

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

GENESIS

THE BOOK OF
BEGINNINGS

GENESIS 1 - 22

JOHN STEVENSON

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To my parents
who planted a seed

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IN THE BEGINNING

GENESIS 1:1-2

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1).*

The word “genesis” is synonymous with beginnings. When we speak of the genesis of a thing, we are referring to its origins. The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. It relates a number of beginnings:

- The beginning of the heavens and the earth.
- The beginning of mankind.
- The beginning of marriage and family.
- The beginning of sin and death.
- The beginning of the nations.
- The beginning of the people of Israel.

Genesis is foundational to the Bible. Every major theme within the Bible finds its origins in Genesis. Indeed, the rest of the Bible would be incomprehensible without the doctrinal foundation which is set down in this first book.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF GENESIS

The Bible itself states that the author of both Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch is Moses. One of the ways of talking about the Old Testament in general was to describe it as “Moses and the Prophets” (Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27; John 1:45; Acts 26:22; 28:31).

The Mosaic authorship of Genesis has recently come under fire by liberal theology that claims the Pentateuch was not written until the days of Ezra, following the Babylonian Captivity. The claim is made that some unknown scribe took and edited various myths and legends and that the result is the book we now call Genesis.

Is this important? Does it matter whether or not Moses wrote the books of the Pentateuch? I believe it does. If Moses did not write Genesis, then the Bible contains errors when it ascribes these books to Moses. If the Bible contains these sorts of errors, then it is not really the Word of God but rather

just a good book written by men that tells stories and gives teaching on how they thought we ought to live.

The theories of alternate authorship did not come about in a vacuum and they did not come about all at once. The origins of such ideas can be traced back to the early 1700's and a French physician named Jean Austruc (1684-1786) who proposed that Moses had used two earlier source documents to write the book of Genesis and that these two unknown source documents were suggested by the various names of God that were used throughout the Genesis narrative.¹

For example, throughout Genesis 1 we read of God as designated by His title, *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים). When we come to Genesis 2, we see *Jehovah* (יְהֹוָה – also written as Yahweh) *Elohim*. Austruc theorized these different names reflected two different source documents that were utilized by Moses.

- “J” Document that used the name *Jehovah*.
- “E” Document that used the title *Elohim*.

Austruc did not deny the Mosaic authorship of Genesis; his theory dealt with the source documents that Moses might have used. To say that Moses utilized source documents is not outside the range of possibility since the Bible itself mentions other books that were extant in the ancient world and even cites some of those books.

- Numbers 21:14 makes mention of the Book of the Wars.
- Joshua 10:13 speaks of events of Joshua’s day being written in the book of Jashar. 2 Samuel 1:18 makes another reference to this unknown book.
- 1 Kings 11:41 references the book of the acts of Solomon.

The important point to see is that there was no proof for this theory. It was based only upon a supposition. Austruc’s followers went on to say that the entire Pentateuch could be divided up in this same way.

Wilhelm M. L. deWette (1780-1849) came out with the theory that Moses had not written Deuteronomy and that this book had been penned by an unknown author in the days of Josiah.

¹ In 1753 Austruc published the book *Conjectures sur les memoires originaux, dont il paraît que Moses s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse* (“Conjectures on the original documents that Moses appears to have used in composing the Book of Genesis”).

In 1853, H. Hupfeld argued that the E Document could be divided to form E1 and E2. This meant seeing the book of Genesis as having four different sources.

- J Document
- E1 Document
- E2 Document
- Deuteronomy

In 1886 a German historian named Julius Wellhausen published *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* ("Prologue to the History of Israel") in which he took Hupfeld's theory and changed the names.

J - Stands for a document written in 850 B.C. It is called this because of its extensive use of the word "Jehovah" when speaking of God.

E - This is said to use "Elohim" for God and is said to have been written in 750 B.C.

D - Stands for the book of Deuteronomy. It is said to be the scroll of the Law which Hilkiah, the priest, found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah.

P - This is said to be a Priestly Document written in 450 B.C. It is the one which contains all of the genealogies and lists, as well as the regulations concerning the sacrifices.

Known today as the Documentary Hypothesis, or concisely as JEDP, this theory says that a later redactor/editor took four independent sources and compiled them in the years following the Babylonian Captivity. According to Wellhausen, the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, but rather contains mistakes and flaws all throughout.

Wellhausen did not base his theory upon archaeological finds. There was no archaeology to speak of in that day. Instead, Wellhausen based his views upon Hegel's prevailing philosophy. This was an ideological theory instead of one based upon facts. Wellhausen lived in a day of high anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism and his theory reflected an obvious bias. In answer to Wellhausen and the advocates of the JEDP theory, the following points can be presented:

1. Moses was qualified to write the book of Genesis.

It was argued by Wellhausen and his supporters that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing was unknown at that early date and that Moses would have been an illiterate nomad. Today we know this is far from the truth. We have examples of writing that can be dated far earlier than Moses.

Moses was scholastically qualified to write Genesis, having been trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). He was prepared to understand any and all the available records, manuscripts and oral traditions that might have been at his disposal.

2. The Style of Genesis reflects an Egyptian influence.

The author of Genesis has a very definite insight and knowledge of the history, customs and culture of Egypt. Furthermore, the Pentateuch contains more Egyptian loan words than any other of the books of the Bible.

3. The unity of the book of Genesis reflects a single author.

Professor Gary A. Rendsburg, chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, makes the following observation:

...there is much more uniformity and much less fragmentation in the book of Genesis than generally assumed. The standard division of Genesis into J, E, and P strands should be discarded. This method of source criticism is a method of an earlier age, predominantly of the 19th century. If new approaches to the text, such as literary criticism of the type advanced here, deem the Documentary Hypothesis unreasonable and invalid, then source critics will have to rethink earlier conclusions and start anew (1986:105).

Furthermore, there is a complete absence of Persian loan words in the Pentateuch. We would expect the complete opposite from a work that was completed after the Babylonian Captivity and during the Persian period.

4. The parallel sections of the book of Genesis reflect a regular pattern of Semitic parallelism.

Rather than being evidence for two different authors, such parallelism is seen to be typical and deliberate. For example, when we come to the Abraham narrative, we will see two different instances where Abraham says that Sarah is his sister rather than his wife. These events will serve as bookends to the Abrahamic narrative, one taking place early in the story and the other taking place near the end of the story. Yet it will only be in the second narrative that we will learn that Sarah is indeed his half-sister as well as his wife. This will cause us to go back and see the earlier parallel narrative in a different light. Similarly, we read the Genesis 1 narrative and then we come and read the second chapter and its additional details causes us to go back and to re-examine the events of the first chapter to “fill in the blanks.”

THE TITLE AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

1. The Hebrew Title.

The Old Testament, including Genesis, was originally written in Hebrew. The Hebrews commonly took the first line of a book and made that the title. Thus they called this book בְּרִאָשִׁית (BeRishyth) - “In the beginning.”

2. The Greek Title.

Our title “Genesis” is taken from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the original Hebrew Bible — Γενεσίς (Genesis) — it means “beginnings.” That is a good title for this book. In the Septuagint, the phrase *biblos genesis* is found nine different times. Each time it is translated: “*These are the generations of...*”

The book of Genesis has its own internal outline which is based upon the repetition of this same Hebrew phrase *elleh toledoth* (“these are the generations”).

“THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF...”		
Formula	Contents	Location
In the beginning God...	Creation	1:1 - 2:3
1. This is the account of the heaven and the earth	Creation	2:4 - 4:26

2. This is the written account of Adam's Line	Genealogy: Seth to Noah	5:1 - 6:8
3. This is the account of Noah	Flood & Covenant	6:9 - 9:29
4. This is the account of Shem, Ham & Japheth	Table of Nations & Babel	10:1 - 11:9
5. This is the account of Shem	Genealogy: Shem to Abraham	11:10-26
6. This is the account of Terah	Story of Abraham	11:27 - 25:11
7. This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael	Genealogy of Ishmael	25:12-18
8. This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac	Transition of blessing from Isaac to Jacob	25:19 - 35:29
9. This is the account of Esau	Genealogy of Esau	36:1-43
10. This is the account of Jacob	Joseph & Israel in Egypt	37:1 - 50:26

Notice that there is a symmetrical pattern which finds Abraham at its center. The entire first half of the book moves toward Abraham and the entire latter part of the book flows from his life and from the covenant promises that are given to him.

Adam →	Abraham	← Israel in Egypt
Genesis 2:4 - 11:26		Genesis 11:27 - 50:26
5 <i>Toledoth</i> from Adam to Abraham		5 <i>Toledoth</i> from Abraham to Israel

Thus, the person of Abraham stands at the center and as the pivotal point of the book of Genesis. He is the father of the nation through whom all of the world is to be blessed. He stands in contrast to Adam through whom all the world was cursed.

