—we simply do not know. The kind of fruit is not an issue.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." <sup>11</sup>And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."**

**3:8 “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden”** King James has “the voice of the LORD God” but the Hebrew word implies the sound of Him walking (BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE). The structure of the Hebrew and the context seem to imply that this was a regular activity where God and the first couple met for fellowship. This is a very anthropomorphic phrase for God who is a spiritual being and does not have a body. Some have postulated that God clothed Himself in human form for fellowship with the original couple. This may be true, but the only part of the Triune God that has a corporeal existence is the Son. Some have speculated that since the NT asserts creation to the agency of the Son (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), and that often there are physical manifestations of God (i.e. Angel of the Lord, e.g. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11, 15; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19) this may refer to the pre-incarnate Christ.

▣ **“in the cool of the day”** The Hebrew phrase is related to the term for the wind (BDB 398). It speaks of the cool breeze either of the morning or the evening.

▣ **“the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God”** This VERB (BDB 285, KB 284) is *Hithpael* IMPERFECT. The tragedy of sin can already be seen in the emotional as well as physical separation between God and His creation (cf. Ps. 139; Rev. 6:16).

**3:9 “Where are you?”** Obviously this is not God looking for information, but asking a question so that they could realize what they had done (cf. v. 11). These types of rhetorical questions in the OT have been used to assert a developing aspect in God’s character, called “Open Theism” (i.e. Clark Pennock, *The Most Moved Mover*).

**3:10 “I was afraid because I was naked”** What a tragedy! Adam is afraid of the loving God who created him and wanted to know him. The intensity of evil can be clearly seen here as man still continues to hide from God, from himself, from his family and from the natural order. The fact that he was naked was simply a coverup of the real problem which was open-eyed rebellion to the will of God.

**3:12 “The man said”** Here we have the emphasis on the fact that Adam is responsible even though he tries to blame Eve, even God Himself. Even in the midst of numerous excuses, blaming either Eve or

God, man is responsible for his own actions. Flip Wilson's theology, "The Devil made me do it!" is no more of an excuse than "Cultural environment made me do it" or "Genetic predisposition made me do it," etc.

**3:13 "The serpent deceived me, and I ate"** Eve quickly learned from Adam and she began to make excuses. The term "deceived" seems to mean "cause to forget" (BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* PERFECT). It may be an onomatopoeia to the serpent's hissing (i.e. *hissi'ani*). The NT mentions Eve's actions in II Cor. 11:3 and I Tim. 2:14.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO GENESIS 3:14-24

### INTRODUCTION

- A. This passage, like 3:1-12, is crucial in our understanding of our world's present condition of sin, sickness, pain, injustice, and evil. This is not the world that God intended it to be.
- B. This passage, especially v. 15, gives us our first word about what our world is going to be because of God's redemptive intervention! It is God's great promise of redemption to fallen, rebellious humanity and it will come through "the woman."
- C. The consequences of rebellion against God's person and word is clearly depicted! Satan is clearly seen as a liar and sin fully runs its course in the lives of Adam and Eve and their children.
- D. The relationship between man and woman is clearly delineated in v. 16 (cf. II Tim. 2:9-15; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; I Pet. 3:1). The stressed relationships of our world are a direct result of original, willful disobedience. If there is etiology in the OT, this could be an example. However, they have also been affected by God's grace in Christ (cf. I Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28).
- E. The rabbis reject original sin and posit the two "yetzers" (intents). However, there seems to be OT corroboration for Adam's originally sinning in Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4; Ps. 51:5 and the classical NT passage of Rom. 5:12-21.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:14-19**

**<sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; <sup>15</sup>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." <sup>16</sup>To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." <sup>17</sup>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 toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup>Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; <sup>19</sup>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."**

**3:14 "The LORD God"** This is the combination of the two major words for God in the OT, YHWH and Elohim. See note at 2:4.

▣ **"said to the serpent"** God does not ask questions of the serpent as He did of Adam and Eve. The serpent is judged as being a tool of the evil one.

▣ **"cursed are you more than all cattle"** The VERB (BDB 76, KB 91) is a *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This does not imply that all of the cattle (wider meaning than cows, possibly land animals) were already cursed. The phrase "more" can mean "out of all the cattle." The rabbis says that this refers to the gestation period of the cattle versus that of the snake, which the Talmud says is seven years.

▣ **"on your belly shall you go"** Anything that crawled on its belly was considered unclean by the Hebrews (cf. Lev. 11:42). The rabbis say that God cut the legs off the serpent in order to make him crawl, but maybe this is similar to the sign of the rainbow of Gen. 9:13 which possibly always existed but now takes on added meaning when used by God in a special way.

▣ **"and dust shall you eat"** This is alluded to in Isa. 65:25. There seems to be an aspect of God cursing the literal snake. This phrase may be a metaphor in the Bible to refer to defeat and shame (cf. Ps. 79:9; Isa. 49:23; Micah 7:17). Both of the IMPERFECTS of this verse are used in a JUSSIVE sense.

**3:15 "and I will put enmity"** Enmity (BDB 33) is a word used between persons. This seems to be the transition where God's judgment is addressed to Satan, not a literal serpent (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2). See "The Presence of God Qualifying our Notions of Grammatical-historical Interpretation: Genesis 3:15 as a Test Case" by Vern S. Poythress, JETS, vol. 50.1, pp. 87-103).

▣ **"between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed"** There has been much discussion among commentators about this verse. In a larger canonical context it seems to refer to the children (i.e. "Seed," BDB 282) of the evil one (cf. Matt. 13:38; John 8:44) and the children of the Messiah (cf. Irenaeus). But because the next verse uses the SINGULAR form "he" and "you" it seems to refer to the tension between God and the evil one symbolized in the redemptive work of the coming Messiah (cf. Irenaeus). It is obvious that Adam and Eve did not understand the ramification of this, nor probably did Moses, although Moses recognized in Deut. 18:18 that a prophet greater than he was coming. I think that it probably does have an allusion to the virgin birth, though this was surely unknown to the original human author, but known to the divine author (Holy Spirit). As mankind fell through the impulsiveness of the woman, mankind will be redeemed through the obedience of a woman in the supernatural conception of the Messiah by the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 7:14; matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38, see *A Guide To Biblical Prophecy*, pp. 78 and 80). The Vulgate changes the "he" in the next phrase to "she," which is totally inappropriate, but it may catch the gist of the fuller significance.

As this prophecy is not fully understood until its historical fulfillment in the virgin birth of Jesus, the same is to be said about the interpretation of Gen. 1 and 2. History reveals the truthfulness of revelation as the continuing scientific study of our earth shows the intricacy and inter-relatedness of God's creative acts! There is no conflict, just a more complete knowledge on mankind's part as to God's activities!



**NASB** “He shall bruise you on the head”  
**NKJV** “He shall bruise your head”  
**NRSV** “he will strike your head”  
**TEV** “Her offspring will crush your head”  
**NJB** “It will bruise your head”

The term “bruise” can mean “crush,” “pound,” “rub off,” “grind,” or “strike” (BDB 1003, KB 1446, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used twice, cf. Job 9:17). Notice the SINGULAR PERSONAL PRONOUN (cf. Rom. 16:20). The battle will eventually come down to individuals.



**NASB** “And you shall bruise him on the heel”  
**NKJV** “and you shall bruise His heel”  
**NRSV** “and you will strike his heel”  
**TEV** “and you will bite her offsprings’ heel”  
**NJB** “and you will strike its heel”

The same VERB (BDB 1003, KB 1446, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used for both, but it is obvious that Satan gets the worst end of the deal. This seems to refer to the crucifixion when understood from the NT perspective.

**3:16 “To the woman He said”** There seem to be four major elements here: (1) multiply pain in childbirth (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT of the same VERB, BDB 915, KB 176); (2) too many children to rear; (3) problems associated with rearing children; and (4) the dominance of the husband. We can see how these are connected with Eve’s rebellion: (a) she wanted to be independent, but now she is totally dependent on her husband (and not God); (b) she sought for joy and happiness in the forbidden fruit, but now she has pain in the normal aspect of her life. It is obvious that the NT understands this as a theological significance of the fallen relationship between men and women (cf. I Tim. 2:9-15). We must strike a balance between who we are in Christ, I Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28, and what we continue to be, in some respects, in Adam, Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; I Pet. 3:1.

There is some confusion in the Hebrew text at this point. The term translated here “in childbirth” is spelled differently. The Hebrew consonants could mean “lying-in-wait-for,” referring to evil tempting the children (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 90-99).

**□ “yet your desire shall be for your husband”** The Hebrew word is translated here “desire” or “longing” (BDB 1003, KB 1801). Walter Kaiser asserts that it can mean “to turn,” possibly in the sense of “to dominate” (cf. Gen. 4:7). Eve turned away from YHWH. Her punishment is her continuing turning to her husband, who often takes advantage of the situation (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP p. 97-98).

**□ “he shall rule over you”** The VERB (BDB 605, KB 647) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. This seems to be a result of the fall and, God help us, males’ sinful nature has taken it to the extreme. Jealousy, rape, divorce and godless dominance have characterized mankind’s sexual drive! We have become like the animals but with the problem of ego added to sexual desire!

**3:17 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife”** Adam should have been following God’s word, but he followed his wife’s word and broke God’s specific command (cf. 2:15-17).

▣ **“cursed is the ground because of you”** The VERB (BDB 76, KB 91, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means the opposite of blessed. The ground will no longer produce freely and abundantly. The current earth is not what God intended!

There is a play on the word “Adam” (*Adam*, BDB 9) and the word “ground” (*adamah*, BDB 9). Both have the same root. We can see the consequences of the fall of mankind and nature in Rom. 8:18-23.

It has also been proposed that this reflects the state of nature outside the Garden of Eden. After their rebellion Adam and Eve are sent out of God’s special place into the reality of a hunter/gatherer, tooth-and- claw world.

▣ **“in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life”** Adam was given the task of keeping the garden before the Fall (cf. 2:15), which was a sign of his dominion, but now the task would become wearisome, repetitive, mandatory and never ending (i.e. “toil” BDB 781). And even with mankind’s labor, the ground yields meager produce (cf. v. 18).

Notice the number of times the VERB “eat” (BDB 37, KB 46) is used in these opening chapters (cf. 2:16,17; 3:1,2,3,6,11,12,13,14,17[twice],18,19,22)! It relates to both abundance and curse.

**3:19 “till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken”** This is a direct connection between Adam’s fall, spiritual death (chap. 3) and physical death (chap. 5). God is trustworthy. He said that they would experience death in all of its ramifications and they certainly did!

▣ **“you are dust”** (cf. Gen. 2:7).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:20-21

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

**3:20 “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all *the* living”** The husband’s dominion over his wife is now symbolized by his naming her. Etymologically, the words “Eve” (*hawwa*) and “the living” (*haya*) are very similar and this was probably a popular Hebrew word play. These word plays on Adam, Eve, Cain-Nod show the literary nature of these early accounts. It is ironical that she is called “Eve” which means “living” when instead of life, she brought death.

**3:21** It is unusual that humans needed this clothing unless climate and/or other radical changes awaited mankind outside the garden of Eden.

This first death, instituted by God for mankind’s need, clearly shows God’s care and provision as well as the reality of judgment and consequence!

See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY GOD CLOTHED ADAM AND EVE WITH ANIMAL SKINS**

- A. As a provision for the harsh life outside of Eden
- B. To cover their sensed shame of nakedness
- C. To show the lawfulness of using animals for mankind's needs
- D. To show the difference in mankind's provisions (leaves) and God's (skins)
- E. To remind them of their own coming death (cf. Gen. 5)
- F. To foreshadow the clothing metaphor of Christ's imputed righteousness given to us as a new garment (cf. Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:8,10,12,14; James 1:21 I Pet. 2:1)
- G. To show God's continuing love and provision for mankind, even though fallen

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:22-24**

**<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD 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" — <sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>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.**

**3:22 "Behold, the man has become like one of Us"** There has been much discussion about these PLURALS in Genesis (cf. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). Verse 22 begins with a SINGULAR and develops into a PLURAL. If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, this obviously does refer to the triune God, not to the Hebrew grammatical form called the plural of majesty. However, it could refer to (1) the angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19), (2) the two divine persons in Ps. 110:1, or even (3) the personification of deity known as the angel of the LORD; for one example of many, see the burning bush of Exod. 3:2,4.

▣ **"the tree of life"** We have noted earlier that a tree of life is common in most ancient Near Eastern creation texts. Here, mankind is excluded, not because of the jealousy of the gods, but because it would be a curse for mankind to live forever in his current fallen state.

▣ **"live forever"** See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: 'OLAM (Forever)**

This is the very common (used over 400 times) term *'olam* (BDB 761, KB 798). It is used of duration of time in several senses, each of which must be linked to the nature of the thing to which it refers.

- A. Time past (examples only)
  1. “heroes of old,” Gen 6:4
  2. “mountains and hills,” Gen. 49:21
  3. “generations of old,” Deut. 32:7
  4. “forefather,” Josh 24:2
  5. “days of old,” Isa. 51:9
- B. Continual for a lifetime (examples only)
  1. “believe in you forever” (i.e., Moses), Exod. 19:9
  2. “slave forever,” Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 27:12
  3. “all your days,” Deut. 23:6
  4. Samuel “stay there forever,” I Sam. 1:22
  5. King “live forever,” I Kgs. 1:21; Neh. 2:3; Ps. 21:4
  6. “bless the Lord forever,” Ps. 115:18; 145:1-2
  7. “sing forever,” Ps. 89:1; 115:18; 145:1-2
  8. “pregnant forever (metaphor), Jer. 20:17
  9. possibly Prov. 10:25
- C. Continual existence (but with obvious limitations)
  1. humans live forever, Gen. 3:22
  2. the earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; 148:6; Eccl. 1:4 (cf. II Pet. 3:10)
  3. Aaronic priesthood, Exod. 29:9; 40:15 (cf. I Sam. 2:30)
  4. the Sabbath, Exod. 31:16-17
  5. the feast days, Exod. 12:14,17,24; Lev. 16:29,31,24; 23:14,21,41
  6. circumcision, Gen. 17:13 (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
  7. the land of promise, Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4; Exod. 32:13 (cf. Exiles)
  8. ruined cities, Isa. 25:2; 32:14; 34:10
- D. Conditional Covenants
  1. Abraham, Gen. 17:7,8,13,19
  2. Israel, Deut. 5:29; 12:28
  3. David, II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; Ps. 89:2,4
  4. Israel, Jdgs. 2:1 (cf. Galatians 3)
- E. Unconditional Covenants
  1. Noah, Gen. 9:12,16
  2. New Covenant, Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; 50:5 (i.e., Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-30)
- F. God Himself
  1. His existence, Gen. 21:33; Deut. 32:40; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; Isa. 40:28; Dan. 12:7
  2. His name, Exod. 3:15; Ps. 135:13
  3. His reign, Exod. 15:18; Ps. 45:6; 66:7; Jer. 10:10; Micah 4:7
  4. His word, Ps. 119:89,160; Isa. 40:8; 59:21
  5. His lovingkindness, Ps. 25:6; 89:2; 103:17; 118:1-4,29; Jer. 33:1

G. His Messiah

1. His name, Ps. 72:17,19
2. Blessed forever, Ps. 45:2,17; 89:52
3. reign, Ps. 89:36,37; Isa. 9:7
4. priest, Ps. 110:4
5. pre-existence, Micah 5:2

H. New Age life

1. everlasting life, Dan. 12:2
2. everlasting contempt, Dan. 12:2
3. no more tears, Isa. 65:19 (Rev. 21:4)
4. no sun, Isa. 60:19-20 (Rev. 21:23)

Note how many different English words are used to translate this Hebrew word in the NIV

1. forever
2. old, of old
3. everlasting
4. eternal
5. lasting
6. always
7. for life
8. continue
9. regular
10. permanent
11. any time
12. ancient, ancient times
13. endless
14. forevermore
15. to the very end
16. a long time
17. long ago

**3:23 “therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden”** This is a strong VERBAL form (BDB 1081, KB 1511, *Piel* IMPERFECT) that has negative connotations. In Deut. 21:14 it refers to divorce, and in I Kgs. 9:7 it refers to judgment on the nation of Israel.