The first 11 chapters of Genesis form a prologue to the rest of the

Pentateuch. This prologue is worded in cosmic terms, taking in all of mankind and all of the world.

GENESIS 1-11	GENESIS 12-50
Events predominant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation • The Fall into sin • The Flood • The Tower of Babel 	Persons predominant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abraham • Isaac • Jacob • Joseph
The Race as a Whole	The Family of Abraham
<i>Over 2000 years</i>	<i>250 years</i>

The New Testament counterpart to Genesis is the book of Revelation. What is introduced in the book of Genesis finds its conclusion in Revelation.

Genesis	Revelation
Creation of the heavens and earth.	A new heaven and a new earth.
The Tree of Life in the Garden.	The Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem.
A river runs through the Garden.	A river runs through the New Jerusalem.
The first marriage: Adam and Eve.	The last marriage: The last Adam to the church.
The beginning of the career of Satan.	The end of Satan's career: The Lake of Fire.
Death enters.	Death is destroyed.
Man lost privileges because of sin.	Man regains privileges because of Christ's payment for sin.
Beginning of sorrow, pain and death.	Christ wipes away all tears.
The first murder.	No more death.
The beginning of Babylon.	Babylon destroyed.

Throughout Genesis we see God's blessings and provision for man and man's failure to appropriate that grace. Ironically, this is illustrated by comparing the first and last verses of the book.

Genesis begins with God	<i>In the beginning God created...</i>
Genesis ends with a corpse	<i>...in a coffin in Egypt.</i>

But this does not mean that Genesis is a book without hope, for even in recording the death and burial of Joseph in Egypt, there is a continuing promise of a redemption to come.

OVERVIEW OF THE CREATION ACCOUNT

1. The Similarity to the Babylonian Creation Account.

Scholars have made much of the fact that other creation accounts in other cultures predate Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. Of particular interest is one such account known as the *Enuma Elish* found in Mesopotamia.

It was customary in the very earliest written history to name a book or a scroll after the first word or phrase found in the body of the work. The *Enuma Elish* ("When on high") draws its title from the first sentence of its narrative.

*"When on high the heaven had not been
named, firm ground below had not been named..."*

The text was found written on seven tablets, but this has no bearing on the seven days of the Genesis account. If the tablets had been larger then there would only have been six.

Tablet 1: The most primitive forces and gods come together as a result of the rage of the sea goddess Tiamat.

Tablet 2: Marduk, one of the second generation gods, is elected to fight Tiamat.

Tablet 3: The assembly of gods decrees the outcome of the battle and the glory of Marduk.

Tablet 4: They each create seven assistants to help them. Marduk wins the conflict and dissects the body of Tiamat.

Tablet 5: From the body of Tiamat, Marduk creates heaven and earth.

Tablet 6: Tiamat's second in command, Kingu, is slain and from drops of his blood Marduk creates man so that there will be one to sacrifice to the gods.

Tablet 7: Contains a list of magical names for Marduk.

It can be seen from this brief outline that this account is only superficially related to the Genesis account. Since the initial discovery of the seven tablets, other copies have been found relating the same story but on ten tablets. At the same time, one can see that there are similarities, not in the actual accounts, but in the way in which they are set forth. Bruce Waltke notes that "both accounts present a primeval, dark, watery, and formless state prior to creation" (1972:329)

The Ennuma Elish	The Genesis Account
Tiamat engulfs the world in a primal chaos.	The world was unformed and unfilled.
Light comes from the gods.	God brings light into existence.
Marduk makes the stars of the zodiac and ordains the year.	The Lord sets sun and moon for signs, seasons, days and years.
Marduk makes man from the blood of Kingu.	God creates man in His own image and likeness.

If this pattern is of a deliberate and intentional nature, then it could be that Moses is giving to us a refutation of the accepted mythos that was held in antiquity as he goes point by point to show that God is the true Creator of heaven and earth.

At the same time, there is a real difference between the Genesis account and the creation accounts of other pagan religions. In other ancient religious systems, the natural world was seen as a manifestation of all of the deities - the sun, moon, stars, oceans,

storms. The cosmos always had the status of deity. The Bible is unique in that the cosmos is merely creation. Only God is God.

The other creation accounts each present their own particular deity as winning the battle or conflict with the other competing deities. The Genesis account does not present Yahweh in competition with other gods. It does not even see the need to mention Yahweh by name. He is referenced by the more generic Elohim. He is the sole God who creates an orderly, organized cosmos.

2. The Nature of the Two Creation Accounts.

A reading of Genesis 1-2 will show immediately that we have two separate and distinct accounts of creation that can be compared and contrasted.

GENESIS 1	GENESIS 2
The heavens and the earth are created in six days.	Creation of the man and the woman (no time element mentioned).
Shows man in his cosmic setting.	Shows man as central to God's purpose.
A panoramic view of creation as a whole.	A detailed view of one particular aspect of creation.
Centers on God creating the heavens and the earth.	Centers on man as the crowning of God's creation.

We have already noted that, rather than being contradictory, these two accounts are complimentary. Indeed, this method of first giving a panoramic view and then coming back to focus on important details is found all through Genesis. For example, in the account of Jacob and Esau, it is Esau's story that comes first, but it is Jacob's which is more fully developed and which holds the place of higher importance to the theme of the book.

This suggests that, while the Genesis 1 account is foundational, it is the second account in chapter 2 that will relate to the reader in a personal manner and which will continue to carry the bulk of the story line.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1).

Perhaps one of the most sublime sermons on creation ever preached was not from a pulpit, but from the Apollo 8 spacecraft as it orbited the moon. It was Christmas Eve, 1968, when astronaut Frank Borman, a lay-reader for the congregation at St. Christopher's Episcopal church in Houston, appeared live on television from lunar orbit. Pointing the camera out the window so that the entire world could see the bleakly grey and dead moon passing quickly underneath the spacecraft, he said, "And now the crew of Apollo 8 has a message we would like to send to you. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...." With that, he and the other two Apollo astronauts proceeded to read the Genesis 1 account.

1. The When of Creation: *In the beginning... (1:1).*

We are not told when this took place with reference to our own modern system of dating. I understand that some old Bibles have placed a date in the margin as to when this was computed to have taken place. But the simple fact is that the Bible is silent concerning the exact date. What it does tell us is that the creation took place *in the beginning*.

That is significant. It means that the creation of which we read was a true creation. If this was what took place at the beginning, then it indicates that the universe is not infinitely old. Whether you want to stipulate that this creation took place thousands of years ago or billions of years ago, the truth remains that there was a time when nothing existed and then something came into being.

But what about before the beginning? This verse gives the answer. "*In the beginning God...*" God did not come into existence at creation. Rather He was already in existence at creation. This is made clear in the New Testament commentary that we have in the gospel of John where the apostle tells us: "*In the beginning was the Word...*" (John 1:1).

2. The Who of Creation: *In the beginning God...(1:1).*

The Hebrew word for "God" is *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים). The interesting

thing about the word *Elohim* is that it is plural.

- *El* (אֵל) is the singular form for “God.” It is found in the Old Testament, but is not as common (only about 250 times).
- *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) is the much more common designation of God.

Some have suggested that this is an indication of the trinity, but it is more likely a device known as a plural of immensity, used to describe God in terms of His greatness. Although *Elohim* is a plural noun, it is accompanied by a singular verb — while “God” is plural, “created” is singular. This verse teaches us several things about God.

- a. It teaches of the existence of God.

God is. He exists. The writer of Genesis does not argue this point. It is not open for debate. He does not begin his book with 5 points of proving the existence of God. The very fact that anything is here is evidence that God exists.

- b. It teaches of the existence of One God.

As we read this chapter, we should remember that it was written to an original audience and with a very specific purpose. The writer was Moses. He was writing to the Israelites in the wilderness. They have lived all of their lives as slaves in Egypt. And in Egypt they had been exposed to the pagan pantheon of Egypt. They had heard the Egyptian creation myths which described the heavens and earth being the domain of all of the false gods of Egypt.

This chapter is written to correct the worldly thinking to which the Israelites had been exposed. It sets out to show that the world is not a random accident caused by the capricious acts of pagan deities, but was created by a single and wise and intelligent and loving God.

- c. It teaches of the pre-existence of God.

God not only existed at the creation, He pre-existed at the creation. He was not the recipient of creation, He was the source of creation. That presupposes that he already existed prior to the creation. We have already noted the words of the Apostle John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2).

This passage also takes us back to the creation. But there is a difference. The emphasis here is not upon God creating, but rather upon His being. Here we read that in the beginning, something already was. When you go back in time as far as you can possibly imagine, before anything else ever exists, God was.

John 1:1 does not say that “in the beginning the Word came into being.” Instead, it tells us that at the time of the beginning, the Word already was. The Word pre-existed. This is seen in the three statements of John 1:1.

- The Word pre-existed.
- The Word pre-existed with God.
- The Word pre-existed as God.

d. It teaches us of the person of God. God is not some mystical impersonal force. That makes good science fiction in a movie like “Star Wars” but it is terrible theology. God is personal. He thinks, He feels and He acts.

3. The Work of Creation: *In the beginning God created... (1:1).*

How are we to understand the work of creation as described in verse 1 as it relates to the rest of the chapter? There are two possibilities:

- a. An Initial Act of Creation. This would see the statement of verse 1 as relating what God did in the beginning and then the ensuing six days of “forming and filling” would tell of God’s continuing work at a later time.
- b. A Summary Statement. This view sees the typical Hebrew parallelism that runs all through Genesis as the brief overview statement is made at the first verse that is

then followed by a description of how God created the heavens and the earth.

It is perhaps noteworthy that four different Hebrew words are used within these two chapters to describe God's creative activity.

(1) **ברא** (*Bara*), “to create.”

Genesis 1:1 describes God creating the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:21 uses the same word to describe God creating the sea creatures and the birds. Genesis 1:27 relates the creation of man and woman.

We must not make this word say too much, for in other places it is used of a woman giving birth. At the same time, there does seem to be a careful distinction between this word and the others that are used in this chapter to describe God's creative works.

(2) **עשָׂה** (*Asah*), “to make.”

This is a very common word, used throughout the Old Testament. It is used to describe God's creation of...

- The expanse (1:7).
- Two great lights (1:16).
- The beasts of the earth (1:25).
- Man (1:26).
- All of the creative work (1:31; 2:2-3).
- The earth (2:4).
- Woman (2:18).

(3) **יצַר** (*Yatser*), “to form.”

Used in Genesis 2:7-8 to describe the forming and the molding of man's body. However, we should not read too much of a distinction into this because Zechariah 12:1 uses this same word to describe God forming man's spirit.

(4) **בָּנָה** (*Banah*), “To build.”

Used in Genesis 2:22 to describe the making of the woman from the rib of the man. It is used elsewhere of building cities (Genesis 4:17; 10:11; 11:4), altars (Genesis 8:20; 12:7) or even building a family (Genesis 16:2 where Sarah seeks to *banah* children through Hagar).

4. The “What” of Creation: ...*God created the heavens and the earth (1:1)*.

The phrase “heavens and earth” is all-inclusive. It takes in everything. The word “heavens” is from the Hebrew word *shamayim* (שָׁמָיִם). It always appears in the plural. It is taken from the root word שָׁמַע (sham) “over there.” It is literally the “place up there.” This is very simple language. It simply says that God created “the down here and the up there.”

When we note the plural of “heavens” we should remember that the Hebrews did not originally make a distinction between various levels of heaven.

This is important. As we read the Genesis account of creation, we will note that the focus is from an earthly perspective. It is written from the point of view of one who is standing upon planet earth. Instead of reading about orbits and rotating planets, we shall read of the sunrise and sunset and of seasons and years.

This brings out a principle. The Bible is written for the inhabitants of planet earth. Only things which concerned them were placed into the Bible. The Bible is not a book about angels or demons or Satan. Though these things might be given passing reference, it is only as they interact with God’s dealings toward men that they are mentioned.

Neither is the Bible a book about geology or biology or archaeology or astronomy. It is a book about God’s grace to fallen man. This does not mean that we should consider the Bible to be inferior to any of man’s sciences. The Bible is God’s Word and the very mind of Christ. It is completely without error. Whenever it speaks on any subject, no matter how slight the reference, it is correct. Having said this, it must be pointed out that there are several theories regarding the interpretation of the Creation Narrative that are held by Christians of good conscience who, despite their differences, still hold to the authority of the Scriptures.

THEORIES OF CREATION

1. Supernatural versus Evolutionary.

The Supernaturalist says that creation occurred in a way that is completely foreign to anything that may be observed today. The creation account indicates that God has completed his creative work (Genesis 2:1-3).

On the other hand, there are Christians who believe that God may have acted through evolutionary means to bring about creation. It is true that God often works through what we think of as “natural processes.” They are in reality His regular and faithful workings.

2. A superficial appearance of history.

The description that we have of God's creative work seems to imply creation with an appearance of age. This is vividly seen in the creation of man. On the day that Adam was created, how old was he? He was one day old! But the Scriptures seem to describe him as a full-grown man rather than as a baby. The implication is that he was created with an appearance of age.

The same is seen of animals and plant life. We do not read that God created seedlings, but rather that He created trees yielding fruit that had within them seeds for perpetuating further growth (Genesis 1:12).

When we were children, we used to discuss what came first, the chicken or the egg. The Biblical answer is that God created egg-laying chickens who looked and acted every bit like those who had been hatched and had grown to adulthood.

3. The Gap Theory.

This view places a great chronological gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 during which the earth was destroyed and then recreated. According to this theory, millions of years ago God created a perfect heaven and earth. This universe continued in a perfect state until Satan rebelled by desiring to become like God (Isaiah 14:12-17). Because of Satan's fall, sin entered the universe. As a result, the earth became “*formless and void*” until a global ice age swept over the earth as light and heat were removed. The six days which follow are said to refer to the **reconstruction** of the earth.

Support for the Theory	Objections to the Theory
The verb <i>hayeta</i> in Genesis 1:2 can be translated “became” so that we could read that “the earth became without form and void.”	The normal rendering of <i>hayeta</i> is “was” and indicates a state of being. To translate it differently would mandate that several factors take place that are not present in this verse.
The words <i>tohu wabohu</i> (“formless and void”) are said to refer to a destruction which took place after God’s original creation. In Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11 these words describe a destruction.	The words <i>tohu wabohu</i> (“formless and void”) need not describe destruction. They can just as easily describe an unconstructed state.
Isaiah 45:18 says that God did not create the earth void (<i>tohu</i>) while Genesis 1:2 says that the earth was now void. It is reasoned that the earth must have come to be in this manner after its original creation.	Isaiah 45:18 simply tells us that God’s intention for the earth in its completed form was that it would not be <i>tohu</i> , but rather that it might be inhabited. The prophet is simply stating the purpose of creation.
The darkness which characterized the formless and void condition is indicative of evil.	Darkness does not always indicate evil. Both light and darkness existed upon the finished earth and it was still said to be good.

As a technical footnote, it should be added that there are two situations in which the verb *היה* (*hayah*) can be translated as “became” rather than “was.”

- It can be used to describe the resulting state of being with a word that is preceded by the preposition **ל** or **כ**. Thus Genesis 2:7 describes how man became a living soul (**חַיָּה לְנַפְשׁוֹ**). In the same way, Genesis 3:22 has God saying that “the man has become like one of us.” (**הָיָה כֹּאֵחֶד מִמֶּנּוּ**.)
- It can be connected to a verse in a causal consecutive chain where a causal relationship exists between the two words so

that the present state of being exists because of the action of the previous verb. An example of this is seen in Genesis 25:27 where “the boys grew up and Esau became (עִזָּה) a skillful hunter” (Esau becoming a skillful hunter depended upon the boys growing up).

Neither of these two situations take place in this verse. It can therefore be seen that the Gap Theory does not fit the grammar of the Hebrew text.

4. The Day/Age Theory.

This view says that the six days of creation are not to be taken as literal days but rather are symbolic for long periods of time.

Support for the Theory	Objections to the Theory
The word “day” is sometimes used in the Scriptures to describe a period of time longer than a 24 hour period (“the day of the Lord”).	The word “day” does not normally refer to an extended period of time when it appears with a modifier (1st day, 2nd day, etc).
2 Peter 3:8 states that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years.	These days are clearly defined in Genesis 1:5 when God calls the light day and the darkness night.
The sun and the moon are not created until the 4th day. This indicates that the previous days are not literal.	The very purpose of the sun was to rule over the day while the moon was to rule over the night.

The observation that the word “day” (Hebrew יוֹם) does not normally refer to an extended period of time when it appears with a modifier (1st day, 2nd day, etc) is not without exception. For example, Hosea 6:2 speaks of the actions of the Lord toward the nation of Israel and says:

*He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day
That we may live before Him.*

Expositors have traditionally taken this to refer, not to literal periods of 24 hours, but to extended periods of time. It should be noted that this view which maintains the days of creation were other than a literal and unbroken period of a week was held by theologians long before the advent of modern evolutionary theory. Origen, Augustine and Aquinas were among some of the early theologians who suggested that the days of Genesis were not necessarily limited to a 24 hour day.

5. The Non-Sequential Theory/Framework Theory.

This view says that the first two chapters of Genesis are not meant to teach us anything about the chronological order of creation and that we should only learn general lessons from these chapters.