**3:24 “the cherubim”** These are winged angelic creatures (BDB 500) which guarded the garden of God to keep mankind out. They later appear in tabernacle/temple art. The fact that the Garden is guarded shows it was a special place, a protected environment, which is now off limits to human kind. See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CHERUBIM

- A. One of several types of angelic beings. This particular type guarded sacred areas (cf. Exod. 25:18-22; I Kgs. 8:6-7).
- B. Etymology is uncertain:
  - 1. From Akkadian “intercessor” or “mediator” between God and man
  - 2. From Hebrew this is a possible word play, “chariot” and cherub” (cf. Ezek. 1; 10)
  - 3. Some say it means “brilliant appearance”
- C. Physical form—This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the ancient Near East. Some link them to:
  - 1. Winged bull of Mesopotamia
  - 2. Winged eagle-lions of Egypt called “griffins”
  - 3. Winged creatures on Hiram, King of Tyre’s throne
  - 4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab’s ivory palace in Samaria
- D. Physical Description
  - 1. The form cherubim is linked with the Seraphim of Isaiah 6.
  - 2. Examples of different forms
    - a. Number of faces
      - (1) two—Ezek. 41:18
      - (2) four—Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14,16,21,22
      - (3) one—Rev. 4:7
    - b. Number of wings
      - (1) two—I Kgs. 6:24
      - (2) four—Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
      - (3) six (like Seraphim of Isa. 6:2) —Rev. 4:8
  - 3. Other features
    - a. Human hands—Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21
    - b. Legs
      - (1) Straight, no knee—Ezek. 1:7
      - (2) Calf feet—Ezek. 1:7
  - 4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what cherubim looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII:3:3).
- E. Places and purpose found in the Bible
  - 1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)
  - 2. Guardian of the Tabernacle
    - a. Over the Ark of the Covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; I Sam. 4:4
    - b. Depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35
  - 3. Guardian of Solomon’s Temple
    - a. Two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; I Kgs. 6:23-28; 8:6-7; II Chron. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
    - b. On walls of inner shrine; I Kgs. 6:29,35; II Chron. 3:7

- c. On panels that were associated with the several lavers; I Kgs. 7:27-39
- 4. Guardian of Ezekiel's Temple
  - a. Carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25
- 5. Connected with transportation of deity
  - a. possibly a metaphor for wind; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
  - b. guardian of God's throne; Ps.80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
  - c. guardian of God's portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; I Chron. 28:18
- 6. Herod's Temple
  - a. Painted on walls (i.e. guardian cf. Talmud "Yoma" 54a)
- 7. Revelation throne scene (i.e. guardian cf. Rev. 4-5)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is this allegory, myth, or historical-narrative?
2. Is the serpent literal and did it talk?
3. Was the serpent energized and possessed by the evil one? If so, how and why?
4. Did God know what Adam and Eve would do? If so, why did He allow it?
5. Describe in your own terms the degrees of development of the serpent's temptation and the specific charges against God.
6. How can God, as a spiritual being, have a body?
7. Does chapter 3 explain the presence of evil in our world and the presence of guilt in the heart of mankind? If so, why is it not discussed more completely in the OT?
8. Is the serpent serving as God's servant to test mankind or is he already a rebel against God (cf. Job 1-2 and Zech. 3)?
9. Why did God judge an animal which was simply being used by Satan?
10. Is verse 15 an allusion to the coming Messiah or simply the fear between women and snakes?
11. It is obvious that our modern society which emphasizes equality between men and women rejects verse 16 as a universal principle. Why do you believe that this verse is or is not still valid?
12. Is verse 20 an act of repentance and faith on Adam's part or a willful assertion that he and Eve can do it by themselves?
13. Explain the use of the PLURALS that are used of God in verse 22. Is this a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity or something else? Why or why not?

# GENESIS 4:1-26

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Cain and Abel	Cain Murders Abel	Cain, Abel, and Seth	Cain and Abel	Cain and Abel
4:1-8	4:1-8	4:1-7 4:8-16	4:1-7 4:8	4:1-8
4:9-15	4:9-15		4:9a 4:9b 4:10-12 4:13-14 4:15-16	4:9-16
4:16	The Family of Cain 4:16-18		The Descendants of Cain	
4:17-22		4:17-22	4:17-22	4:17-22
4:23-24	4:19-24			
(23-24)	(23-24) A New Son	(23-24)	(23-24) Seth and Enoch	(23-24) Seth and His Descendants
5:25-26	4:25-26	4:25-26	4:25-26	4:25-26

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. It has been asserted by many commentators that 4:1-24 describes the development of the rebellious seed of Cain, while 4:25-5:32 describes the development of the godly seed of Seth. Although this is helpful in looking at these chapters it completely breaks down in the evilness of all men seen in 6:5-6, 11-12,13.
- B. Many have asserted that chapter 4 is not a detailed western genealogy but an eastern Hebraic genealogy that simply hits the high points. If you add up the dates of Genesis 4 they seem to be overlapping and only cover about a 2,000 year span. Therefore, I believe that they are representative samples or symbolic numbers (like those of Jesus in Matthew and Luke), not exhaustive genealogies.
- C. Chapter 5 has been described as the death chapter, but verses 21-24 hold out great hope for the redemption of mankind in the translation of Enoch. The same terms are used for Elijah in II Kgs. 2:3,5,9,10.
- D. Genesis 3:8-11:9 reveals the terrible consequences of sin which continues from generation to generation.
- E. The descendants of Cain are not documented like the descendants of Seth (i.e. not dates or ages given). Cain's line dies in the flood completely. Possibly because of who he married. All bipedal, tool-making, large skull creatures were not in the image of God.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-8**

**<sup>1</sup>Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a man-child with *the help of the LORD.*" <sup>2</sup>Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. <sup>3</sup>So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. <sup>4</sup>Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; <sup>5</sup>but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>"If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." <sup>8</sup>Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.**

**4:1 "the man had relations with his wife Eve"** Literally, "Adam knew Eve." The Hebrew term "knew" speaks of intimate personal relationship (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Jer. 1:5). Whether this was the first sexual union between Adam and Eve is not stated. The Bible is silent about how many children they had and when they had them. We only know about the three named ones. This is very significant in interpreting the NT words for "knowing" God which show that it is not only factual content, but a personal relationship that is being emphasized. Basically mankind's response to God involves (1) truths to be believed, (2) a person to welcome, and (3) an appropriate life to live! See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)**

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil - Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding - Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience - Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider - Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
  - a. a person - Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 28:35,36; 33:9
  - b. a god - Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17  
YHWH - Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
  - c. sexual - Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge - Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise - Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
  - a. of Moses - Deut. 34:10
  - b. of Israel - Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ **“Cain”** The name “Cain” (*qayin*, BDB 884 III, KB 1097, and BDB 888-89) is a sound play on the Hebrew word “gotten” (*qaniti*). It seems to affirm that Cain was a special gift with the help of YHWH (possibly even a fulfillment of 3:15).

▣ **“a man child with the help of the LORD”** The translation, “man-child,” seems to catch the emphasis. Some assert that Eve had previous daughters and that this was the first male, but this is speculation. The closing phrase of v. 1, “with *the help of the Lord*,” (BDB 86) implies that this was a statement of faith by Eve based on Gen. 3:15. This is the first use of the name YHWH by itself. The next time it appears alone is in worship by the line of Seth in 4:26.

**4:2 “Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel”** The rabbis say that because the phrase “and Adam knew Eve” is missing in v. 2 that Cain and Abel were twins, but this seems highly unlikely.

▣ **“Abel”** The Hebrew term means “breath,” “vapor,” or “vanity” (BDB 211 II, cf. Eccl. 1:2). There are three possible implications of this name: (1) this may reflect (a) Eve’s discouragement about her fallen condition or (b) a prediction about the shortness of his life; (2) a possible link to the Akkadian word “son” (*ibil*); and (3) others have asserted that it is related to the word “weakness” because of Eve’s discouragement over the curse of many children (cf. Gen. 3:16).

**4:3 “that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground”** Notice that Cain is the first to bring an offering to the Lord (BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil IMPERFECT*). There is nothing inherently inferior in a grain sacrifice versus an animal sacrifice. The significance is in the faith of the offerer, not the sacrifice itself. Possibly they brought the offering to the gateway of the garden of Eden.

**4:4 “Abel on his part also brought out of the firstlings of his flock”** The key seems to be in the term “firstlings” (BDB 114). Cain brought some of his agricultural produce, but Abel brought the best of his

flock, which showed an attitude of faith and respect. But it must be remembered that the text itself is very ambiguous and brief. We must be careful of reading too much into these early accounts.



NASB	“and their fat portions”
NKJV	“and their fat”
NRSV	“their fat portions”
TEV	“the best parts of it”
NJB	“and some of their fat”
SEPT	“even some of the fattest of them”
JPSOA	“the choicest”
NET	“even the fattest of them”

Apparently here and in later Judaism, the intestines and the fat connected to it were what was offered on the altar: (1) they were seen as the seat of the emotions or (2) the fat was a symbol of prosperity and health.

The SEPT, JPSOA, and NET Bible understand this phrase as referring not to the fat of the intestines offered on the altar, but as the best of the flock. This fits the context better.

☐ **“and the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering”** Literally this means “looked upon” with a positive connotation (BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. TEV and NJB). The how is uncertain although there have been many speculations. It is obvious that God communicated His joy for the one and His displeasure in the other. It has been noted by commentators, both ancient and modern, that God accepted Abel first and then his offering. This is always the order (cf. Heb. 11:4). The problem with Cain was his attitude. It is possible that God is showing His sovereignty by loving the younger not the older. This is seen throughout Genesis.

**4:5 “Cain became very angry”** The Hebrew words are very intense here which describe Cain’s emotions (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* IMPERFECT plus the ADVERB “very,” BDB 547). Notice that he is angry at God but he will take his anger out on his brother. The context here is anger amidst worship. Possibly he was upset because he brought his offering first, but Abel’s was accepted and his was not.

☐ **“his countenance fell”** There is a word play between “fell” in vv. 5 and 6 (BDB 656, KB 709) and “will not your countenance be lifted up” in v. 7. The term “lifted up” can mean “accepted” (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV).

**4:6 “Why are you angry”** Here again is God asking several questions, not for information, but to help the person to understand his own feelings and motives (cf. v. 9 and 3:9,11,13).

**4:7 “sin is crouching at the door”** In this verse sin is personified as a wild animal whose desire is to destroy (cf. I Pet. 5:8). There is a possible Akkadian connection with the word “crouching” which was used of the demonic (BDB 918, KB 1181, *Qal* PARTICIPLE). This shows the true nature of sin in our world.

☐ **“and its desire is for you”** This same term “desire” (BDB 1003, KB 1802) is used in Gen. 3:16. It shows that the purpose of evil is our destruction (i.e. “to control” and “to dominate”).

☐ **“but you must master it”** The VERB (BDB 605, KB 647) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. This shows that we are not a puppet in the hand of evil, but we have the ability, with God’s help, to resist evil (cf. Eph.

6:13; James. 4:7; I Pet. 5:9), to repent and be restored! Cain was not bound by Adam's sin (cf. Ezek. 18:2-4). We are affected by Adam and Eve's rebellion, but we are responsible for our own choices.

**4:8 “Cain told Abel his brother”** There has been much discussion about this phrase. Some assert that Cain told Abel about what God had said in vv. 6 and 7. Others assert, along with the Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and RSV translations, that Cain lured him into the field so that he could kill him (i.e. premeditated murder).

▣ **“Cain rose up against Abel”** Chapter 3 emphasized supernatural temptation; chapter 4 emphasized the development of the Adamic fallen nature in mankind. There is no tempter here, only full-blossomed sin resulting from the sin of Adam and Eve and which extends to all their descendants (cf. Rom. 8:9-18,23; I John 3:12). The VERBS “rose up” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT) and “killed” (BDB 246, KB 255, *Qal* IMPERFECT) show the progressive violence.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-15**

**<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" <sup>10</sup>He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. <sup>11</sup>Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup>When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." <sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! <sup>14</sup>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 whoever finds me will kill me." <sup>15</sup>So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.**

**4:9 “Am I my brother’s keeper?”** The great problem with Cain was his unrepentant heart. The term “keeper” can mean “shepherd” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE), which may be a play on the occupation of Abel (cf. v. 2).

**4:10 “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground”** This phrase is very significant (“crying” BDB 858, KB 1042, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). For the Hebrews, the life force was in the blood (cf. Lev. 17:11; Rev. 6:9,10). The word “blood” is PLURAL in Hebrew. Rashi says that the PLURAL refers to Abel and his potential seed. The PLURAL also shows intensity.

**4:11 “Now you are cursed from the ground”** This is the first direct curse on man. With Adam's sin the ground was cursed. It is significant that Cain, being a farmer, can no longer use this as his occupation. He is banished into the desert which is the abode of demons and with it, the absence of agriculture activity.

**4:12 “it shall no longer yield its strength to you”** This is a *Hiphil* JUSSIVE form (BDB 414, KB 418). Many commentators have asserted that this is why Cain's line developed urban life as over against rural life (cf. vv. 16-24).

▣ **“you will be a vagrant and a wanderer”** These two similar sounding terms (BDB 631, KB 681 and BDB 626, KB 678, cf. v. 14) describe Cain's nomadic life. They are word plays on the land of Nod (BDB 627 II). These word plays show the literary shaping of these early chapters.

4:13 “My punishment is too great to bear!” Cain is not sorry for his act but he is sorry for its consequences.

**4:14 “driven me this day from the face of the ground”** This is the occupational result of Cain’s sin while the next phrase “from Thy face I shall be hidden” is the spiritual result (cf. 3:8) of Cain’s sin.

▣ **“whoever finds me will kill me”** Cain feared for his own life. The rabbis say that he was afraid of the animals. However, the context seems to imply that his own relatives, who would be “go’els” (blood avenger) for Abel, would kill him. This would imply that Adam and Eve had many unnamed children.

There is a very interesting discussion of Adam and Eve’s relationship to other pre-historic humanoids in Kidner’s *The Tyndale Commentary on Genesis* and Bernard Ramm’s discussion of anthropology in *The Christian’s View of Science and Scripture*. This verse implies many other rational creatures. For a discussion of humanoids and their dates of occupation of the ancient Near East see R. K. Harrison’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 147-163 and *Who was Adam?* by Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross.