The creation week is seen merely as a literary device, a framework in which a number of very important messages are held.² Thus, the chronological sequence is merely to be regarded as the packaging in which the real message is wrapped.

"Bringing a question of chronological order to Genesis 1 is like bringing a question of meteorology to Psalm 139."

The problem with this view is that the Bible often contains similar literary devices even when it is obvious that the writer intended his readers to understand they were reading a historical narrative. For example, the entire life of Abraham can be demonstrated to follow a chiastic parallel. This in no way suggests that the life of Abraham was to be considered only packaging for a deeper spiritual truth.

On the other hand, the Scriptures often do have larger sections that speak poetically and are not meant to be taken with rigid literalism. Timothy Keller presents such a stance:

I personally take the view that Genesis 1 and 2 relate to each other the way Judges 4 and 5 and Exodus 14 and 15 do. In each couplet one chapter describes a historical event and the other is a song or poem about the theological meaning of the event. When reading Judges 4 it is obvious that it is a sober recounting of what happened in the battle, but when

² See Ridderbos, *Is there a Conflict between Genesis 1 and Natural Science*" and Meredith Kline, *The Genesis Debate*.

we read Judges 5, Deborah's Song about the battle, the language is poetic and metaphorical. When Deborah sings that the stars in the heavens came down to fight for the Israelites, we understand that she means that metaphorically. I think Genesis 1 has the earmarks of poetry and is therefore a “song” about the wonder and meaning of God’s creation. Genesis 2 is an account of how it happened (2008:93-94).

6. The Literal Interpretation.

If we read the passage naturally, we seem to see a literal six-day period of creation since the entire idea of a “day” and a “night” is defined within the passage where “*God called the light DAY...*” For this reason, this has been the accepted interpretation from both Jewish and Christian scholars throughout most of history.

Most of the other interpretations of Genesis have as their motivating force the desire to bring the teachings of this chapter into line with popular geological and evolutionary theory. This is not a bad thing if those modern theories can be demonstrated to be correct. We have done similar works of interpretation when we take archaeological discoveries into account and use them to help us to understand and to interpret the Scriptures. For example, when Isaiah 11:12 speaks of the Lord gathering His people “*from the four corners of the earth,*” we utilize our understanding of geography to interpret this as a figure of speech rather than to insist that planet earth has literal corners.

Bruce Waltke and Cathi Fredricks point out that *general revelation in creation, as well as the special revelation of Scripture, is also the voice of God. We live in a “universe,” and all truth speaks with one voice* (2001:77). If this is the case, then we do not need to fear listening to the discoveries of geologists when they give evidence for the age of the earth.

FORMLESS AND VOID

And 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. (Genesis 1:2).

We have already mentioned an interpretation known as the “Gap Theory.”

This position postulates a gap between verse 1 and verse 2. It says: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, but then the earth became formless and void.” In such a view, this verse as seen, not as a creative act, but as a destructive act, possibly brought about through Satan’s fall.

The problem with the Gap Theory is that the Bible does not teach it. There is nothing in these first two verses of Genesis that would lead us to believe that we are to understand a gap between the creation and the condition of the earth as it is described in verse 2. Satan is not mentioned here and there is nothing to indicate that the earth had been rendered into something it had not originally been. Instead, a natural reading of the text would either lead us to believe that the conditions of the second verse flow from the original state of God’s creative action or else to see verse 1 as an introductory description of all of creation followed by a detailed description of how that creation came to be carried out. We are told three things about the condition of the original earth:

1. Formless and Void.

The words **תֹהוּ וּבֹהוּ** — *tohu wabohu* (“formless and void”) are used together two other times in the Old Testament (Isaiah 34:11; Jeremiah 4:23). These are the only times that *bohu* is used in the Bible. The words seem to form a unit — a bit like our expression, “topsy-turvy.”

Evolutionary thought today maintains that the cosmos is still in a state of chaos as a result of a “big bang.”

2. Darkness over the Surface of the Deep.

The “deep” refers to an abyss of water. This same word is used in Exodus 15:5 to describe the Red Sea as it swept over the armies of Pharaoh. It will not be until the third day that we shall see dry land appear.

This darkness is not seen to be the result of evil; it is merely the absence of light in the unformed and unfilled state of the earth. When God does bring about both light and darkness, the resulting combination will be said to be good.

Most ancient mythologies taught that the creation was the result of a battle between the dualistic forces of light and of darkness. These forces were seen to be equal. By contrast, we are taught here that all chaos was subservient to the power of God.

3. The Spirit of God was moving over the Surface of the Waters.

This statement is given in contrast to the previous statement that darkness was over the surface of the deep. The first statement is a condition of lifelessness while the second statement offers the possibility of new life.

מְרַחֵפֶת is the pi'el participle of **רַחֲפָה**. When in the pi'el stem, it describes the act of hovering.

We need not see that as a new event that began to take place. Instead, it is a further description of the initial state of creation. At the same time, we recognize that it is a development in the revelation of that state. Having set forth the problem of darkness and its accompanying state of lifelessness, the writer brings us hope that this situation will change as we are introduced to the working of the Spirit of God.

Lifelessness	New Life
Darkness... was over... the surface of... the deep.	The Spirit of God was moving over... the surface of... the waters.

The word which describes this “moving” of the Spirit of God is found in Deuteronomy 32:11 where it describes a bird brooding over her young. The picture here is of the Holy Spirit working over the earth and preparing it to bring forth life.

There is a point to be made. When the Spirit of God comes, life also comes. He is the Bringer both of light to the darkness and life to the lifeless.

LESSONS FROM GENESIS 1:1-2

1. There is only one God and that is the God who created us. No matter what we may hear or read in the newspapers, we did not create God. That means that He is the God of every man, even if every man does not recognize Him as such.

2. The God who created us is a pretty big God. All you have to do is to look up into the sky to see a glimpse of how big is God. The more powerful telescopes that scientists are able to make, the more galaxies we are able to see. There are millions upon millions. And behind it all is our God.
3. God is personally involved in His creation. We see this especially in the picture of His Spirit hovering over planet earth as a mother eagle hovers over her young. With all of the enormous galaxies and star systems, God is concerned with this one little blue planet and what happens on it.
4. The purpose of the Genesis account is not merely to have us view the creation, but that we might see the Creator who created the creation. Dr. B. B. Warfield states it this way:

A glass window stands before us. We raise our eyes and see the glass; we note its quality, and observe its defects; we speculate on its composition. Or we look straight through it on the great prospect of land and sea and sky beyond. So there are two ways of looking at the world. We may see the world and absorb ourselves in the wonders of nature. That is the scientific way. Or we may look right through the world and see God behind it. That is the religious way.

The scientific way of looking at the world is not wrong any more than the glass-manufacturer's way of looking at the window. This way of looking at things has its very important uses. Nevertheless the window was placed there not to be looked at but to be looked through; and the world has failed of its purpose unless it too is looked through and the eye rests not on it but on its God (1970:108).

Genesis was not written for the glass maker — it was written that we might look through the glass of this account to the Creator behind it all.

THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

GENESIS 1:3-31

The six days of creative work are topical in nature. This does not rule out a literal interpretation, but the topical nature should also be realized.

Unformed	Unfilled
DAY 1: Light.	DAY 4: Light-givers (Sun, moon & stars).
DAY 2: Water & sky divided.	DAY 5: Fish and birds.
DAY 3: Land & Vegetation	DAY 6: Land animals & man.

The outline for this structure can be seen in Genesis 1:2 where the earth was described as being unformed and unfilled. The first three days involve forming the earth while the second three days involve filling the earth.

The Jews delighted in this sort of parallelism - it was akin to poetry. This observation has led some to suggest that we are not meant to take the teachings of this chapter with a rigid literalness but rather as a poetic passage teaching us that God is indeed the creator of all things.

THE FIRST DAY

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Genesis 1:3-5).

There is a specific formula that we shall see repeated in each of the six days. The same pattern is followed throughout this chapter.

- God's creative statement: *And God said...*
- The fiat: "*Let there be...*"
- The creative act: *And there was light...*
- A declaration that the creation was good: *God saw that it was good.*
- The time limits of that creative period: *And there was evening and there was morning...*
- The numerical listing of that day: *One day.*

In verse 1 we saw the created activity of God described outright in the narrative, but are not given any details as to how that work was carried out. It has been described as creation ex nihilo -- creation from nothing. That is actually a misnomer as it is actually a case of creation from God's power. In this verse, we see creation via the spoken word of God. We read that God says and then it comes to pass.

Cardinal rather than ordinal numbers are used for this first day ("day one" instead of "the first day"). However, the rest of the chapter uses ordinal numbers ("second day, third day...").