If Cain married a non-homosapien without God’s Spirit, then Gen. 6:1-4 would be a mixing of God’s special human creation with bipedal animals instead of humans with angels.

**4:15 “vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold”** The term “sevenfold” seems to mean complete vengeance (BDB 988). Apparently God left Cain alive as an even more poignant sign of sin. The rabbis say that God will take vengeance on him in seven generations which would be Lamech. There is a rabbinical legend that verse 23 refers to Lamech and his son, Tubal-Cain, killing Cain by accident.

▣ **“appointed a sign for Cain”** This was either a sign (BDB 16, “a mark”) of (1) God’s mercy amidst judgment or (2) God’s sustaining His judgment through time. The rabbis say that God put an animal horn in the midst of Cain’s head. However, it seems more probable that it was a mark on the forehead (cf. Ezek. 9:4,6).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:16**

**<sup>16</sup>Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.**

**4:16 “Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD”** This seems to be a physical result typifying the spiritual result (“went out” BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Verses 16-24 really show banished mankind starting a world system apart from God. This anti-YHWH world system can be seen in the kingdoms of Daniel’s visions. It becomes typified in the great whore of Babylon in the book of Revelation and in John’s use of the term “world.”

▣ **“the land of Nod”** “Nod” is a Hebrew term for “wandering” or “the land of wanderers” (BDB 627 II). This is an obvious play on Cain’s name. We do not know where this place is located but it is obviously more east of Eden than Adam and Eve had gone.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:17-22**

**<sup>17</sup>Cain had relations with 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. <sup>18</sup>Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael,**

**and Methushael became the father of Lamech. <sup>19</sup>Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and *have* livestock. <sup>21</sup>His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. <sup>22</sup>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.**

**4:17 “Cain had relations with his wife”** Who did he marry? Most conservative scholars assume he married one of his sisters, but this is never stated in the Bible. Genesis 5:4 does state that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters. One wonders about the people outside the garden whom Cain was afraid of in 4:14 (see note at 4:14).

▣ **“she conceived and gave birth to Enoch”** All etymologies of these names are very doubtful. The name Enoch may mean “beginner” or “initiator” (BDB 335). There is an obvious similarity between the list of Cain’s children and the list of Seth’s children in chapter 5 (ex. Enoch and Lamech). The exact reason for this etymological similarity is uncertain, but it shows (1) that the two families had many social connections, or (2) the spiritual differences of these two Enochs.

Also notice that the length of the lives of Cain’s line are not given. This may imply that the extended ages of Seth’s line are symbolic of renown or praise (as with the list of ten Sumerian kings who had extended lives before and after the flood. The length of life decreases after the flood but is still very long by today’s standards).

▣ **“he built a city”** This seems to be in direct defiance to God’s command that he would be a wanderer (cf. vv. 12,14). Others have seen this as an example of Cain’s fear that someone would kill him; therefore, he built a fort to protect himself and his family (similar to the purpose of the Tower of Babel).

**4:18 “Now to Enoch was born Irad”** Possible etymologies of this term are: (1) ornament of the city; (2) townsman; or (3) fleet-footed (BDB 747).

▣ **“Mehujael”** The possible etymologies of this term are (1) “God is giver of life”; (2) “God is giver of fountain of life”; (3) “smitten of God”; or (4) “formed of God” (BDB 562).

▣ **“Methushael”** The possible etymologies of this term are (1) “Man of God”; (2) “strong youth”; or (3) “king” (BDB 607).

**4:19 “Lamech took to himself two wives”** This is the first account of polygamy and it begins in the fallen line of Cain. The name Lamech is of uncertain origins (BDB 541).

▣ **“Adah. . .Zillah”** These two women’s names are a play on terms for physical beauty. The rabbis say that one was his wife to bear children and one was his mistress for pleasure. The name “Adah” can mean “ornament” or “morning” (BDB 725), while the name “Zillah” seems to mean “shade” or “shelter,” “tinkling” or “musical player” (BDB 853).

**4:20 “Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and *have* livestock”** This term seems to mean “wanderer” (BDB 385 II), which describes the nomadic life which he apparently developed.

**4:21 “Jubal. . .all those who play the lyre and the pipe”** Some assert that his name means “sound.” This is the beginning of certain gifts of musical skills. Music is connected with the evil one in Ezekiel

18:13. As all of God's gifts, it can be perverted. This tribal group developed not only the stringed instruments but also the wind instruments.

**4:22 “Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron”** This man (BDB 1063) was the first to make weapons of war. It is possible that the three people mentioned in vv. 21-22 are named to reflect their occupations.

▣ **“Naamah”** This name means “pleasant” or “beautiful” (BDB 653 I). The rabbis say that she married Noah but this is highly unlikely.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:23-24**

<sup>23</sup>Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; <sup>24</sup>If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

**4:23 “Lamech said to his wives”** This is one of the first uses of poetry recorded in the Bible (about 40% of the OT is in poetic form). It is grammatically connected with verse 22. Rabbinical legend says that his two wives had left him because he had killed Cain by accident and also his son, Tubal-cain, while hunting. This seems extremely fanciful. What it does emphasize is the development of sin to such an extent that Lamech was bragging on the stringency of his revenge. Some have asserted that he held up Tubal-cain's first weapon of war and made this rhythmical brag. There has been much discussion among commentators about the time element (past, future). Most assume that they refer to something that will happen, not to something that had happened.

**4:24 “seventy-sevenfold”** This shows the severity of Lamech's revenge (cf. 4:15). Some commentators see a contrast between this and Jesus' words about forgiveness in Matt. 18:21,22.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:25-26**

<sup>25</sup>Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."  
<sup>26</sup>To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enoch. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD.

**4:25-26** This contextually should go with chapter 5. Chapter and verse divisions were not part of the original text of either the Hebrew OT or the Greek NT.

**4:25** This is another word play between the Hebrew term “appointed” (*shat*, BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* PERFECT) and Seth (*shet*, BDB 1011 I). This continuing literary (sound) play on the names in Gen. 1-11 shows its literary character.

**4:26 “he called his name Enoch”** This is one of the Hebrew terms for “man” (BDB 60), synonymous with Adam (cf. Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 96:3; 144:3; Isa. 51:12; 56:2).

▣ **“Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD”** This seems to imply regular public worship because of the use of the divine covenant name of YHWH. Many have seen a contradiction between this verse and Exod. 6:3. Possibly, men had used the name of YHWH without knowing its full significance until the time of Moses. This is the beginning of the Messianic line (cf. Luke 3:38).

# GENESIS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Descendants of Adam	The Family of Adam	The Generations From Adam to Noah	The Descendants of Adam	The Patriarchs Before the Flood
5:1-2	5:1-5	5:1-2	5:1-5	5:1-2
5:3-5		5:3-5		5:3-5
5:6-8	5:6-8	5:6-8	5:6-8	5:6-8
5:9-11	5:9-11	5:9-11	5:9-11	5:9-11
5:12-14	5:12-14	5:12-14	5:12-14	5:12-14
5:15-17	5:15-17	5:15-17	5:15-17	5:15-17
5:18-20	5:18-20	5:18-20	5:18-20	5:18-20
5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24
5:25-27	5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24	5:21-24
5:28-31	5:28-31	5:28-31	5:28-31	5:28-31
5:32	5:32	5:32	5:32	5:32

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup>He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.**

**5:1 “the generations of”** This term (BDB 410) is repeated ten times in Genesis (cf. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1; 37:2). This seems to imply a written document (probably clay tablets or leather scroll). In ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets a term or phrase was used to link several clay tablets together as a literary whole (i.e. colophon). I believe that Moses used (1) oral traditions, (2) written sources from the Patriarchs, as well as (3) direct revelation to write the Pentateuch.

This phrase is repeated many times in Genesis. It always closes a context. It functions as a closing literary marker.

▣ **“In the day when God created man”** This may start another separate cuneiform stone tablet because it summarizes Genesis 1-2.

**5:2 “named them Man”** Notice that this is the generic use of adam, as v. 3 is the specific use. This generic use is another affirmation of equality, as is 1:26-27.

▣ **“in the day”** This is the use of “day,” not as a twenty-four hour period of time, but an age or period of time. This same usage can be seen in Gen. 2:4; Ps. 90:4. See Special Topic at 1:5.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:3-5

**<sup>3</sup>When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. <sup>4</sup>Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.**

**5:3 “Adam . . . became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image”** There are two possible interpretations of this phrase: (1) like other earthly animals, Adam produced offspring after his own kind (cf. 1:11) or (2) this shows that God’s image (cf. 1:26-27) is still in mankind even after the fall.

**5:5 “all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years”** There has been much discussion about the length of human life before and immediately after the great flood (i.e. the antediluvian period). Some have asserted that (1) it is figurative; (2) they calculated years differently; (3) sin had simply not pervaded the earth as it has today; or (4) the large numbers were used to show honor for previous leaders as in the Sumerian lists of ten ancient kings. In that list, the kings before the flood lived much longer than the kings after the flood, much as in the genealogies of the Bible.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-8**

<sup>6</sup>Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enoch. <sup>7</sup>Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

This is referred to earlier in 4:26.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan. <sup>10</sup>Then Enoch lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>So all the days of Enoch were nine hundred and five years, and he died.

**5:10 “Kenan”** This can mean: (1) “possessor”; (2) “child”; (3) “created thing”; (4) “young man”; or (5) “spear-man” (BDB 884). It is obvious with this many options (as is so often the case) that we simply do not know its meaning.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel. <sup>13</sup>Then Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

It is obvious that these are paralleled or standardized literary statements.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:15-17**

<sup>15</sup>Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. <sup>16</sup>Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup>So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

**5:15 “Mahalalel”** This means “praise of God” (BDB 239).

▣ **“Jared”** This means “descent” (BDB 434).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. <sup>19</sup>Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

**5:18 “Enoch”** This can mean (1) “beginner”; (2) “dedicated”; or (3) “initiator” (BDB 335). See note at 4:17b for similarity in the names between Cain’s line (i.e. chapter 4) and Seth’s line (i.e. chapter 5).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21-24**

<sup>21</sup>Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had *other* sons

**and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.**

**5:21 “Methuselah”** This means either (1) “man of the javelin” or (2) “man of weapons” (BDB 607). He is said to have lived longer than any other person in the Bible but no reason or emphasis is attached to this fact. The rabbis say that the flood came on the day that Methuselah died.

**5:22 “Enoch walked with God”** This Hebrew term (BDB 229, KB 246) is the *Hithpael* stem denoting intimate fellowship almost to the point of “to live with.” As with all these ancient Hebrew names, we are simply not sure of their exact meaning (BDB 335). Hebrews 11:5 describes Enoch’s walk of faith. The only other person this phrase is used for is Noah in 6:9.

**5:24 “for God took him”** These same words (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* PERFECT) are used to describe Elijah in II Kgs. 2:3,5,9,10. This implies translation into God’s presence without facing physical death. Enoch’s relationship with God resulted in intimate personal fellowship. In a chapter replete with the phrase “and he died” this is a refreshing example of hope (1) of the love of God and (2) for all who trust in Him.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:25-27**

<sup>25</sup>**Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech. <sup>26</sup>Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup>So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.**

**5:26 “Lamech”** This name possibly means” (1) “strong” (2) “youth”; (3) “warrior”; or (4) “conqueror” (BDB 541). KB mentions an Arabic root meaning “very powerful man.” This name is also found in Cain’s line (cf. 4:18ff). This implies (1) the name was common or (2) there is some connection between the two genealogies.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:28-31**

<sup>28</sup>**Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. <sup>29</sup>Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands *arising* from the ground which the LORD has cursed." <sup>30</sup>Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had *other* sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup>So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.**

**5:28** What a contrast are the two Lamechs. One is boastful of violent revenge (Cain’s line); the other is hopeful of the mercy of God (Seth’s line)!

**5:29 “Noah. . .rest”** This is a popular, not a philological, etymology of the term “rest” (BDB 629). This seems to express Lamech’s faith, that through Noah, a significant reversal of the curse of Gen. 3:17 would take place. This is Lamech’s statement of faith.

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:32**

<sup>32</sup>Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

**5:32 “Shem”** This term may mean “renown” or “name” (BDB 1028).

▣ **“Ham”** This term may mean “to be hot” or “to be dark” (BDB 325).

▣ **“Japheth”** This term may mean “beauty” or “spreading” (BDB 834).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the theological relationship between Genesis 4 and 5?
2. Why is the genealogy of Cain developed and then totally dropped from Scripture?
3. Why are the names of the Cainites and the Sethites so similar?
4. What happened to Enoch?

# GENESIS 6:1-22

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Corruption of Mankind 6:1-4	The Wickedness and Judgment of Man 6:1-4	The Birth of the Nephilim 6:1-4	Human Wickedness 6:1-4	Sons of God and Women 6:1-4
		The Great Flood (6:5-8:22)		The Corruption of Humanity 6:5-8
6:5-8	6:5-8 Noah Pleases God	6:5-8	6:5-8 Noah	6:5-8
6:9-10	6:9-10	6:9-10	6:9-12	0.25625 6:9b-12
6:11-12	6:11-13	6:11-22		Preparations for the Flood (6:13-7:16)
6:13-22	The Ark Prepared 6:14-21 6:22		6:13-22	6:13-16 6:17-22

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup>that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. <sup>3</sup>Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." <sup>4</sup>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.

**6:1 "men"** This is the generic use of the term (cf. 5:2). If it is used in the generic sense in v. 2 which seems probable then the angelic theory is strengthened.

▣ **"and daughters were born to them"** This does not imply that these were the first birth of daughters (cf. 5:4) but a general statement of the expansion of the human race (BDB 408, KB 411, *Qal* PASSIVE PERFECT).

**6:2 "sons of God"** See Special Topic below.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: "the sons of God" in Genesis 6

- A. There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase "the sons of God." There have been three major interpretations
  1. the phrase refers to the godly line of Seth (cf. Gen 5, see note at 4:14)
  2. the phrase refers to a group of angelic beings
  3. the phrase refers to the kings or tyrants or Cain's line (cf. Gen. 4)
- B. Evidence for the phrase referring to Seth's line
  1. the immediate literary context of Gen. 4 and 5 shows the development of the rebellious line of Cain and the chosen line of Seth. Therefore, contextual evidence seems to favor the godly line of Seth
  2. the rabbis have been divided over their understanding of this passage. Some assert that it refers to Seth (but most to angels).
  3. the plural phrase "the sons of God," though most often used for angelic beings, rarely refers to human beings
    - a. Deut. 14:1 – "sons of YHWH your God"
    - b. Deut. 32:5 – "His sons"
    - c. Exod. 22:8-9; 21:6 (possibly Levitical judge)
    - d. Psalm 73:15 – "Thy children"
    - e. Hosea 1:10 – "sons of living God"
- C. Evidence for the phrase referring to angelic beings
  1. this has been the most common traditional understanding of the passage. The larger context of Genesis could support this view as another example of supernatural evil trying to thwart God's will for mankind (the rabbis say out of jealousy)

2. the plural phrase (“sons of God”) is used overwhelmingly in the OT for angels
  - a. Job 1:6
  - b. Job 2:1
  - c. Job 38:7
  - d. Psalm 29:1
  - e. Psalm 89:6,7
  - f. Daniel 89:6
3. the inter-testamental book of I Enoch (cf. I Enoch 6:1-8:4; 12:4-6; 19:1-3; 21:1-10) and Jubilees (cf. Job 5:1), which was very popular among believers in the NT period, along with the *Genesis Apocryphon* from the Dead Sea Scrolls, interprets these as rebellious angels
4. the immediate context of chapter 6 seems to imply that “the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” came from this improper mixing of the orders of creation
5. the Septuagint translates the phrase “sons of God” as “angels of God”
6. I Enoch even asserts that Noah’s Flood came to destroy this angelic/human union which was hostile towards YHWH and His plan for creation (cf. I Enoch 7:1ff; 15:1ff; 86:1ff)
7. in Ugaritic literature “sons of God” refers to members of the pantheon (i.e. lesser spiritual beings)

D. Evidence for the phrase referring to kings or tyrants of Cain’s line

1. there are several ancient translations that support this view
  - a. Targum of Onkelos (second century A.D.) translates “sons of God” as “sons of nobles”
  - b. Symmachus (second century A.D.) Greek translation of the OT, translated “sons of God” as “the sons of the kings”
  - c. the term “*elohim*” is used of Israelite leaders (cf. Ex. 21:6; 22:8; Ps. 82:1,6), note NIV and NET Bible
  - d. *Nephilim* linked to *Gibborim* in Gen 6:4, *Gibborim* is from *Gibbor* meaning “ a mighty man of valor; strength; wealth or power
  - e. this interpretation and its evidence is taken from Hard Sayings of the Bible pp. 106-108.

E. Historical evidence of the advocates of both usages

1. the phrase refers to Sethites
 

a. Cyril of Alexander	e. Calvin
b. Theodoret	f. Kyle
c. Augustine	g. Gleason Archer
d. Jerome	h. Watts
2. the phrase refers to angelic beings
 

a. writers of the Septuagint	g. Tertullian	m. Olford
b. Philo	h. Origen	n. Westermann

- |                                         |                 |              |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| c. Josephus ( <i>Antiquities</i> 1:3:1) | i. Luther       | o. Wenham    |
| d. Justin Martyr                        | j. Ewald        | p. NET Bible |
| e. Irenaeus                             | k. Delitzsch    |              |
| f. Clement of Alexandria                | l. Hengstenberg |              |

F. How are the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:4 related to the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” of Gen. 6:1-2? Note these theories:

1. They are the resultant giants (cf. Num. 13:33) of the union between angels and human women.
2. They do not relate at all. They are simply mentioned as being on the earth in the days of the events of Gen. 6:1-2 and also afterwards.
3. R. K. Harrison in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 557, has the following cryptic quote, “to miss entirely the invaluable anthropological insights into the interrelation of *Homo sapiens* and pre-Adamic species which the passage contains, and which are amenable to those scholars who are equipped to pursue them.”

This implies to me that he sees these two groups as representing differing groups of humanoids. This would imply a later special creation of Adam and Eve, but also an evolutionary development of *Homo erectus*.

G. It is only fair to disclose my own understanding of this controversial text. First, let me remind all of us that the text in Genesis is brief and ambiguous. Moses’ first hearers must have had additional historical insight or Moses used oral or written tradition from the Patriarchal period that he himself did not fully understand. This issue is not a crucial theological subject. We are often curious about things the Scriptures only hint at but are ambiguous. It would be very unfortunate to build an elaborate theology out of this and similar fragments of biblical information. If we needed this information God would have provided it in a more clear and complete form. I personally believe it was angels and humans because:

1. the consistent, although not exclusive, use of the phrase “sons of God” for angels in the OT
2. the Septuagint (Alexandrian) translates (late first century B.C.) “sons of God” as “angels of God”
3. the pseudepigraphal apocalyptic book of I Enoch (possibly written about 200 B.C.) is very specific that it refers to angels (cf. chapters 6-7)
4. the theological link to II Pet. 2 and Jude of angels who sinned and did not keep their proper abode

I know that to some this seems to contradict Matt. 22:30, but these specific angels are neither in heaven nor earth but in a special prison (*Tartarus*).

5. I think that one reason many of the events of Gen. 1-11 are found in other cultures (i.e. similar creation accounts, similar flood accounts, similar accounts of angels taking women) is because all humans were together and had some knowledge of YHWH during this period, but after the tower of Babel’s dispersion this knowledge became corrupted and adapted to a polytheistic model.

A good example of this is Greek mythology where the half human/half superhuman giants called Titans are imprisoned in *Tartarus*, this very name used only once in the Bible (cf. II Pet. 2) for the holding place of the angels that did not keep their proper abode. In rabbinical theology Hades was divided into a section for the righteous (paradise) and a section for the wicked (*Tartarus*).

▣ **“the daughters of men were beautiful”** The term “beautiful” is literally “good” or “fair” (BDB 373). This has been a key theological concept from chapter 1 (esp. 1:31). What God saw as good He now sees evil (cf. vv. 5-6).

▣ **“they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose”** The first phrase implies marriage which would militate against the view that it was angels (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT). However, the second phrase implies that they took previously married and/or unmarried women, whomever they chose (BDB 103, 119, *Qal* PERFECT). This could imply (1) angelic beings or (2) powerful human leaders of Cain’s line (i.e. tyrants) practicing polygamy.

**6:3 “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever”** The term “strive” can be translated “remain” (BDB 192, KB 220, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. NRSV “abide”). This either refers to (1) God’s patience (i.e. He postponed the flood until the ark was finished cf. I Pet. 3:20) or (2) mankind’s reduced life span.

How does 6:3 relate to 6:1-2 and 6:4? It is very difficult to follow the original author’s intent through this context. Possibly even though humans had mixed with angels they will still die. As Eve “saw” and took so now “sons of God” “saw” and took, which implies the same type of rebellion (i.e. possibly grasping eternal life or independence).

▣ **“because he is also flesh”** This seems to add weight to the interpretation that the other people spoken of in the passage are angelic beings in contradistinction to mortal humans. Today’s English Version translates “they are mortal.”

▣ **“nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years”** This seems to imply a time period of grace (cf. II Pet. 2:5) where it asserts that Noah preached for these intervening years, therefore, it refers to the time until the flood came. It also could point toward the reduced life-span of humans after the coming flood.

**6:4 “The Nephilim”** This implies “the fallen ones” (from the Hebrew *naphal*, BDB 658, KB 709). It seems to me that they are analogous to the giants (cf. Num. 13:33; also Deut. 2:10-11; 9:2; and the Septuagint, the Vulgate and Peshitta translations). However, other interpreters such as Martin Luther and H.C. Leupold assert that this term should be interpreted “tyrants” which implies the powerful kings of Cain’s line who had large harems.

J. Wash Watts in *Old Testament Teaching*, pp. 28-30, says “Nephilim refers to Noah and his family as those who separated themselves from those of Cain’s line and Seth’s line who were intermarrying. In this interpretation Nephilim are the sons of the “One true God” (cf. “the God” 5:22,24; 6:9). See Special Topic below.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names:

1. *Nephilim* (BDB 658) - Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33
2. *Rephaim* (either BDB 952 or BDB 952 II) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; II Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; I Chr. 20:4,6,8
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273), *zuzim* (BDB 265) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20
4. *Emim* (BDB 34) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of *Anak*, BDB 778 I) - Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22; 14:12,15

▣ **“were on the earth in those days”** Those who believe in angels co-habiting with human women use the second half of v. 4 as a proof-text to show that the giants came out of this relationship. However, others use the first half of v. 4 to assert that giants were already on the earth at this time.

The inter-testamental apocalyptic book of I Enoch asserts that these giants were the result of the union of angels and humans and that the mixing of the orders of creation is the reason God sent the flood. I Enoch also asserts that these giants who lost their physical bodies in the flood are the demons seeking to indwell human bodies for their own selfish reasons.



**NASB, NKJV** “the mighty men”  
**NRSV, NJB** “the heroes”  
**TEV** “the great heroes”

This is the Hebrew term *gibbor* (BDB 150), which means an especially empowered person, animal, or thing. It is used of (1) Nimrod in Gen. 10:8-9; (2) tyrants in Ps. 52:1; Ezek. 32:27; and (3) angels in Ps. 104:20 (also in the Thanksgiving Hymns 8:11 and 20:34 from the Dead Sea Scrolls)



**NASB, NKJV**  
**NJB, NIV** “men of renown”  
**NRSV** “warriors of renown”  
**TEV** “famous men”

The first rendering is the translation of most modern English Bibles as well as the Septuagint. However, literally it is “men of the name” (BDB 1027). This has resulted in three theories:

- (1) it refers to the godly line of Seth who worshiped YHWH (i.e. the name of God, cf. J. Wash Watts)
- (2) it refers to the Nephilim as powerful offspring of the angels and humans (i.e. the giants cf. TEV)
- (3) it refers to the kings of the godless line of Cain who were tyrants (cf. NRSV); they took many women as wives (i.e. royal polygamy cf. NJB)

This is a very brief and ambiguous paragraph. Its main thrust is the continual and escalating wickedness of creation which sets the stage for God’s radical judgment. However, wickedness continues even in Noah and his family.

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup>The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup>The LORD 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 am sorry that I have made them." <sup>8</sup>But Noah found favor in the eyes of THE LORD.**

**6:5 “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great”** This section of Scripture emphasizes the development of evil in the heart of mankind (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Gen. 6:11-12,13b; 8:21; Ps. 14:3; 51:5) which is a direct paradox to the goodness of creation in Gen. 1:31.

▣ **“and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** This result of Adam and Eve’s fall had reached universal proportions. All but six people were hopelessly affected by evil. They dwelt on thinking about evil, night and day!

The concept of “evil intent” (*ysr*, BDB 428) becomes the rabbinical understanding of mankind’s moral nature. They see mankind as exercising one of two intents (good or evil). This famous proverb, “in every man’s heart is a black and a white dog; the one you feed the most becomes the biggest” (paraphrase), describes mankind. This view of mankind is strengthened by 4:7. Jewish theologians do not emphasize Gen. 3 but Gen. 6 as the source of evil in the world. Children are not evil at birth because moral responsibility comes only with knowledge (*bar mitzvah*, *bat mitzvah*). Evil consists of choices!

**6:6 “the LORD was sorry. . .He was grieved in His heart”** These are anthropomorphic phrases. The first is interpreted “the LORD heaved with a sigh” (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* IMPERFECT). The second is interpreted “the LORD was grieved into His heart” (BDB 780, KB 864, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT). These are intense Hebrew phrases (cf. 34:7; 45:5; I Sam. 2:33; 20:34; II Sam. 19:2; Ps. 78:40; Isa. 54:6). God is often spoken of in the Bible as being sorry or repenting (cf. Gen. 6:6-7; Exod. 32:14; I Sam. 15:11; II Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:7,8; 26:13,19; Jonah 3:10). However, other passages assert that God never repents or changes His mind (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Jer. 4:28; Ps. 132:11). This is the tension that always occurs when we use human terms to describe God. God is not a man, but the only words we have to describe Him and His feelings are human terms. It must be asserted that God is not fickle. He is steadfast and longsuffering in His redemptive purpose for humanity, but mankind’s response in repentance of sin often determines God’s actions in a particular situation (cf. Ps. 106:45; Jonah).

Theologically it is God who changes, not mankind. God chooses to work with sinful humanity. His goal is the same—a righteous people who reflect His character. This will only be accomplished by a new heart, a new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-38). God chooses grace over judgment!

**6:7 “I will blot out man whom I have created”** The term “blot out” means “to wash away” (BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* IMPERFECT, i.e. the flood). The animals suffer because of the sin of mankind (cf. Rom. 8:19-22). The fish are not included in this judgment. This judgment is not based on the capricious actions of the gods as in the Mesopotamian accounts but the moral evil of humanity. This evil remains even within the family of righteous Noah (cf. 8:21-22) but God’s grace chooses to cover continuing human evil until the coming of Christ (cf. Gal. 3).

**6:8 “in the eyes of the LORD”** This is another example of anthropomorphic phrases to describe God. He does not have eyes, He is a Spirit. This is metaphorical for God’s all-knowingness (i.e. omniscience).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:9-10

<sup>9</sup>These are *the records of the generations of Noah*. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. <sup>10</sup>Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

**6:9 “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time”** These two descriptive words are very significant. The first one implies that Noah conformed to the standard of his understanding about the will of God. See Special Topic: Righteousness at . The second (BDB 1070) implies that he has a complete heart toward the LORD (e.g. 17:1; Ps. 18:23). The second term is later used for unblemished sacrifices. These two terms do not imply Noah’s sinlessness, as 9:21 shows.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 843). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Gal. 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

- A. declaring sinful mankind righteous through the work of Christ (forensic righteousness).
- B. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (imputed righteousness).
- C. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (ethical righteousness) in mankind.
- D. restoring the fellowship of the garden of Eden by Christ restoring the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in believers (relational righteousness).

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e. freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

- A. repentance
- B. faith
- C. lifestyle obedience
- D. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation.

It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. Paul’s paradox is that God, through Christ, acquits the guilty. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e. the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification]), while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God (experiential progressive sanctification). In reality it is surely both!!

In my view all of the Bible, from Gen. 4 - Rev. 20, is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Gen. 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Rev. 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

- A. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
  - 1. Romans 3:26
  - 2. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
  - 3. II Timothy 4:8
  - 4. Revelation 16:5
- B. Jesus is righteous
  - 1. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
  - 2. Matthew 27:19
  - 3. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
- C. God’s will for His creation is righteousness
  - 1. Leviticus 19:2
  - 2. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
- D. God’s means of providing and producing righteousness
  - 1. Romans 3:21-31
  - 2. Romans 4
  - 3. Romans 5:6-11
  - 4. Galatians 3:6-14

5. Given by God
    - a. Romans 3:24; 6:23
    - b. I Corinthians 1:30
    - c. Ephesians 2:8-9
  6. Received by faith
    - a. Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
    - b. I Corinthians 5:21
  7. Through acts of the Son
    - a. Romans 5:21-31
    - b. II Corinthians 5:21
    - c. Philippians 2:6-11
- E. God's will is that His followers be righteous
1. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
  2. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
  3. II Corinthians 6:14
  4. I Timothy 6:11
  5. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
  6. I John 3:7
  7. I Peter 2:24
- F. God will judge the world by righteousness
1. Acts 17:31
  2. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- A. a decree of God
- B. a gift of God
- C. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued; it will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther's view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God's righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer's relationship to God has three aspects:

- A. the gospel is a person (the Eastern Church and Calvin's emphasis)
- B. the gospel is truth (Augustine's and Luther's emphases)
- C. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

☐ **“Noah walked with God”** This (BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* PERFECT) is a very similar phrase to 5:21-22 (*Hithpael* IMPERFECT) where the phrase is used of Enoch.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:11-12**

<sup>11</sup>Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup>God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

**6:11-12** God’s will was for mankind and animals to fill the earth but sin filled (BDB 569, KB 583, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) the earth with violence and evil (cf. v. 13; Ps. 14:1-3; Rom. 3:10-18). No longer is the “very good” of Gen. 1:31 an appropriate description. This is not the world that God intended it to be!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:13-22**

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. <sup>15</sup>This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. <sup>16</sup>You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. <sup>17</sup>Behold, I, even 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 perish. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping things of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* shall come to you to keep *them* alive. <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

**6:14 “Make for yourself an ark”** The VERB (BDB 793 I, KB 889) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This may be an Egyptian loan word for “chest” or “box” (BDB 1061). The only other use of this term is for the basket in which Moses was placed (cf. Exod. 2:3,4).