Hebrews 11:3 teaches the same essential truth — that the worlds were made by the word of God. *By faith we understand that the worlds [αιωνας] were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

The object of creation on this first day was light ('Or – אור). This stands in contrast to the object of the fourth day of creation which would be the creation of light-bearers (*Ma'oroth* – מְאַרְתָּה). The first describes elemental light without any reference to the source of that light. The second describes the light sources.

THE SECOND DAY

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

And 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. 8 And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (Genesis 1:6-8).

The old King James Version translated the Hebrew רְקִיעַ (raqiya) with the English "firmament." New American Standard Version replaces it with "expanse."

הַקּוֹעַ is used 17 times in the Old Testament - most of those instances taking place in the first chapter of Genesis. Before looking at the other instances, let us look first of all at its use in this chapter.

- **הַקּוֹעַ** is defined in verse 8 when “God called the **הַקּוֹעַ** heaven” (note that the Hebrew is plural; “Heavens”).
- This seems to be further explained in verse 20 where God says, “...let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens” (It literally reads “...upon the face of the **הַקּוֹעַ** of the heavens”).

A summary of the **הַקּוֹעַ** is given in the following observations:

- (1) It took place in the midst of the waters (1:6).
- (2) It separated upper waters from lower waters (1:7).
- (3) It was called “heaven” (1:8).
- (4) It had lights - the sun & moon (1:17).
- (5) It was the place where the birds flew (1:20).

Any attempt to assign a specific meaning to **הַקּוֹעַ** such as “atmosphere” or “outer space” is doomed to frustration when we consider all of these observations. The problem is that we are inclined to try to read in a 21st century interpretation into an ancient Semitic text. But to understand it will not be difficult if we put ourselves into the shoes (or sandals) of the early Hebrew. He is not attempting to describe precise scientific phenomenon. Rather, he is describing the world from his own vantage point.

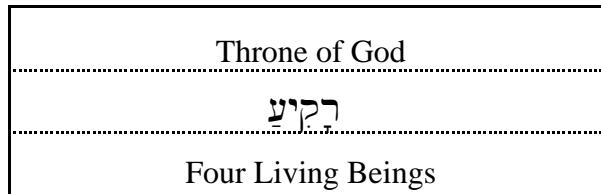
Have you ever gone out at night and looked into the sky? What did you see? Could you tell by looking where the atmosphere and the clouds ended and where “outer space” began? No!!! All you could see was the distinction between “down here” and “up there.” That is how the Hebrews described things. I am not saying that they were in scientific error, any more than you are in scientific error when you speak of the sun rising and setting. Psalm 19:1 and 150:1 give us little help in further determining the nature of this “firmament.”

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

Praise the Lord!

*Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty EXPANSE. (Psalm 15:1).*

Ezekiel also mentions the **רְקִיעַ** in his first chapter. It is there that the prophet describes a vision of the throne of God. It looks like this:



In spite of the vividness of this description, the **רְקִיעַ** itself is not described. It is merely understood without explanation. This leads one to conclude that it is a general term needing no specific explanation.

Up to this point, there is not a lot of help found in the actual uses of the word within the Old Testament. However, when we look to the root word, there is a possible clue. The root is **רְקֹעַ** (only the yodh is missing). It seems that this word can carry a double meaning.

- On the one hand, it can refer to that which is spread out (Job 37:18; Psalm 136:6; Isaiah 42:5).
- On the other hand, it is used to describe the act of stamping the foot (Ezekiel 6:11; 25:5) or even stomping of the enemies of the Lord (I Samuel 22:43).

When used in the intensive stems (pi'el & pu'al), it takes on the idea of beating out precious metals, spreading them out over a wide area. Thus, we are left with a picture of God as the Creator, spreading out the expanse of

heavenly bodies in the dome of the sky, all designed to be seen from the earth below and to bear witness of His majesty and might. At the same time, the customary statement that “God saw that it was good” is omitted here.

Perhaps this is because the mere division between the waters into upper and lower realms would provide little of practical readiness for such things to receive habitation until the following day when the boundaries for the waters under the heavens would be

The Septuagint adds the phrase, “And God saw that it was good,” but this carries little authority in the Hebrew text and was likely a later attempt to “fix” what was perceived to be an error.

established. One Jewish Midrash stated it in this manner:

Now why does it not say, “that it was good” on the second day? Because the work involving the water was not completed until the third day, although He commenced it on the second day, and an unfinished thing is not in its fullness and its goodness; and on the third day, when He completed the work involving the water and He commenced and completed another work, He repeated therein “that it was good” twice: once for the completion of the work of the second day and once for the completion of the work of that day. (Gen. Rabbah 4:6).

THE THIRD DAY

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth”; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. (Genesis 1:9-13).

There are two key events that take place upon the third day. First there is the appearance of dry land. Then there is the bringing forth of vegetation upon that dry land.

In Jonah 1:9, when Jonah was questioned by the sailors aboard the storm-tossed sea, He describes the God whom he worships as *the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.*

The Israelites in the wilderness to whom Moses wrote this book were well acquainted with this aspect of the identity of the Lord, for they had seen Him make dry land from the bottom of the Red Sea.

THE FOURTH DAY

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

And 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.

And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. (Genesis 1:14-19).

Beginning with the fourth day, we have a series of creative events that parallel that which was given in the first three days of creation. While the first three focus upon the created kingdom, the second set of three days focus upon that which rules the created kingdom. This is seen in here where the greater and lesser lights serve to govern (**תְּמִימָנִים**) the day and the night.

Created Kingdoms	Created Kings
Day 1: Light and Darkness	Day 4: Light-givers to rule day and night
Day 2: Division of waters into sky and sea	Day 5: Birds in the sky and fish in the sea
Day 3: Dry land appears	Day 6: Land animals and mankind
Creator King	
Day 7: The King takes His Rest	

God had already brought light into being on the first day (Genesis 1:3-4). But we are given no explanation for the source of that light. Now we are told that God gave a permanent source of light in the form of two light-bearers. Notice that these light-bearers had several varied purposes.

- To divide day from night.
- For signs.

- For seasons.
- For days and years.
- To give light upon the earth.

This is significant because Moses is writing to Hebrews who had just recently come out of slavery in Egypt. The Egyptians had worshiped Ra, the sun god, as one of their chief deities. They need to know that God and Ra are not two different gods of a similar nature. Rather it was Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, who had created the sun and the moon and the stars.

The fact that the stars are mentioned in verse 16 is puzzling. Are we meant to conclude that the stars were not created until the fourth day? I do not believe so. The mention of the stars at this point might simply be a part of a topical arrangement. This is designed to have two effects:

- To show that there is nothing that was not created by God.
- To prevent the Hebrews from following the heathen practices of astrology and star worship.

Some have taken the reference in Genesis 1:14 to stars being for signs as an excuse for engaging in astrological practices, but this is not supported in this passage. The stars were used for signs in the ancient world in the same way that the sun and moon are used for signs today -- in telling time and seasons and years and centuries.

For example, Egypt had a 365 day year, but no leap year. That made their year depart from the solar year by a fourth of a day each year. They also reckoned as to when the star Sirius rose into the sky and they noted that the rising of Sirius, the rising of the sun, and their slowly changing new year all took place at the same time only once every 1460 years (365 x 4). This meant their calendar depended, not only on the movement of the sun and the moon, but also on the stars.

THE FIFTH DAY

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.”

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. 22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful

and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. (Genesis 1:20-23).

The creative events of the fifth day correspond to that which took place on the second day of creation.

Day 2: Division between the waters and the sky



Day 5: Sea Creatures and birds fill the sea and the sky

This is the first time that a command has been given to *be fruitful and multiply*. The command will be repeated in verse 28 where it shall be addressed to mankind.

God’s creation involves the intent to multiplication. From a single man and woman, He has brought forth all of humanity. This multiplication is seen in the animal kingdom, it is seen among humanity and

The term “living creature” used in verse 20 is from the Hebrew **חַיִּה נֶפֶשׁ** and literally describes “living souls.” This term is used to distinguish animal and human life from plant life.

it is also seen in the spiritual realm. We are called to that same sort of multiplication ministry today, not just in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual realm. We have been sent into the world to make disciples and to reproduce that spiritual life in others.

THE SIXTH DAY

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. 25 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. (Genesis 1:24-25).

The creative events of the sixth day correspond to that which took place on the third day of creation.

Day 3: Dry land appears



Day 6: Land creatures created

This time there is no specific reference to multiplication. Instead the emphasis is upon each of the animals of the earth being *after their kind*. This reflects a certain observable orderliness to creation. At the same time, there is no blessing pronounced upon the land creatures. Waltke and Fredricks suggest this is because the land animals are not to have dominion over their domains in contrast with birds and fish who are virtually exclusive to their own domains (2001:64).