▣ **“gopher wood”** We have no certainty about the etymology of this word (BDB 781 and 172). Some of the various interpretations are: (1) the Septuagint has “squared wood”; (2) the Vulgate has “smooth wood”; (3) most commentators believe that it refers to some type of tree, most likely a cypress (NRSV, REB) because most ships in the ancient Near East were made from this wood and covered with resin.

▣ **“you shall make the ark with rooms”** This apparently was to divide the animals as well as to help support the structure of the ark (also three levels).

**6:15 “cubits”** There are two cubits (BDB 52) in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between an average man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches (cf. Deut. 3:11; II Chr. 2:3). There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction (i.e. Solomon’s temple), which was common in Egypt, Palestine, and sometimes Babylon. It was 21 inches long (cf. Ezek. 40:5; 43:13). The physical dimensions of the ark were probably around 450 feet by 75 feet by 45 feet. This is about half the size of the Queen Elizabeth II. It has been surmised that it was square but it possibly had slanted sides to help control wave pressure against the hull.

The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. The people of the ancient Near East used:

1. width between the outstretched arms
2. length from elbow to middle finger (cubit)
3. width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span)
4. length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths.

- a. normal male’s elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11)
- b. royal cubit was a bit longer (about 21 inches, cf. II Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

**6:16 “You shall make a window for the ark”** This is not the same word for window that is used in 8:6. Many have supposed that it refers to a lighting and ventilation system around the top of the ark, just under the roof.

**6:17 “the flood”** There has been some conjecture that this term (BDB 550) is related to the Assyrian term “to destroy.”

Was the flood of Noah’s day world-wide or only in the ancient Near East? The term “earth” (*eres*) is often translated “land” in a local sense (cf. Gen. 41:57). If humans had not spread out to all parts of the earth which is surely implied in the tower of Babel experience of chapters 10-11, then a local flood would have done the job. The best book I have read on the rational evidence for a local flood is Bernard Ramm’s *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*.

▣ **“the breath of life”** This is the Hebrew term *ruach*. It can be used for wind, life, breath, or spirit. Both humans and beasts are said to have *nephesh* but only humans are made in the image of God (cf. 1:26-27) and have a “special” creation (cf. 2:7). In this context all that breathe—die (cf. 7:22, animals and humans)!

**6:18**

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

**“I will establish”**

TEV

**“I will make”**

NET

**“I will confirm”**

The VERB’s (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* PERFECT) basic meaning is to “arise” or “stand up.”

The *Hiphil* stem is used “to establish,” “to ratify” (cf. 6:18; 9:9,11,17; 17:7,19,21; Exod. 6:4; Ezek. 16:62).

It is uncertain to which promise/covenant this refers. Probably it is a foreshadowing of 9:9,11,17. The key is that God Himself will confirm and maintain His promises with fallen, rebellious mankind. Even amidst their wickedness God’s eternal plans for fellowship abide!

▣ **“My covenant with you”** This is the first use of this term *berith* (BDB 136). It is explained and amplified in Gen. 9:8-17. It forms a central motif for both the OT and NT understanding of the relationship between God and humanity. There are mutual responsibilities, obligations, and promises on both sides. This sets the stage for our understanding the dialectical tension between the unconditional covenant on God’s part, yet its conditional aspect on human response in each generation. See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT**

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-28)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37 (YHWH’s action). Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God’s reflected image. The problem was not God’s covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both

initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **“you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you”** Noah’s blamelessness extended to his family (cf. I Cor. 7:14).

**6:19 “you shall bring”** This may imply that the animals (whether local or worldwide is uncertain) came to Noah, but Noah positioned them in the ark. He probably began doing this before the last week. How the animals lived together and ate on the ark is a mystery, but it does not rule out the possibility either of a natural setting or a supernatural setting.

**6:21** There was food on the ark for Noah and the animals (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal IMPERATIVE*). However, the specifics are not recorded. The account is theological more than just information.

**6:22 “Thus Noah did”** The key theme is that Noah obeyed God (cf. 7:5,9,16), which is the appropriate response, however, Adam and Eve and the rest of mankind did not (e.g. 6:5,11-12,13).

# GENESIS 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Flood	The Great Flood	The Great Flood	The Flood	Preparations for the Flood
		(6:5-8:22)		(6:13-7:16)
7:1-5	7:1-12	7:1-5	7:1-5	7:1-5
7:6-12		7:6-10	7:6-10	7:6
				7:7-10
		7:11-16	7:11-16	7:11-12
7:13-16	7:13-16			7:13-16a
				7:16b
				The Flood
7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-24

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous before Me in this time. <sup>2</sup>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;<sup>3</sup> also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup>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." <sup>5</sup>Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

**7:1 “the LORD said to Noah”** It is the covenant name for God, YHWH, here but in verse 16 He is called *Elohim*. The rabbinical understanding of these terms referring to God as savior (YHWH) and as Creator (*Elohim*) seems to fit the usages of the Pentateuch. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

▣ **“enter the ark”** This VERB (BDB 92, KB 112) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE.

▣ **“for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time”** The term “righteous” here is used in the same sense as referring to Job as “blameless” (cf. 6:9). This does not imply a sinlessness but one who has conformed to and performed all that they understand or is culturally expressed in relation to God. Notice that Noah’s righteousness affects his family. This is a biblical truth. This does not mean that someone can be right with God based on another person’s merit, but it does imply that spiritual blessings flow from those who know God to those with whom they are acquainted and with whom they are intimately involved (compare Deut. 5:9-10; 7:9 and I Cor. 7:14).

**7:2 “clean animals by sevens, a male and his female”** Note the distinction between clean and unclean in this context because it is in a pre-Mosaic sacrificial setting (cf. Lev. 1-7). Nothing is said about the criteria or purpose of the clean animals. It is obvious that Moses developed this distinction later on in Leviticus (cf. chapter 11) in connection with the food laws and the sacrificial system. There has been much discussion about the seven pairs (cf. NRSV, NJB, JPSOA). Does it mean seven individual animals or seven pairs of animals?

**7:4 “seven more days, I will send rain on the earth”** Rashi says that this was the period of mourning for the righteous Methuselah who had just died. The rabbis believed that God did not send the flood until Methuselah passed away.

The seven day week is so ancient that its origin has never been traced. Both the month and the year can be deduced from the phases of the moon and change of seasons, but not the week. For believers Gen. 1 sets the pattern.

▣ **“forty days and forty nights”** The term “forty” is used quite often in the Bible (see a concordance). At times it is meant to be taken literally but at other times it simply means a long period of indefinite time (longer than a lunar cycle which is twenty-eight and one-half days, but shorter than a seasonal change). In several Mesopotamian accounts the time frame of the flood is seven days.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6-12**

<sup>6</sup>Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. <sup>7</sup>Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. <sup>8</sup>Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, <sup>9</sup>there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. <sup>11</sup>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of

**the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. <sup>12</sup>The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.**

**7:11 “all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened”**

The dating of verse 11 is very specific in this verse (which implies a historical event) as well as the verbs which describe the physical catastrophe that occurred on the earth (two *Niphal* PERFECTS, BDB 131, KB 149 and BDB 834, KB 986). We can see the scale of destruction in vv. 18 and 19 in the Hebrew text. Many of the earth’s physical features may have been changed especially in the near east. There are two sources of the water: (1) fountains of the deep and (2) floodgates (i.e. windows, cf. Ps. 78:23ff; Mal. 3:10) of the sky. This is an obvious reversal of what God did in Gen. 1. Watery chaos returns.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>On the very same 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, <sup>14</sup>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, all sorts of birds. <sup>15</sup>So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup>Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and THE LORD closed it behind him.**

**7:14** This includes all the categories of land animals mentioned in Gen. 1 excluding the sea life.

**7:16 “and the LORD closed it behind him”** YHWH (i.e. the covenant, Savior deity) closed the door Himself. The rabbis say that He did this in order to keep the wicked out of the ark. They even go so far as to assert that God surrounded the ark with lions and bears to keep the people away. To me, the ark is another act of YHWH’s mercy to mankind to continue the Messianic line, even amidst judgment, which would eventually provide redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17-24**

**<sup>17</sup>Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. <sup>19</sup>The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. <sup>20</sup>The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. <sup>21</sup>All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; <sup>22</sup>of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. <sup>23</sup>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 was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. <sup>24</sup>The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.**

**7:19** The language of this verse certainly implies a world-wide flood (cf. 8:21; II Pet. 3:6). But does it? The term “earth” (*eres*, BDB 75) can mean “land” (cf. 41:57). It may be an idiom similar to Luke 2:1 and Col. 1:23 (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP pp. 112-114). As for the theology of the flood, its extent is irrelevant. There is not a consistent flood deposit even in Mesopotamia much less the whole world! Floods were common in Mesopotamia because of the two large river systems that combine at their mouths. For a good discussion see Bernard Ramm, *The Christian’s View of Science and Scripture*.

**7:22 “the breath of the spirit of life”** (cf. note at 1:30). The aquatic life was spared.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is your understanding of the phrase “the sons of God” and why?
2. Why do you think that angels would want to take human women?
3. Who were the Nephilim?
4. How could God repent?
5. What does it mean to walk with God?
6. Why weren't the fish judged along with the land animals?
7. What is a clean and unclean animal in Noah's setting?
8. Was the flood local or universal? Why?

# GENESIS 8:1-22

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Flood Subsides	Noah's Deliverance	The Great Flood (6:5-8:22)	The End of the Flood	The Flood Subsides
8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5	8:1-5
8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12	8:6-12
8:13-19	8:13-14	8:13-19	8:13-14	8:13 8:14 They Disembark
	8:15-19		8:15-19	8:15-19
	God's Covenant with Creation (8:20-9:17)		Noah Offers Sacrifice	
8:20-22 (22)	8:20-22 (22)	8:20-22 (22)	8:20-22 (22)	8:20-22 (22)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is an obvious parallel between Gen. 1 and Gen. 7 in that watery chaos returns.

- B. There is an obvious parallel between Gen. 1 and Gen. 8 in God restoring a life-sustaining land
1. compare 1:2 with 8:1
  2. compare 1:6-7 with 8:2
  3. compare 1:22,24 with 8:17
  4. compare 1:28 with 9:1-2
- C. Genesis 8:1-19 is a reversal of 7:11-24. This is surely literary structuring.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-5

<sup>1</sup>But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. <sup>2</sup>Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; <sup>3</sup>and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. <sup>4</sup>In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

**8:1 “God”** This is the term *Elohim*. See notes at Gen. 1:1 or Special Topic at 2:4.

▣ **“remembered”** This term (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used in the sense of God taking appropriate and personal action towards someone (cf. 8:1; 9:15; 16; 19:29; 30:22). The covenant God is about to act again because of who He is. Noah will be the source of a new humanity.

▣ **“Noah”** This name (BDB 629) may mean “rest,” a popular etymology based on sound, not philology.

▣ **“God caused a wind”** The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778) is a *Hiphal* IMPERFECT. God used a natural means in an accelerated way to dry up the flood waters, v. 2, as He did in the Exodus (cf. Exod. 14:21).

It is also possible to see God’s acts in chapter 8-9 as paralleling God’s acts in chapter 1. This is a new beginning for mankind. If so, the wind here parallels “the Spirit hovered” of 1:2.

▣ **“subsided”** This same term (BDB 1013, KB 1491, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used for the anger of the King in Esther 2:1.

**8:4 “the mountains of Ararat”** This has been explained in three ways: (1) a mountain on the Turkey/Russian border; (2) a mountain to the north near Lake Van; and (3) the term itself refers to a whole mountain range (Assyrian *urartu*, BDB 76), not specifically a peak (notice the plural “mountains”).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:6-12

<sup>6</sup>Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; <sup>7</sup>and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; <sup>9</sup>but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him

into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself. <sup>10</sup>So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. <sup>11</sup>The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. <sup>12</sup>Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

**8:6 “forty days”** This phrase usually means “a long, indefinite period of time.” In this context, the dates are so specific it might mean forty exactly.

▣ **“the window”** This is a different term (BDB 319) from the ambiguous terms of 6:16 (literally “roof,” BDB 844I). Its size and location are uncertain but probably in the roof itself.

**8:6-12** Be careful not to allegorize these birds! There is an exact parallel in Mesopotamian literature (i.e. Gilgamesh Epic 11:145-55), which seems too specific for coincidence. There is a literary relationship between the Bible (i.e. Gen. 1-11) and Mesopotamian literature.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:13-19**

<sup>13</sup>Now it came about 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. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. <sup>14</sup>In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. <sup>15</sup>Then God spoke to Noah, saying, <sup>16</sup>“Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup>Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” <sup>18</sup>So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. <sup>19</sup>Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

**8: 13 “Noah removed the covering”** This seems to imply he removed part of the roof (BDB 492). Although later this same term will refer to the animal skin covering of the tabernacle, it is difficult to support that meaning here.

**8:15 “God spoke to Noah”** This entire context reveals the patience and obedience of Noah. God’s commands (i.e. 8:15-19) parallel 7:1-5.

**8:16 “Go out”** This is the first of several commands in vv. 16-17.

1. “go out,” *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 422, KB 425), v. 16
2. “bring out,” *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 422, KB 425), v. 17
3. “breed abundantly,” *Qal* PERFECT used in an IMPERATIVE sense (BDB 1056, KB 1655), v. 17
4. “be fruitful,” *Qal* PERFECT used in an IMPERATIVE sense (cf. 9:1,7 BDB 826, KB 953), v. 17
5. “multiply,” *Qal* PERFECT used in an IMPERATIVE sense (cf. 9:1,7 BDB 915, KB 1176), v. 17

These commands are parallel to Gen. 1:22,24. In a sense God is starting over. The waters of chaos destroyed all land life except what was on the ark. God's original purpose is continued (cf. 6:18).

**8:17** These commands of God (also 9:1) parallel Gen. 1:22,24. See Contextual Insights at the beginning of this chapter.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:20-22**

**<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. <sup>22</sup>While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."**

**8:20 "then Noah built an altar"** His first act was that of worship and thanksgiving. Sacrifice is an ancient institution (cf. 4:3; 12:7,8; 13:18; 22:19). This is also the first act of Gilgamesh in the Gilgamesh Epic after the flood (cf. 11:156-158).

▣ **"every clean animal"** The criteria determining clean and unclean is uncertain (cf. 7:2), but apparently was related to sacrifice, not dietary guidelines (cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14).

**8:21 "the LORD smelled the soothing aroma"** This phrase is used in the Bible in the sense of God accepting an offering (especially Lev. and Num.). It does not imply that the meat was food for God as it was in the Gilgamesh Epic (cf. 11:159-161). The Bible never views the sacrificial system as food for divine beings as the surrounding nations did.

▣ **"I will never again curse the ground. . . I will never again destroy every living thing"** These parallel statements show the tension in God's heart between His love (cf. Isa. 54:9) for His creation and His justice. Mankind is evil and corrupt but God has chosen to work with us in time and set it straight in the eschaton (i.e. last days). In this judgment God's attitude toward sinful mankind changed. Humans are still evil. God's attitude will change again when His people are unable to perform the Mosaic covenant. God will institute a new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:27-38). Humans will be made right with God through the Messiah's performance and sacrificial death.

Although it is surely true that God promises never to send another flood, II Pet. 3:10 asserts that He will purify the earth with fire. God will work with sinful mankind but His goal is righteousness (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48).

▣ **"the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth"** The evil so evident before the flood (cf. 6:5,11,12,13) is still within fallen mankind, as Noah and his family will clearly show!

**8:22** It is this constancy in nature that has given rise to modern western science. God established uniformitarianism (i.e. the regular, uniform activities of nature). However, notice the initial phrase "while the earth remains." Verse 22 is printed in English translations in a poetic passage.

# GENESIS 9:1-29

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Covenant of the Rainbow	God's Covenant with Creation (8:20-9:17)	God's Covenant with Noah	God's Covenant with Noah	The New World Order
9:1-7 (6-7)	9:1-7 (6-7)	9:1-7 (6)	9:1-6 9:7	9:1-7 (6)
9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-17	9:8-11 9:12-16 9:17
	Noah and His Sons	Noah's Curse upon Canaan	Noah and His sons	Noah and His Sons
9:18-19	9:18-19	9:18-19	9:18-19	9:18-19
9:20-27 (25-27)	9:20-23 9:24-27 (25-27)	9:20-27 (25-27)	9:20-27 (25-27)	9:20-27 (25-27)
9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29	9:28-29

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, *as I* gave the green plant. <sup>4</sup>Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. <sup>5</sup>Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from *every* man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. <sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. <sup>7</sup>As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."**

**9:1 “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”** Notice the three *Qal* IMPERATIVES: “be fruitful” (BDB 826, KB 963), “multiply” (BDB 915, KB 1176), “fill the earth” (BDB 569, KB 583). This is a second beginning for mankind (cf. 1:28), but notice that sin has caused a change in the command, “subdue and have dominion” is left out.

**9:2 “fear. . .terror”** Mankind has a new relationship with the animals, not peace and friendship as in Eden and the eschaton (Isaiah 11), but fear (BDB 432) and terror (BDB 369). The Septuagint adds “cattle” to the verse but domestic animals are not affected.

**9:3 “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you”** Mankind was originally a vegetarian (at least in the garden of Eden) but since the fall and since no crops could be produced for a while, meat was made available. Also notice that there was no distinction between clean and unclean animals as far as consumption was concerned (very different from Lev. 11), but there was a distinction in sacrifice (cf. 7:2ff).

**9:4 “you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood”** This is the theological foundation for the sacrificial system (cf. Lev. 17:10-16; Deut. 12:16,23; Acts 15:29) and the significance of the death of Christ. Sin costs a life. God mercifully substituted an animal life.

**9:5-6 “By man his blood shall be shed”** This is the first statement of “eye for eye” justice. It shows God’s ordaining government the right of capital punishment. In the OT, this was accomplished by the “go’el” (kinsman redeemer). For possible NT references see Acts 25:11 and Rom. 13:4.

Verse 5 is prose while v. 6 is printed in poetic parallel lines.

There is a possible Hebrew word play which may even affect etymology between blood (*dam*) and man (*adam*). In Assyrian the term man (*adamu*) is related to sanctuary (*adman*). Therefore, there may be a link between blood-worship-mankind (cf. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 45).

▣ **“For in the image of God He made man”** This shows the priority of humankind (cf. 1:26,27; 5:1,3). What an awesome privilege and responsibility.

**9:7 “Populate the earth abundantly”** This is parallel to 1:22,24,28. Chapters 8-9 form a re-initiation of God’s expressed will and actions in Gen. 1. This verse has four *Qal* IMPERATIVES, while v. 1 has

three. The rabbis say that because of the context of murder (vv. 5-6) those who refuse to have children also violate this command.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:8-17**

**<sup>8</sup>Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, <sup>9</sup>"Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." <sup>12</sup>God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; <sup>13</sup>I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." <sup>17</sup>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."**

**9:9 “I Myself do establish”** This covenant is unconditional and totally from God’s grace. (cf. 9,11,12,17). Other covenants including the Adamic and the Abrahamic covenants had conditions. See Special Topic: Covenant at 6:18.

**9:12 “all successive generations”** “All” (*olam*), as in v. 16, means “ever-lasting.” See Special Topic at 3:22. Also Rashi mentions that “generations” is misspelled in the Hebrew text. He interprets that as meaning that the covenant is only for generations with faulty faith.

**9:13 “bow. . . a sign”** The rainbow may first have appeared here. Genesis 2:5-6 implies that initially watering took place in a different way from rain (i.e. mist from the ground). It is just possible that the bow (BDB 905) was a weapon that God put down (i.e. will not destroy mankind in judgment). In ancient times hanging up the bow was a symbol for peace. It is also possible that God put a new meaning to a common physical occurrence.

**9:15 “I will remember”** The bow was a sign for God and mankind. This is a physical item symbolizing the fact that God does not forget (similar to the concept of “the book of life” and “book of deeds”).

**☐ “never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh”** This does not mean no floods at all, but no universal flood that destroys all mankind and animal kind.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:18-19**

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

**9:18 “Shem”** The etymology of this name can be “renown” or “name” (BDB 1028 II).

☐ **“Ham”** This name can mean “hot” (KB 325II). It may have reflected an ancient name for Egypt (i.e. “hot lands”).

☐ **“Japheth”** The etymology of this name can be “extender” or “enlarged” (BDB 834, see Hebrew word play in v. 22).

☐ **“Canaan”** He (BDB 488) is mentioned for possibly two reasons: (1) Noah’s drunkenness and resulting curse will affect Canaan or (2) the Canaanites became Israel’s major theological problem in later years (i.e. Moses’ lifetime).

**9:19** This was the repeatedly stated purpose of God (i.e. fill the earth). The tower of Babel was in direct deviance to this.

It is interesting that modern mitochondrial DNA studies have concluded that the original humans came from north Africa while modern philology has determined that all human languages started in northern India. Notice how geographically near this is to the biblical account.

Apparently all the different races of humans are direct descendants of these three brothers. Modern DNA research has shown that humans of all races are genetically the same!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:20-27**

**<sup>20</sup>Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. <sup>23</sup>But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. <sup>24</sup>When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. <sup>25</sup>So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." <sup>26</sup>He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant. <sup>27</sup>May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant."**

**9:20 “Noah began farming”** The NASB and RSV translations seem to read too much into the Hebrew wording; Noah was not the first farmer—what about Cain (4:2) or Lamech (5:29)? The NRSV has “Noah, a man of the soil.”

**9:21 “became drunk”** Drunkenness (BDB 1016 I, KB 1500) is deplored over and over again in Scripture (cf. Prov. 23:29-35). Yet wine is not the problem, but mankind’s misuse of it (cf. Deut. 14:26; Ps. 104:15; Prov. 31:6-7).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WINE AND STRONG DRINK**

#### I. Biblical Terms

##### A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for “wine,” which is used 141 times (BDB 406). The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine” (BDB 440). However, because of climatic conditions of the

near east, fermentation began as soon as 6 hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see: Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.

3. *Asis* - Joel 1:5 and Isa. 49:26 show that it is obviously alcoholic (BDB 779).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016, cf. Isa. 5:1). It has something added to it to make it more intoxicating. The same Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.”

#### B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7)
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

### II. Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, often the first day (6 hrs. after juice is extracted).
- B. When a slight foam appears on the surface, Jewish tradition says that it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7).
- C. The primary fermentation is over in one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation takes about 40 days. At this stage it is considered aged wine and can be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that is resting on its “lees” (aging sediment) is considered good, but wine must be strained well before use.
- F. Three years is the longest period of time that wine can be stored. It is called “old wine.” It is considered the best usually after one year of fermentation.
- G. Only in the last 100 years, with sterile conditions and chemical additives, has it become possible to postpone the fermentation process.

### III. Biblical Usage

#### A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (cf. Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is part of a sacrificial offering (cf. Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Jdg. 9:13).
3. Wine was used at Israel’s feasts (cf. Deut. 14:26).
4. Wine is used as medicine (cf. II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
5. Wine can be a real problem (Noah: Gen. 9:21; Lot: Gen. 19:33,35; Samson: Jdg. 16:19; Nabal: I Sam. 25:36; Uriah: II Sam. 11:13; Ammon: II Sam. 13:28; Elah: I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers: Amos 6:6; Ladies: Amos 4).
6. Wine has its accompanying warning against abuse (cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hos. 4:11).
7. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazirites, Num. 6; rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hos. 7:5).

8. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (cf. Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Inter-biblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).

2. The rabbis say “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed” (BB 58b).

3. Mixed wine and water is not harmful, but delicious, and enhances one’s enjoyment (II Macc. 15:39).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus turned water into wine (cf. John 2:1-11).

2. Jesus used wine (cf. Matt. 11:16, 18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff)

3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:13).

4. Wine used as medicine (cf. Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).

5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (cf. I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).

6. Wine used in eschatological settings (cf. Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).

7. Drunkenness is deplored (cf. Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34 I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:1-14)

#### IV. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical Tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.

2. Drunkenness is a major problem

3. Our example is Christ (cf. Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Rom. 14; I Cor. 8:7-13).

B. Tendency to go beyond God-given bounds

1. God is the sources of all good things.

2. Man has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Rom. 14:14, 20).

**9:22 “saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside”** Ham’s sin was (1) his irreverence for his father or (2) some type of sexual act (cf. Lev. 18:6,7). Hebrews were very conscious of nakedness.

In a theological sense, this shows the continuing downward pull of the fall. Noah drunk! Ham intensely enjoying both his father’s folly and nakedness! This propensity towards irreverence and abuse of sexuality becomes so evident in Canaan’s descendants! The tendencies must have been evident to Noah who curses Canaan, not Ham.

As a postscript, this episode has nothing, nothing to do with a biblical depreciation of the black race. Africans surely came from Ham but Canaanites were not black (i.e. wall pictures in Egypt)!

**9:24 “Noah. . .knew”** He possibly knew because he asked, but probably it was by the covering that Shem and Japheth placed on him.

▣ **“youngest son”** Ham is always listed second in the list of Noah’s sons. This Hebrew word can be a superlative “youngest” or comparative “younger.”

**9:25 “So he said”** Remember the Hebrew concept of the power of the spoken word, Gen. 1, as well as the importance of the parental blessing, Gen. 49.

▣ **“Cursed be Canaan”** This VERB (BDB 76, KB 91) is a *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The rabbis say Canaan saw Noah’s nakedness first and told his father, Ham, but probably Noah saw this evident disrespectful character in Ham’s youngest son, or Canaan, the youngest son, is a way of referring to all of Ham’s descendants. Notice that this is not a curse by God but by an alcohol abusing Noah!

It is obvious from Israel’s later history that Canaanites are viewed as evil idolatrous people that must be totally destroyed. It is in their lands that the giants still live. It is their fertility worship that is forbidden in the book of Leviticus.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. This is a universal expression by fallen mankind within his society. This is mankind’s ego, supporting itself on the backs of others. Racism is, in many ways, a modern phenomena, while nationalism (or tribalism) is a more ancient expression.
- B. Nationalism began at Babel (Gen. 11) and was originally related to Noah’s three sons from which the so called races developed (Gen. 10). However, it is obvious from Scripture that humanity is from one source (cf. Gen. 1-3; Acts 17:24-26).
- C. Racism is just one of many prejudices. Some others are (1) educational snobbery; (2) socio-economic arrogance; (3) self-righteous religious legalism; and (4) dogmatic political affiliations.

### **II. Biblical Material**

#### **A. Old Testament**

- 1. Gen. 1:27- Mankind, male and female, were made in the image and likeness of God, which makes them unique. It also shows their individual worth and dignity (cf. John 3:16).
- 2. Gen. 1:11-25 - Records the phrase, “. . .according to its own kind. . .” ten times. This has been used to support racial segregation. However, it is obvious from the context that this refers to animals and plants and not to humanity.
- 3. Gen. 9:18-27 - This has been used to support racial dominance. It must be remembered that God did not curse Canaan. Noah, his father, cursed him after awakening from a drunken stupor. The Bible never records that God confirmed this oath/curse. Even if He did, this does not affect the black race. Canaan was the father of those who inhabited Palestine and the Egyptian wall art shows they were not black.
- 4. Joshua 9:23 - This has been used to prove one race will serve another. However, in context, the Gibeonites are of the same racial stock as the Jews.
- 5. Ezra 9-10 and Neh. 13 - These have often been used in a racial sense, but the context shows that the marriages were condemned, not because of race (they were from the same son of Noah, Genesis 10), but for religious reasons.

## B. New Testament

### 1. The Gospels

- a. Jesus made use of the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans on several instances, which shows that racial hatred is inappropriate.
  - (1) the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
  - (2) the woman at the well (John 4:4)
  - (3) the thankful leper (Luke 17:7-19)
- b. The Gospel is for all humanity
  - (1) John 3:16
  - (2) Luke 24:46-47
  - (3) Hebrews 2:9
  - (4) Revelation 14:6
- c. The Kingdom will include all humanity
  - (1) Luke 13:29
  - (2) Revelation 5

### 2. Acts

- a. Acts 10 is a definitive passage on God's universal love and the gospel's universal message.
- b. Peter was attacked for his actions in Acts 11 and this problem was not resolved until the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met and came to a solution. The tension between first century Jews and Gentiles was very intense.

### 3. Paul

- a. There are no barriers in Christ
  - (1) Gal. 3:26-28
  - (2) Eph. 2:11-22
  - (3) Col. 3:11
- b. God is no respecter of persons
  - (1) Rom. 2:11
  - (2) Eph. 6:9

### 4. Peter and James

- a. God is no respecter of persons, I Pet. 1:17
- b. Because God does not show partiality, then neither should His people, James 2:1

### 5. John

- a. One of the strongest statements on the responsibility of believers is found in I John 4:20

## III. Conclusion

- A. Racism, or for that matter, prejudice of any kind, is totally inappropriate for God's children. Here is a quote from Henlee Barnette, who spoke at a forum at Glorieta, New Mexico for the Christian Life Commission in 1964.

“Racism is heretical because it is unbiblical and unchristian, not to mention unscientific.”

B. This problem gives Christians the opportunity to show their Christlike love, forgiveness and understanding to a lost world. Christian refusal in this area shows immaturity and is an opportunity for the evil one to retard the believer's faith, assurance, and growth. It will also act as a barrier to lost people coming to Christ.

B. What can I do? (This section is taken from a Christian Life Commission tract entitled "Race Relations")

**"ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL:**

- ★ Accept your own responsibility in solving the problems associated with race.
- ★ Through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with those of other races, strive to rid your life of racial prejudice.
- ★ Express your convictions about race, particularly where those who stir up race hatred are unchallenged.

**IN FAMILY LIFE**

- ★ Recognize the importance of family influence in the development of attitudes toward other races.
- ★ Seek to develop Christian attitudes by talking over what children and parents hear about the race issue outside the home.
- ★ Parents should be careful to set a Christian example in relating to people of other races.
- ★ Seek opportunities to make family friendships across racial lines.

**IN YOUR CHURCH**

- ★ By the preaching and teaching of biblical truth relating to race, the congregation can be motivated to set an example for the entire community.
- ★ Be sure that worship, fellowship, and service through the church is open to all, even as the NT churches observed no racial barriers (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:26-29).