THE CREATION OF MAN

Though it is still on the sixth day, the crowning act of God's creation is seen now in the creation of mankind.

1. The Divine Plan.

The 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.”

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27).

The creative work of God reaches a crescendo when it reaches the creation of man. It begins with a completely different sentence construction from the rest of the creative acts of God. All of the other creative acts are introduced with the phrase, “Let there be...” Here we find something different. The Lord says, “Let Us make man.” There is a special care and concern taken in the creation of man. He is distinct from the rest of creation.

a. The Plurality of the Planner.

Notice the use of the plural pronoun (“*Let us make man in our image*”). The Jews held this to be a conversation that the Lord was having with the angels. However, the fulfillment of the plan in verse 27 does not say that God created man in the image of God and the angels. Indeed, angels are nowhere mentioned in the first half of the book of Genesis.

This may be a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is the view suggested by the Epistle of Barnabas. On the other hand, it may also be a literary device known as a “plural

of majesty” or a “plural of deliberation.” This same sort of plural usage will be seen in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7.

Several other uses of the plural of majesty in the Bible can be suggested:

- Ezra 4:18 - Xerxes writes, “*The document which you sent to US has been translated and read before me.*” The context in verses 11-13 shows that the document in question was sent to the king alone.
- 2 Chronicles 10:9 might be a plural of majesty - “*What counsel do you give that WE may answer this people...*”
- Isaiah 6:8 goes back and forth between the singular and the plural: *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then said I, “Here am I; send me.”*

It is notable that the New Testament writers never pointed to this usage as evidence for the deity of Jesus. They did point to Psalm 110 on several occasions.

b. In the Image of God.

In what way was man created in the image and likeness of God? Some have suggested that it is in the area of free will. Others have tried to see in this statement a tri-unity within man - that he is body, soul and spirit (as a reflection of the Trinitarian God). Still another view postulates that God has a body.

None of these views is supported by the context of Genesis. The context suggests only one way — the area of rulership. This is seen in the very next verse.

And 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."
(Genesis 1:28).

As God was sovereign over all that He had created, so now man was placed into a position of relative sovereignty over all that was upon the earth.

c. There Are Two Separate Words for Man.

(a) **אָדָם** (*adam*) is the generic word for “man” or “mankind.”

- Notice that Adam’s name was “Man” (a little like the name “BOY” in the old Tarzan movies).
- This name points to his origins. The related word **אָדָמָה** (*admah*) is the Hebrew word for “ground.”
- Genesis 1:27 indicates that **אָדָם** refers to both the man and the woman.

(b) **אִישׁ** (*ish*) indicates man as a male, in contrast to **אִישָׁה** (*ishah* — “Woman”).

d. The Purpose of the Creation Account.

We must remember that the creation account does not stand alone. It is a part of the larger book of Genesis, which is itself a part of the larger work of the Torah. Therefore, the purpose of this account must be seen in terms of the covenant people of Israel who had come out of Egypt.

Genesis 1	The Israelite Experience
Light and darkness are made by God on Day 1	They had seen God bring light and darkness over Egypt
A division of the waters on Day 2	They had passed through the Red Sea
The sun and moon and stars created on Day 4	The Egyptians worshiped the sun and moon and stars and had seen the sun darkened in Egypt.
Man is created in the image of God	Only the Pharaoh was thought to be in the image of God

Man is told to rule over the earth	Only the Pharaoh had the right of rulership
Man is placed into a beautiful garden	Israelites are tempted to return to the meats of Egypt, but Canaan is to be seen as the new promised Eden.

In Egypt the images of birds and beasts had been used to represent the various gods. But in Genesis 1 we see man made in the image of God and told to rule over birds and beasts.

This analogy continues in Genesis 2 where man is placed into a garden. This garden in Eden is seen in contrast to false gardens like Egypt and Sodom and Gomorrah (they are described as being “like” Egypt in Genesis 13:10). The Nile was the River of Egypt, but the Garden of Eden was a much richer garden because it had four rivers flowing out of it.

What is the point of all this? It is to show the Israelites that their God was no mere tribal god. He was the Creator of all the universe and He provided for His people that which is better than what they experienced in Egypt.

Furthermore, it is not merely the pharaoh or the king who is created in the image of God, but all mankind that shares the divine image. It is because of this high calling that all mankind is given the ordinance of rulership.

2. An Ordinance of Rulership.

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.” (Genesis 1:28).

Man is given both the privilege and the responsibility of rulership over all life on planet earth. There is a sense in which he is to be God’s representative on the planet.

- a. This is what it means for man to have been created in the

image of God. He is in God's place, the place of rulership, with respect to the rest of life on this planet.

- b. Mankind was given the position of federal headship over the earth. It is because of this that man's fall was able to impact all of the rest of creation. When man fell into sin, the rest of creation followed suit because it was under man's dominion.
- c. If mankind has been given the position of stewardship over the rest of creation, then it stands to reason that the Christian has an obligation toward the faithful stewardship of that with which he has been entrusted. The Christian has a basis for ecology that goes far beyond the pragmatic. He has been entrusted with the care of God's creation. He is to act toward the rest of creation with the same grace and favor that God has shown him, for he is the representative of the divine to the rest of creation.

Man's rulership over the animal kingdom flies in the face of the paganism of the ancient world that called for men to bow down before the images of various animals.

3. An Ordinance of Food.

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; 30 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. (Genesis 1:29-30).

This passage specifically mentions plants as having been given for food for both mankind and the animal kingdom. Some have taken this passage to mean that only plants were originally to be utilized as food and that this did not change as a creation ordinance until Genesis 9:3 where God says, *“Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.”* If that is a correct assessment, then this underscores the goodness of God's original creation in that there was no death due to animals being killed for food.

4. A Declaration of Goodness.

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31).

The sixth day concluded, not merely with a declaration of goodness, but with the statement that it was *very good*. This summary statement is not given until mankind has been created. This is going to stand in contrast to the events that shall take place in Genesis 3 when the Lord looks at the entry of sin into the world.

This tells us something about the world in which we live. It exists today in an unnatural state. The world was not created in a fallen condition. It was created to be *very good*. The entrance of sin into the world brought about an unnatural state that is quite different from the way in which it was originally created.

It is in the work of Jesus Christ that we see the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. The redemption of the cross involves not only a redemption with regard to personal salvation, but also a redemption of planet earth.

GENESIS AND EGYPTIAN CREATION MYTHS

It has often been noted that there are similarities between the Genesis account and the various creation myths of the nations of the Middle East. In particular, it is notable that the creation myths of Egypt find a topical echo in Genesis 1.

Egyptian Mythology	Genesis Account
Atum created himself	God pre-existed in the beginning (1:1).
Begins with a time when there was only chaos and the dark waters of Nu.	Begins with the world without form and void and darkness upon the face of the deep (1:2).
Atum created a hill on which to stand.	God made dry land to appear

Atum gave birth to his children, Shu who represented air and Tefnut who was the goddess of moisture	God made a division between the waters and divided the waters under the expanse from those that were over the expanse.
Atum wept and his tears became men. Another tradition has Khnemu fashioning man on his potter's wheel.	God very deliberately created man in His own image (1:26-27)

What is the reason for these similarities? It is not that the writer of Genesis is adopting the mythology of Egypt, but it IS the case that he is answering and refuting that mythology. He specifically speaks to the various arenas of Egyptian mythology to show that it was not the false gods of Egypt who brought about creation, but the God of Israel who is the true Creator.

LESSONS FROM GENESIS 1

1. This world belongs to God, not to us. It is our Father's world. We have merely been made stewards of this world. And that means that we have an obligation to take care of his world. Christians ought to be ecologically minded, for we realize that to us has been committed a stewardship of taking care of God's world.
2. There is only one God and that is the God who created us. No matter what we may hear or read in the newspapers, we did not create God. That means that He is the God of every man, even if every man does not recognize Him as such.
3. The God who created us has also remained committed to us, even when we refuse to be committed to him. He has not left his creation to run by itself, but has continued to be part of it.
4. The God who created us desires that his creation be obedient to him. He is the one who has created the order and the rules, we are the ones who prefer to make our own.
5. The God who created us is a very big God. He is the God of all of the heavens and the earth. He is sovereign and no one can tell Him what to do. It should not surprise you when the God of the universe cannot fit between your two eardrums.

MAN - THE CROWN OF GOD'S CREATION

GENESIS 2:1-25

Genesis 1 is given in parallel symmetry with the first three days of creation serving as a parallel to the latter three days. In Genesis 2 we find a different sort of symmetrical arrangement. It is known as a chiasm and the various points of the parallel often find their pivot at the center of the passage.