**IN DAILY LIFE**

- ★ Help to overcome all racial discrimination in the world of work.
- ★ Work through community organizations of all kinds to secure equal rights and opportunities, remembering that it is the race problem which should be attacked, not people. The aim is to promote understanding, not to create bitterness.
- ★ If it seems wise, organize a special committee of concerned citizens for the purpose of opening lines of communication in the community for education of the general public and for specific actions in improving race relations.
- ★ Support legislation and legislators in the passing of laws promoting racial justice and oppose those who exploit prejudice for political gain.
- ★ Commend law enforcement officials for enforcing the laws without discrimination.
- ★ Shun violence, and promote respect for the law, doing everything possible as a Christian citizen to make sure that legal structures do not become tools in the hands of those who would promote discrimination.
- ★ Exemplify the spirit and mind of Christ in all human relationship.

▣ **"servant of servants"** This is a Hebrew superlative meaning "lowest servant." This was fulfilled in Joshua's conquest of Palestine!

**9:26-27** The “let’s” of these two verses are JUSSIVES, three specific forms and one contextually implied.

**9:26 “the LORD” “YHWH”** seems to be the special use of the covenant name (see note at 2:4) to recognize Shem as the Messianic line (cf. Luke 3:36).

▣ **“the God of Shem”** Shem means “name” and may be a play on God’s special name, YHWH (BDB 1028 II). The line of Shem is the Messianic line. This is in opposition of 11:4!

**9:27 “let him dwell in the tents of Shem”** Some see this (1) in a political sense like the domination of Roman or European culture or (2) in a spiritual sense of the inclusion of the Gentiles with the blessings of the Jews, which was also part of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 12:3; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:28-29**

**<sup>28</sup>Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. <sup>29</sup>So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.**

**9:29** Death still reigned (cf. chapter 5)!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did the fall affect God’s covenant with Noah?
2. Is capital punishment a biblical precept (cf. v. 6)?
3. Did Noah curse the black race?
4. To what does verse 27 refer?

# GENESIS 10:1-32

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Descendants of Noah	Nations Descend from Noah	The Table of the Nations	The Descendants of Noah's Sons	The Peopling of the Earth
10:1	10:1	10:1	10:1	10:1
10:2-5		10:2-5	10:2-5	10:2-5a 10:5b
10:6-14	10:6-14	10:6-14	10:6-12 10:13-14	10:6-7 10:8-12 10:13-14
10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-20	10:15-19 10:20
10:21-31	10:21-31	10:21-31	10:21-31	0.43125 10:22-23 10:24-30 10:31
10:32	10:32	10:32	10:32	10:32

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. What is the theological purpose of the detailed nature of chapter 10?
1. It shows that God is concerned with all nations. Chapter 11 is chronologically out of order. This seems to show that 10 is not only a judgment (cf. 11:1-9), but primarily the fulfillment of 1:28 and 9:1,7 (i.e. be fruitful and fill the earth).
  2. These same nations are often referred to in the prophets (cf. Isa. 7-23; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 27-30; 38-39) as groups that God judges.
  3. It sets the stage for the call of Abraham and his seed as a kingdom of priests to bring all the world to YHWH (cf. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6).
  4. It follows the pattern of Genesis of the narrowing focus of the Messianic line (cf. 9:26).
  5. There seems to be about 70 groups mentioned. The rabbis say that there are 70 languages of the world, possibly from Deut. 32:5. Many link Luke 10:1 with this to assert the worldwide missionary thrust of the Gospel.
- B. How and why does it disagree with modern ethnological research?
1. Modern research is based on linguistic principles while the biblical account focuses on geographical data. This geographical information is affected by (1) date and (2) people movements both from migration and war (cf. Ezek. 16:3; Hosea 12:7).
  2. One must take into account the theological nature of this account
    - a. Selective coverage
    - b. Unity of mankind (Adam and Noah)
    - c. Those nations farthest from contact with Israel are dealt with least (or not at all)
  3. This chapter contains many plural names. This shows that often an ancestor stands for a group. Often, groups occupy more than one geographical location.
  4. This is not a western, detailed, scientific account. We often forget that this is the first attempt at a list of this type. Its accuracy is assured by our pre-suppositional commitment to Scripture. However, this does not mean it was meant to inform us exhaustively in all areas or conform to our western mind-set. For its day it is shockingly accurate!
  5. This list, as all of the Torah, was subject to scribal revisions and updating. Several of the names in this list (i.e. Cimmerians, Scythians, Philistines, and Medes) are not found in other ancient Near Eastern literature until 1500-1000 B.C.
  6. It is possible because the peoples of Asia and Polynesia (and thereby the Americas) and many of the peoples of Africa are not dealt with, that this list may only include parts of the racial diversity observable today. If this is true then it is a theological overstatement to say the races came directly from Noah's three children.

This is not meant to diminish the oneness of humans (which DNA studies have confirmed) which is clearly asserted in the original human pair in Gen. 1 and 2.
- C. Its structure
1. Japheth, vv. 2-5, occupies the region north of Mesopotamia from Spain to the Caspian Sea.
  2. Ham, vv. 6-20, occupies the region south of Mesopotamia from Africa to India
  3. Shem, vv. 21ff, deals with the Semites' occupation of Mesopotamia from the Mediterranean Sea to India.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1

<sup>1</sup>Now these are *the records of the generations* of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.

**10:1 “Now these are *the records of the generations*”** This phrase is repeated three times in the context of chapters 10 and 11 (10:1; 11:10,27). This may have been the author’s way to outline the book or a Babylonian colophon to mark the cuneiform clay tablets that go together.

▣ **“Shem, Ham, and Japheth”** This order of listing their names is not primarily related to their age but a theological arrangement, listing those in the Messianic line first, and those farthest removed last.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:2-5

<sup>2</sup>The sons of Japheth *were* Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. <sup>3</sup>The sons of Gomer *were* Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. <sup>4</sup>The sons of Javan *were* Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. <sup>5</sup>From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

**10:2 “Gomer”** This seems to refer to the Cimmerians (BDB 170), who are mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad*, chapter 11:13-19. They inhabited northern Asia Minor. They possibly migrated north and became European tribal groups. This can be seen through a similar term for them in north Germany, “Cimbi” and in Wales, “Cymri.”

▣ **“Magog”** There has been much discussion about this name because of its connection to Ezek. 38-39 and end-time events. However, it must be asserted that Magog (BDB 156), along with Meshech and Tubal, also mentioned in v. 2, are primarily tribes connected with Asia Minor and the coast of the Black Sea. It is quite possible that they migrated north and became the tribal groups of modern Russia. But, in ancient times, they were much closer to the Promised Land. Most assert that Magog is connected with the Scythians, southeast of the Black Sea. This information comes from Josephus.

▣ **“Madai”** Most assert that this refers to the Medes (BDB 552), who lived south and southwest of the Caspian Sea, who become so important to Israel in their joining with Persia to overthrow the Neo-Babylon Empire (Nebuchadnezzar).

▣ **“Javan”** This (BDB 402) seems to refer to the Ionian (southern) Greeks (cf. Dan. 8:21; 10:20; 11:2). This group is spelled “Javana” in Sanskrit; “Juna” in old Persian and “Jouan” on the Rosetta stone. They later became, not only the kingdom of Greece, but possibly a part of the sea peoples in the Aegean area (i.e. Phoenicians and Philistines).

▣ **“Tubal”** Many assert that this (BDB 1063) refers to the Tiberenians of central Asia Minor. Both Tubal and Meshech occur in Ezek 38-39 as residing in Asia Minor.

▣ **“Meshech”** Many assert that this is a tribal group (BDB 604) who lived south and southwest of the Black Sea (cf. Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2; 39:1). This information comes from Herodotus.

▣ **“Tiras”** There have been several possible identifications for this group (BDB 1066), as is so common among commentators. Many of these names and locales are simply uncertain. The possibilities include (1) the Etruscans; (2) an Aegean pirate nation called Pelasgians; (3) Josephus says the Thracians; or (4) Rashi says that it refers to Persia.

**10:3 “Ashkenaz”** This is the name (BDB 79) adopted by later Jews of Europe (i.e. Germany). The current theories are (1) Scythians in the area of Germany; (2) people close to Lake Urumia; or (3) a tribal group of Bithynia in Asia Minor.

▣ **“Riphath”** This has been alleged to be a tribal group (BDB 937) near the river Rhebas or a tribal group near the Bosphorus.

▣ **“Togarmah”** These (BDB 1062) are (1) a tribal group in the area of Cappadocia in Asia Minor; (2) near the ancient city of Carchemish; or (3) a tribal group in Phrygia. All three of these possibilities are in modern Turkey.

**10:4 “Elishah”** Most assert that this refers (BDB 47) to the native population of Cypress. They are mentioned in Ezek. 27:7.

▣ **“Tarshish”** Although Albright located this at Sardinia, most modern researchers locate it in southern Spain (i.e. Tartessos). It is mentioned in II Chr. 9:21; Ps. 48:7; 72:10; Jonah 1:3; 4:2).

▣ **“Kittim”** There is a consistent opinion that this refers to the settlers on the east coast of Cypress (BDB 1076 II).

▣ **“Dodanim”** Many assert that the similarity between the Hebrew letters, D (ד) and R (ר), has been confused and that this refers to the tribal inhabitants of the Island of Rhodes (cf. NIV translation). However, others assert that it is northern Greece and still others say it is southern Italy. It is obvious that this is simply unknown (BDB 187).

**10:5 “From these coastlands of the nations”** This phrase is used metaphorically for far away peoples, but here it seems to refer to the inhabitants along the coast of the Mediterranean and Black Seas which follows the migration of the children of Japheth.

▣ **“their lands. . .his language. . .their families. . .their nations”** This seems to be a fourfold division of how this chapter is divided: (1) geographically; (2) linguistically; (3) ethnically; and (4) politically.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-14**

<sup>6</sup>The sons of Ham *were* Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. <sup>7</sup>The sons of Cush *were* Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah *were* Sheba and Dedan. <sup>8</sup>Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." <sup>10</sup>The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. <sup>11</sup>From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, <sup>12</sup>and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. <sup>13</sup>Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim <sup>14</sup>and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim.

**10:6 “Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan”** These sons of Ham are discussed further in the following verses: Cush (BDB 468) in vv. 7-12; Mizraim (BDB 595) in vv. 13-14; and Canaan (BDB 488) in vv. 15-19. Put (BDB 806), although not discussed, seems to refer either to East Africa (Somalia), southern Arabia, Libya or Cyrene. It is obvious from this many possible locations that we are uncertain.

**10:7 “Seba”** This is the area of the upper Nile as far as we can tell from the information that is now available (BDB 685). It is mentioned in Isa. 43:3.

▣ **“Havilah”** This is literally “sandland” (BDB 296), possibly located somewhere in Egypt.

▣ **“Sabhah”** This (BDB 688) can either be in the area of modern Ethiopia, which would be east Africa, or a city in Arabia.

▣ **“Raamah”** This seems to be the Sabateans of southwest Arabia (BDB 947).

▣ **“Sabteca”** This also refers to Ethiopia (BDB 688).

▣ **“Sheba”** This (BDB 985) seems to be the famous area of the Queen of Sheba, southwest of Arabia (cf. I Kgs. 10:1-10; Job 1:15; 6:19; Ps. 72:10,15; Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20).

▣ **“Dedan”** This seems to be somewhere in Arabia (BDB 186). It is obvious that the sons of Cush are located in east Africa and the Arabian peninsula. It is mentioned in Isa. 21:13; Jer. 25:23; 49:8; Ezek. 25:13; 27:20.

**10:8 “father of Nimrod”** Nimrod (BDB 650) is particularly named because he was a founder of the first major civilization. This would mean that descendants of Ham developed Babylon. He is linked with the sons of Cush because of the linguistic similarities to the name Kassites. There are two groups from Cush, one in v. 7 on the eastern side of the Red Sea and this one in v. 8 on the western side of the Red Sea.

▣ **“Nimrod”** The term seems to mean “revolt” according to Rashi and Leupold. With this in mind the next two major phrases, “mighty one” and “mighty hunter,” are interpreted negatively as “tyrant” or “conqueror” or “killer of men.” However, we are uncertain if this is the connotation, but it seems to fit the context. This man is going to build some of the major cities of Mesopotamia and he will apparently start the first world power. Many have asserted that this refers to Tukuli-ninurta I, but he did not live until the thirteenth century B.C. when he controlled Assyria and Babylon. He was called Ninus, but his time is much too late to fit that of Nimrod. Others assert that this refers to Sargon I, ruler of the city of Akkad.

**10:9 “a mighty hunter before the LORD”** Some commentators assert that God taking notice of a hunter is beneath His dignity, but if the phrase refers to the first conqueror and developer of a human world system (cf. Mic. 5:6), then God taking notice of him is understandable.

**10:10 “Babel”** The Babylonians say that this term (*bab-ili*) means “the gate of the gods.” However, in Genesis 11, the Jews interpreted it as meaning (*balil*), “he confused” (BDB 93).

▣ All of the cities listed in this verse were major cities in Shinar at one time or another.

▣ **“Calneh”** Some say that this (BDB 484) refers to a city of Nippur, while others re-verbalize this to mean “all of them.”

▣ **“the land of Shinar”** This is linguistically related to the term “Sumer” or “Sumeria” (BDB 1042). It refers to an area of southern Mesopotamia.

**10:11 “he went forth into Assyria”** Some say that this refers to Nimrod and that seems to fit the context best (cf. Mic. 5:6). However, others, including the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Syriac, Martin Luther, and John Calvin, say it refers to Asshur.

▣ **“Nineveh”** This (BDB 644) is the major capital of the Assyrian Empire located on the Tigris River (cf. II Kgs. 19:36; Isa. 37:37; Jonah 1:2; 3:2-7; 4:11; Nah. 1:1; 2:8; 3:7; Zeph. 2:13)..

▣ **“Rehoboth-Ir”** This literally means “wide street city” or “wide places of the city” and probably is a description of Nineveh (BDB 944 II).

▣ **“Calah”** This is a major Assyrian city (BDB 480 II). Its modern name is Nimrud which is obviously connected to the name, Nimrod.

**10:13 “Mizraim”** Many assert this refers to upper and lower Egypt (BDB 595).

▣ **“Ludim”** This may refer to Lydians in Asia Minor (BDB 530).

▣ **“Anamim”** This may be a tribal group occupying the oasis west of Egypt (BDB 777).

▣ **“Lehabim”** This seems to refer to the desert tribes of the northern African coast (BDB 529).

▣ **“Naphtuhim”** This seems to be the tribal group near the city of Memphis (BDB 661). All of those mentioned in v. 13 are obviously connected with Egypt and the surrounding area.

**10:14 “Pathrusim”** This means southland and probably refers to upper Egypt (BDB 837).

▣ **“Casluhim (from which came the Philistines)”** There has been much discussion about this phrase because from Amos 9:7 it seems to imply that the Philistines came from Crete. This is one of those places where this reference may be geographical. The continuing wave of invasions and migrations of the sea peoples of the Aegean affected most of the coastlands of the Mediterranean world, including Egypt and Palestine. For Casluhim see BDB 493.

▣ **“Caphtorim”** This seems to refer to the inhabitants of the island of Crete known as Caphtor (BDB 499).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:15-20**

<sup>15</sup>Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth <sup>16</sup>and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite <sup>17</sup>and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite <sup>18</sup>and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. <sup>19</sup>The territory 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. <sup>20</sup>These are the

**sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.**

**10:15 “Sidon”** This is the famous Phoenician seaport and originally its capital, north of Palestine (BDB 850).

▣ **“Heth”** This (BDB 366) seems to be a non-Semitic name. It is possibly the beginning of the Hittite group. In the Bible they are located in two places: (1) around the city of Hebron and (2) north of Palestine in central Turkey. They dominated this entire region between 1800-1200 B.C. The tribal group called Hivites may also be connected to the term Heth.

**10:16 “the Jebusite”** These were the occupants of the city of Salem or Jebus, later Jerusalem (BDB 101).

▣ **“Amorite”** The term (BDB 57) Amorite can be a collective term (cf. Gen. 15:16) like the term Canaanite. We think it had the connotation of “high-lander” (the literal name meant “westerner”) while Canaanite had the connotation of “low-lander” (the literal name meant “land of purple”). In the Bible the inhabitants of Canaan are listed in several places: (1) by two tribal groups in Gen. 13:7, 34:30; Judg. 1:4,5; (2) by seven nations in Deut. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; 24:11; (3) by ten nations in Gen. 15:19-20; and (4) the most common usage is a sixth nation designation that is used the majority of times in the Pentateuch.

▣ **“Girgashite”** This was a Canaanite tribe often named in the various lists of the tribes of Canaan (BDB 173, cf. Gen. 10:16; 15:21; Deut. 7:11; Josh. 3:10; 24:11; Neh. 9:8; I Chr. 1:14), but no locality is ever identified.

**10:17 “the Hivite”** They seem to be the inhabitants of central Palestine (BDB 295). Some identify them with Hurrians. Numbers 13:29 is a good geographical summary of the division of these tribes in Palestine.

▣ **“Arkite”** This seems to be the inhabitants of a coastal city and island north of Sidon (BDB 792).

▣ **“Sinite”** This seems to be the inhabitants of a city close to Arke (BDB 696).

**10:18 “Arvadite”** This seems to refer to the inhabitants of an island off the coast north of Palestine (BDB 71). Like the two previous ones it is north of Tripolis.

▣ **“Hamathite”** This refers to the inhabitants of a city on the Orontes River (BDB 333).

**10:19 “Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim”** These are cities of the plains that God later destroys. They are located in the southern end of the Dead Sea.

▣ **“Lasha”** Jerome says that this was east of the Dead Sea (BDB 546).

**10:20** This is a summary of the divisions much like v. 5.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:21-31

<sup>21</sup>Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, *and* the older brother of Japheth, children were born. <sup>22</sup>The sons of Shem *were* Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. <sup>23</sup>The sons of Aram *were* Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. <sup>24</sup>Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah <sup>27</sup>and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah <sup>28</sup>and Obal and Abimael and Sheba <sup>29</sup>and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. <sup>30</sup>Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east. <sup>31</sup>These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

**10:21 “Shem”** This is the Hebrew term “name” (BDB 1028 II). His importance is seen because he is mentioned both here and in 11:10-26. The rebellious people of chapters 10-11 want to build a “name” for themselves. His name links up with 4:26 (i.e. YHWH’s name glorified). He will represent the chosen line of blessing (cf. 12:2).

▣ **“Eber”** The etymology of this name is very similar to the term “Hebrew” (BDB 720 II), which refers to a much wider group than simply the Jews. There has been much speculation about the connection between Eber and the phrase found on many documents and stele(s) in Egypt called “Habirv” (cf. Gen. 14:13). A possible etymology of the name Eber is “to pass over and through,” which seems to imply a nomadic group.

▣ **“the older brother of Japheth”** Rashi asserts that the Hebrew is ambiguous as to who is the older brother.

**10:22 “Elam”** This was a major kingdom to the east of the Tigris River whose capital was Shushan. This is probably the most eastern of the groups mentioned in this chapter (BDB 743).

▣ **“Asshur”** This (BDB 78) can refer to (1) a person; (2) a city; or (3) a nation (i.e. Assyria).

▣ **“Arpachshad”** This (BDB 75) seems to be a tribal group north of Nineveh (another capital of Assyria). The NIV translation has Arphaxad.

▣ **“Lud”** This possibly refers to the Lydian nation of Asia Minor (BDB 530). Heroditus asserts that they claimed origin from Nineveh, a Semite city.

▣ **“Aram”** This refers to the area of modern Syria (BDB 74).

**10:25 “Peleg”** This is the specific line from which Abraham will come and it is fully discussed genealogically in 11:18-27. It may mean “divided” (BDB 811 II).

▣ **“for in his days the earth was divided”** The Hebrew term literally means “irrigation canals” which would fit southern Mesopotamia, but the popular etymology is “divisions” (BDB 811, KB 928, *Niphal* PERFECT). There is a sound play between Peleg and divided (*niplega*). This may refer to the dividing of the languages mentioned in chapter 11. Therefore, the dispersions of chapter 10 are out of chronological order when compared to chapter 11.

**10:26-29** This is a delineation of the Arabian tribes.

**10:28 “Sheba. . .Havilah”** This, along with Asshur in v. 22, seems to be included in both the Hamite list and the Semite list. This is either because of (1) geographical migration; (2) victories of war; or (3) the merging of two families by marriage. This list is not specific in many ways.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:32**

**<sup>32</sup>These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.**

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the purpose of Genesis 10?
2. Why is Nimrod singled out for special treatment?
3. Why are Israel, Moab, and Edom not mentioned in this list of nations?

# CHAPTER 11:1-32

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Universal Language, Babel, Confusion	The Tower of Babel	The Tower of Babel	The Tower of Babel	The Tower of Babel
11:1-9	11:1-9	11:1-9	11:1-9	11:1-4 11:5-9
Descendants of Shem	Shem's Descendants	Genealogies of Abraham	The Descendants of Shem	The Patriarchs After the flood
11:10-11	11:10-11	11:10-11	11:10-11	11:10 11:10b-11
11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13	11:12-13
11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15	11:14-15
11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17	11:16-17
11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19	11:18-19
11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21	11:20-21
11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23	11:22-23
11:24-25	11:24-25	11:24-25	11:24-25	11:24-25
11:26	11:26	11:26	11:26	11:26
	Terah's Descendants		The Descendants of Terah	The Descendants of Terah
	11:27-30	11:27-30	11:27-30	11:27 11:27b-30
11:27-30				
11:31-32	11:31-32	11:31-32	11:31-32	11:31 11:32

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

#### 1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 10-11 are in reversed chronological order.
- B. Although the confusion of languages with its resultant scattering of peoples seems to be an act of judgment, remember that it is the development of nationalism which has, up to this point, thwarted the political movement toward a one world government. Therefore, this was in a sense another blessing of God.

For the Christian, Pentecost was the theological reversal of the Tower of Babel!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-9**

<sup>1</sup>Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. <sup>2</sup>It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup>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, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." <sup>5</sup>The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

**11:1 “the whole earth used the same language”** It is obvious that chapter 11 explains the dispersion described in chapter 10.

This one language, which apparently went back to Eden, was not Hebrew. The oldest written language known to moderns is cuneiform Summerian, dating from 3,000 B.C. (ABD, vol. 1, p. 1213), and the culture from 10,000-8,000 B.C.

**11:2 “they journeyed east”** This seems to imply a movement away from the location of the ark, the mountains of Ararat. The literal phrase “journeyed” means “pulled up stakes” (BDB 652, KB 704), *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). Mesopotamia is southeast of the mountains of Ararat (which run from modern Turkey to Iran).

▣ **“the land of Shinar”** This refers to lower Mesopotamia or Babylon, also called Chaldea (BDB 11042).

**11:3** This verse has one *Qal* IMPERATIVE and two related COHORTATIVE forms. This describes the

construction techniques that are historically accurate for Mesopotamia (no tress). There were no rocks in this area, so bricks were fired. King James has “slime,” but it obviously refers to the black, sticky substance that boils up in this area. We would call it tar, asphalt, or pitch (BDB 330, cf. 6:14).

**11:4** This verse has one *Qal* IMPERATIVE and two related IMPERFECTS used as COHORTATIVES. There seem to be four elements involved in this account: (1) the building of a city and a tower; (2) the size of which would rival the other structures of its day; (3) they wanted to make themselves a name; and (4) they did not want to be scattered abroad (i.e. all the earth). The exact connotation of this is uncertain. Many have asserted that it relates to the Babylonian ziggurats, but the Hebrew word is *migdal* which is translated “fortified tower” (BDB 153, cf. Judg. 8:9-17). It is obviously an attempt by mankind to organize themselves apart from God, and thereby to thwart His will. Philo even says that they wrote their name on every brick so that they would not be dispersed. This is the first example of human pride, organized and functioning apart from God (cf. Daniel and Revelation 18 and 19).

▣ **“a tower whose top will reach into heaven”** The people of Mesopotamia were astral worshipers (i.e. heavenly lights were gods). These towers were raised platforms to observe the night sky. They were the place where the gods were worshiped and encountered.

**11:5** This is very anthropomorphic (cf. 18:21; Exod. 3:8).

**11:7 “Let Us go down”** This verse also has a *Qal* IMPERATIVE with two related COHORTATIVES. This is a PLURAL form, much like 1:26; 3:22. Although this passage seems anthropomorphic in English, it is not referring to a weakness on God’s part but to an act of grace whereby He stops sinful mankind from trying to run their lives in their own fallen way (cf. Rom. 1-3).

The “Let Us” of divine activity thwarts the “let us” of human rebellion (cf. vv. 3,4,7).

**11:9 “Babel”** It is interesting to note that archaeology has unearthed literary documents from the Sumerian culture in Mesopotamia which assert that at this time all people spoke in one tongue (i.e. Samuel Noah Kramer in his article “The Babel of Tongues: A Sumerian Version” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88:108-111). The popular Hebrew etymology is “confusion” (i.e. *balal*, BDB 93), which seems to describe God’s confusing their one language. Babel literally means “the gate of God” (Akkadian *bab-ilani*), which is very similar to some of the names of Ziggurats, which were large structures with a temple on top to worship the astral deities. Babylon becomes a symbol of a fallen world power, exemplified in Nimrod, later in Nebuchadnezzar, and finally in the sea beast of the book of Revelation.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:10-11**

<sup>10</sup>These are *the records* of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; <sup>11</sup>and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

Shem’s descendants continue the Messianic line from Seth from Gen. 5:3-32 and 10:21-31. This line will continue in Terah/Abraham in 11:10-25 (cf. Luke 3:23-38).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; <sup>13</sup>and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

The Masoretic Text excludes *Kainan* in v. 13 but the Septuagint includes him as does Luke 3:36.

▣ “Shelah” See BDB 1019 II.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:14-15**

<sup>14</sup>Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; <sup>15</sup>and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

▣ “Eber” See BDB 720.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; <sup>17</sup>and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

▣ “Peleg” See BDB 811 II.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:18-19**

<sup>18</sup>Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; <sup>19</sup>and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

▣ “Reu” See BDB 946.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:20-21**

<sup>20</sup>Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; <sup>21</sup>and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

▣ “Serug” See BDB 974.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:22-23**

<sup>22</sup>Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; <sup>23</sup>and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

▣ “Nahor” See BDB 637.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What was the tower of Babel?
2. What was man trying to do against God in Gen. 11?

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 11:24-13:18

- A. This section of Genesis begins the fuller discussion of the line of the Messiah through Abraham.
- B. Genesis' fifty chapters are concerned with the redemption of God's covenant people, not creation. Calling one to call all is the focus of the book.
- C. Abram is seen in his weaknesses as well as in his faithfulness. The God of election and mercy calls him out for his own redemptive purposes.
- D. God chose Abraham to choose a world (cf. 12:3c; Exod. 19:4-6; II Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). God wants all people made in His image to be redeemed (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ezek. 18:23,32; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
- E. The *Talmud* specifies seven blessings of the call:
  1. Abram would be the father of a great nation.
  2. He would be blessed in his lifetime.
  3. His name would be renowned.
  4. He would be a blessing to others.
  5. Others will be blessed who honor him.
  6. Others will be cursed who reject him.
  7. His influence would be universal.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:24-25**

<sup>24</sup>Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; <sup>25</sup>and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

**11:24 “Terah”** “Terah” possibly means “tarrying,” “delaying,” or “migrating” (BDB 1076). From Josh. 24:2 it is obvious that he and his family were polytheists. The names of his family suggest primarily that

they worshiped the moon goddess *Zin*. She was worshiped in Ur, Tema, and Haran. However, Gen. 31:53 implies that he knew of YHWH.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:26**

**<sup>26</sup>Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.**

**11:26 “Abram, Nabor and Haran”** This might be the order of importance and not age. The name Abram can mean (1) “exalted father”; (2) “exalter of father”; or (3) “the Exalted One is my father” (BDB 4). The name Nahor means “panting” or an Assyrian place name (BDB 637), while Haran means “mountaineer” (BDB 248).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:27-30**

**<sup>27</sup>Now these are *the records of the generations of Terah*. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. <sup>28</sup>Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. <sup>29</sup>Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. <sup>30</sup>Sarai was barren; she had no child.**

**11:27 “Lot”** See BDB 532 II.

**11:28 “Haran died in the presence of his father Terah”** This is a Hebrew idiom for Haran dying before his father.

▣ **“the Ur of the Chaldeans”** The Chaldean culture developed (i.e. built on the strengths of the Sumerian culture) and thrived after Abram’s day (BDB 505).

**11:29 “Sarai”** See BDB 979.

▣ **“Milcah”** See BDB 574.

▣ **“and Iscah”** This person (BDB 414) and the reason for her presence in this verse is unknown. The rabbis (also Josephus, Jerome, and Augustine) say it is Sarai, but the text asserts that they have different fathers.

**11:30 “Sari was barren”** The inability of Sarai, Rachel, and Rebecca to have children (BDB 785) was one of the ways God used to exhibit His power and control of human history and genealogy. Human sexual generation is not the key aspect to the lineage of the Messiah.

This same style of theological aspect to Israel’s history is also seen in the fact that the firstborn is not in the Messianic line. Culturally the firstborn was the head of the clan, but not so among YHWH’s people. It was His choice!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:31-32**

**<sup>31</sup>Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans**

**in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. <sup>32</sup>The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.**

**11:31 “they went out”** There is much discussion as to whether Terah took his family or if Abram took them. Some postulate God’s original calling of Terah but that he lapsed back into idolatry. It seems to me that Abraham is the focus of the entire section, not Terah. By leaving Ur Abram was leaving not only his extended family, but also their national deities. He left a comfortable, settled life to follow a new God who had spoken to him in a rather cryptic fashion.

**11:32 “the days of Terah were 205 years”** When one adds 11:26 with 12:4 which equals 145 years and subtracts this from 205, it becomes obvious that Terah lived 60 years after Abraham left Haran. This seems to conflict with Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7:4. Several aspects of Stephen’s historical review conflict with our modern understanding of Old Testament history. Possibly he was using rabbinical interpretative methods. Other scholars assert that Abram, though listed first in 11:26, was born much later and that Stephen was accurate. It is interesting that the Samaritan Pentateuch has “144” here.

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

“In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.”