Creation complete: The heavens and earth created; God finished His work (2:1-3)

Man Created: Formed from dust (2:4-9)

Trees in the Garden & Rivers given **names** (2:9-14)

Man given work of guarding & keeping Garden (2:15)

Forbidden fruit (2:16-17)

Man in need of a helper: Not good to be alone (2:18)

Animals in the Garden & they are given **names** (2:19-20)

Woman Created: Formed from the rib of man (2:21-24).

Creation Complete: Man & woman naked and unashamed in the presence of God (2:25)

Notice what is at the center of this chiasm. It is the prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This prohibition is centrally placed because of the key role it will play in the next chapter.

As we approach Genesis 2, it seems at first as though we are dealing with a totally separate account of creation. In an initial reading of this chapter, we note that it contains several references to God's creation that are already described in chapter 1. Because of this, some have wondered whether the two passages were not written by two different authors.

However closer observation will show that these two chapters form a unit.

Neither account is able to stand complete in itself.

The relationship between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 is easily understood when we consider the literary structure of the entire book of Genesis.

First the less important things are dealt with in a rapid survey.
Then the things that are deemed more important to the theme of the book are studied and developed more fully.

For example, in the account of Jacob and Esau, it is Esau's story that comes first. But it is Jacob's story that is more fully developed and which holds the place of higher importance to the overall theme of the book.

The same is true of these first two chapters of Genesis. This will be seen as we take the two chapters and contrast them.

Genesis 1	Genesis 2
Gives a brief outline of God's creation	Tells us in detail of the creation of man
Sets out the order of creation	Sets out the purpose of creation
Shows man in his cosmic setting	Shows man as the central theme of the book
Gives us a panoramic view of creation as a whole	Gives us a detailed view of one particular aspect of creation
Centers on God creating the heavens and the earth	Centers on man, the crowning of God's creation

From this we can see that the two chapters are complimentary. Each contains unique material that is necessary in understanding who God is and what He has done for us.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 And 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. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all

His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1-3).

This is really a continuation of the message of the previous chapter. In that chapter, the word of creation was seen to encompass six days. Now on the seventh day, that work is brought to a close.

1. A Completed Work: *Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done* (2:1-2).

Throughout the first chapter of Genesis, we see the earth being formed and filled. The first three days of creation involved forming the earth and preparing it for life. The second three days of creation involved filling the earth with that for which it had been formed.

2. A Divine Rest: *He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done* (2:2).

The reference to God resting does not imply that He was somehow tired or overworked or in need of rest. He rested because the work was completed and nothing more of a creative nature remained to be done.

3. A Divine Blessing: *God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made* (2:3).

The seventh day was both blessed and sanctified. This was done long before the giving of the Mosaic Law. Some have tried to make a point that the Sabbath is not mentioned again until Exodus and this is a valid observation, but it should also be pointed out that, when the Sabbath IS mentioned again, it is in Exodus 16:23-29 at a time prior to the giving of the Mosaic Law.

This tells us something foundational about the Sabbath. It both precedes and it also supersedes the Mosaic Law.

- The Sabbath was given as a memorial to the work of God in creation. This principle is set forth here in verse 3 and it is repeated again in Exodus 20:11.
- The Sabbath also served as a memorial of God's redemption. This is mentioned in Deuteronomy 5:15 where the Lord says,

“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.”

Because the Sabbath was also a memorial of redemption, the historic Christian church has understood that the observance of the Sabbath under the New Covenant is such that it commemorates the new redemption brought about by Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It is for this reason that the Christian Church has regularly worshiped on Sunday rather than on Saturday.

- The Sabbath was designed to be a shadow of things to come and not as an end unto itself.

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17).

Today we have a place of rest that is a permanent rest. It is a Sabbath that involves trusting and resting upon the finished work of Christ on the cross.

4. Summary.

- Principle of Completion.

God rested on the Sabbath because He had completed His work. We have a place of rest today in Christ that goes far beyond a mere once-a-week memorial. We rest upon the completed work of Christ on the cross.

- Principle of Ceasing.

God stopped His work of creation, not because He was tired, but because the work was completed and there was nothing left to do.

Jesus made the atoning payment for our sins once and for all and then He sat down at the right hand of God because His saving work was finished.

- Principle of Blessing and Sanctification.

God set apart the Sabbath as a memorial of His works of creation and redemption. Today we continue to observe the memorial to both His creation and His new creation.

THE CREATION OF MAN

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.

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. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

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. (Genesis 2:4-7).

Verse 4 begins with the phrase, “*This is the account of the heavens and the earth.*” The word *account* is a translation of the Hebrew word תולדות (toledoth). This same word is used throughout Genesis as something of a chapter heading.

“THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF...”		
Formula	Contents	Location
In the beginning God...	Creation	1:1 - 2:3
1. This is the account of the heaven and the earth	Creation	2:4 - 4:26
2. This is the written account of Adam's Line	Genealogy: Seth to Noah	5:1 - 6:8
3. This is the account of Noah	Flood & Covenant	6:9 - 9:29

4. This is the account of Shem, Ham & Japheth	Table of Nations & Babel	10:1 - 11:9
5. This is the account of Shem	Genealogy: Shem to Abraham	11:10-26
6. This is the account of Terah	Story of Abraham	11:27 - 25:11
7. This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael	Genealogy of Ishmael	25:12-18
8. This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac	Transition of blessing from Isaac to Jacob	25:19 - 35:29
9. This is the account of Esau	Genealogy of Esau	36:1-43
10. This is the account of Jacob	Joseph & Israel in Egypt	37:1 - 50:26

In each case, the phrase introduces a subsequent narrative that was derived from that which is initially mentioned. Thus the narrative that follows from this passage will tell us what took place as a result of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The word **תּוֹלְדוֹת** (*toledoth*) is derived from the Hebrew root **יָלַד** (*yalad*), meaning “to bear.” In this form, it always appears in the plural construct. We could translate this phrase to say, “These are the things begotten of the heavens and the earth...”

1. The Name of God.

This is the first use of **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים** (*Yahweh Elohim*) in the Bible. Throughout Genesis 1, God is described consistently simply as **אֱלֹהִים** - only now do we have the inclusion of the name **יְהוָה** as a reference to Yahweh.

Elohim is the title for God. Yahweh is the personal name of God. For example, Mr. President is a title while George Washington is a name. What we have here in Genesis 2 is a combination of God's title and His personal name (as in “President Washington”). Elohim tends to focus upon God in relation to His creation. Yahweh shows God in relation to man.

2. The Absence of Rain.

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. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. (Genesis 2:5-6).

We are now told that there were no shrubs or plants and that there was a specific reason for this absence. Actually there were two reasons:

- There was no rain upon the earth.
- There was no man to cultivate the ground.

The first of these situations is dealt with in verse 6 in that a mist was given to water the surface of the ground. The second of these situations is dealt with in verse 7 when man is created from the dust of the ground.

What are we to make of this absence of rain? Some have taken it to mean that climactic conditions throughout all of the earth up until the flood were such that it did not rain. According to this view, the rain bringing the flood of Noah was the first rain to ever fall upon the earth and the designation of the rainbow was the first time this phenomenon had been manifested.

On the other hand, it is possible to understand the description of verse 5 to be localized to the area in which the Garden of Eden was located. It is noteworthy that the Mesopotamian River Valley receives little or no rain. The waters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers come from the mountains far to the north, turning the desert lands to the south into a fertile river valley.

Seen in such a way, it could be speaking, not of the creation of the plant kingdom, but the planting of crops and the establishment of horticultural pursuits.

3. Body and Soul: *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. (Genesis 2:7).*

Man was formed of dust from the ground. This is a play on words. **הָאָדָם** (*Ha-Adam*) was formed of dust from **הָאָדָמָה** (*Ha-Adamah*). Man's very name is taken from the source from which his body is created. Yet the creation of man's physical frame was not the sum of his existence. He is more than a biological entity. The Lord then *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

The Hebrew actually speaks of God breathing into his nostrils the "breath of lives." But we should not read too much into this plural usage. It is a Hebrew colloquialism to speak of life in the plural.

The creation of man is seen in two stages. First there is the forming of his outward body from the dust of the ground. Then there is the in-breathing of life into him. It is only at this point that he becomes a living being, literally, "a living soul."

THE TREES OF THE GARDEN

And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

9 And 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. (Genesis 2:8-9).

The garden was planted *toward the east*. The word east (**כָּדָם**, *kadam*) also carries the idea of "front." When you were on the east side of the tabernacle, you were at its front. The natural question that we have to ask is this: From what location was the Garden considered to the east? East of where? Because the bulk of Genesis takes place within the land of Canaan, I would suggest that this is the central location from which Eden exists to the east.

The word *edenu* in Akkadian means "garden" or "paradise."

Various locations have been theorized as to the location of the Garden of Eden. It has been located alternately at...

- Jerusalem: Though there is nothing in the text of Genesis to suggest such a location, there was a Jewish tradition that placed the garden of Eden in Jerusalem.

- The lower Mesopotamian River Valley. This is the traditional view, based upon the location of two of the rivers mentioned later in this chapter.
- The land of Urartu near the source of both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It is also from this area that the great Halys River finds its source before it flows around the whole land of the Hittites.

Man's original home is described as a garden. When you think of a garden in the ancient world, you would think of an enclosed area that was protected from the wild. Kings would often have a garden where their royal forefathers would have a place of burial. One of the wonders of the ancient world would be the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

We are not told that the whole world was a garden. Instead, we read that there was a place within the world that was set apart as a garden. This place would serve as a forerunner for the rest of the world. It would be a place fit for a king. At the same time, we have already seen in the previous chapter that mankind was told to multiply and to fill the earth. The idea here is that this garden-kingdom over which man ruled would eventually be extended to fill the whole world.

The garden of Eden was characterized by the trees that grew in its midst. They were trees that were both pleasing to the eye as well as to the palate -- they were good to look at and their fruit was good to eat. Two trees in particular are named:

1. The Tree of Life: This tree represented the promise of continuing life and fellowship that was to be had with God in the garden. The menorah that would later stand in the Tabernacle and in the Temple was a stylized symbol of this same tree.
2. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: This tree called for a decision. The decision will be central to this chapter. When we noted that this chapter is given in the form of a chiasm, it was also noted that the stipulation regarding this tree is at the very center and pivotal point of that chiasm.

We normally think of the first promises of the land being given to Abraham. But the idea of a land that was given is found first here in Genesis 2 where the first man was given the first land. It was a paradise.

This means that the promise of a land that was given to Abraham is a promise

of a redeemed land. It is a promise of a return to a new paradise.

THE RIVERS OF THE GARDEN

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

11 The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.

13 And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.

14 And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14).

This passage has been a source of great confusion because it seems to join geographical areas which are far removed from one another.

Verse 10 says literally, *"from there it divided and became four heads"* (רָאשִׁים). This raises the question of whether the “heads” of these rivers speak of their beginning point or their ending point. Rivers do not normally divide into separate beginning points, though there are notable exceptions.

1. Pishon (פִּישׁוֹן) - “Full flowing.”
2. Gihon (גִּיחֹון) - The root word גֹּהֵה (goha) means “to bring forth, gush.” There is a stream known as the Gihon on the east side of Jerusalem, but it flows down into the Dead Sea and comes nowhere close to the Tigris and Euphrates.
3. Tigris (תִּגְרָס).

The Hebrew names seem to have been taken from the Akkadian *Idiklat*. The Greek Septuagint renders this at Τίγρις, from which we get our English translation, “Tigris.” The Persian word *tir* means “arrow” and is also the designation for the Tigris River.

3. Euphrates (הָוָא פָּרָת).

הָוָא is the pronoun “it” (or “he”). פָּרָת means “fruitful.” It was one

of the rivers that brought abundance and fruitfulness to the Mesopotamian River Valley.

The last two rivers are known to us. The first two are not. However, they come with geographical identifiers. This perhaps indicates that they were not well known to the readers of this account.

The Pishon “*flows around the whole land of Havilah,*” Havilah is normally a reference to lands in northern Arabia where the descendants of Ishmael made their homes (Genesis 25:18).

The Gihon is said to flow around the whole land of Cush (Genesis 2:13). This presents a difficulty in that Cush was the land to the south of Egypt. However, there was also an area to the east of the Tigris River which was known as Cush.

This seems to point to a location for the Garden of Eden at the northwest end of the Persian Gulf where these four rivers meet and flow into the ocean. Alternatively, there are some who would point to the country of Armenia where the source of the Tigris and Euphrates is to be found as the original location of Eden.

The real point of this description is not to give us a geographic location of the Garden of Eden, but to present us with a symbol that depicts life-giving water flowing out of the garden to divide into four rivers that subsequently go out to water the whole earth. This is a picture of God’s gracious provision for mankind. This image of a life-giving river flowing out from the presence of God is a theme that is echoed in the Psalms.

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High. (Psalm 46:4).*

The book of Revelation uses this same image to picture *a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb* (Revelation 22:1). Both the tree of life as well as the water of life find their origins and their culminations in Genesis and Revelation.

Here is the point. The purpose of the river was to water the garden, but it accomplished much more than that. It went out of the garden and it divided into four rivers and it watered all of the surrounding lands. In the same way, God would be a blessing to the single family of Abraham, but those blessings would overflow to go out and bless the whole world.

What is true of the river is also true of the Lord's salvation today. We have been sent out as rivers of living water to bring the Spirit of God to all mankind. Our mission is to be a blessing to the world.

MAN'S WORK IN THE GARDEN

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15).

It is noteworthy to consider that man's perfect environment involved work. It was not a wearying or toilsome labor, but man had a purpose and an assignment in the garden. He was directed *to cultivate it and keep it*. These same two words are used in Numbers 3:8 to describe the work of the priests as they were to *keep* the furnishing of the tent of meeting and to *do the service*, literally, "to cultivate" the tabernacle.

Such language suggests that Adam was given the role as the priest of God over the garden. He was to do in the garden what the priests of a later generation would do in the tabernacle. He was to keep it orderly as a part of his worship relationship with God. This was his assigned work.

Man was made to work. It is a part of his makeup. It is often in his work that he finds his significance. Ephesians 2:10 says that *we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* There is something wonderfully fulfilling in learning for what purpose you were made and then accomplishing that purpose.

We have a similar work. We have been called to a royal priesthood in which we are to cultivate and keep this world. That cultivation involves making disciples of the nations and it involves guarding against the tactics of the devil.

THE PROHIBITION

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 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 shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17).

We noted at the outset of this chapter that it is arranged in a chiastic order with the prohibition of verses 16-17 placed at the center. This is one of the central ideas of this chapter.

1. The Grace of the Garden: “*From any tree of the garden you may eat freely*” (2:16).

Man was placed in a garden paradise and provided with food and water and companionship. He could eat from any of the trees of the garden and he could eat freely from all of them. This is the language of grace.

2. The Nature of the Prohibition: *From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat* (2:17).

There was one tree whose fruit was forbidden to man. It was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are not told that there was something inherently harmful or dangerous about the nature of the fruit of this tree. It was not a poisonous tree. It was merely forbidden. Why? Because this prohibition was designed to give man a choice. He could choose to obey or disobey this command. This tree gave man the possibility of choosing good or evil.

3. The Consequences of Transgression: *In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die* (2:17).

Some Bible students have found this verse to be troublesome. They look ahead to chapter 3 and they realize that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit and they did not die on that same day. To the contrary, they lived for many years that followed. How then could this passage tell us that they would die in the day they ate from it?

One suggested resolution to this problem has been to say that Adam and the woman died spiritually on the same day they ate from this tree. While I agree to the reality of such a spiritual death caused by the eating of this fruit, I am not so sure that is what this passage describes. There is no mention in the context of Genesis of a spiritual death taking place.

Instead, I want to suggest that this is a Hebrew idiom guaranteeing, not the immediacy of death, but rather the certainty of death. This same sort of language is used in 1 Kings 2:37 when Solomon says to Shimei, “*On the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron, you*

will know for certain that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head." When Shimei is put to death, it is not on the day he crossed the Kidron, for it would have taken longer than a single day for him to make the trip to Gath, find his servants and bring them back.

While it might be argued that Solomon's promise was only that Shimei would know of his death on the day of his disobedience, when we come to 1 Kings 2:42 where Solomon recounts the original prohibition, he makes no mention of this knowledge being the significant factor and merely echos, *"Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, 'You will know for certain that on the day you depart and go anywhere, you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word which I have heard is good.'*"

What we see in these words is the inevitability of this promise. Solomon makes the point to Shimei and the Lord makes the point to Adam that death will be the inevitable result of disobedience.

THE CREATION OF THE WOMAN

Genesis 1:26-27 pictures the creation of both man and woman in the image of God. It is when we come here to the second chapter of Genesis that we see a more specific description of the creation of the woman.

1. The Need for a Woman: *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."* (Genesis 2:18).

Throughout the first chapter of Genesis, we see the continuing refrain that each aspect of creation *was good*. The Lord would make something and then we would read, "And God saw that it was good." Now for the first time we see that there is something that was not good. It is not that God had created something that was evil, but rather that this portion of creation was thus far incomplete. Man was alone and he would not be completed until he had a helper suitable for him.

The woman is designed to be a "helper suitable" (עֶזֶר כְּנֶגֶד) - *Izer KeNegdu*). Of special interest to us is this term "helper." *Izer* (עֶזֶר) is the noun form of the Hebrew verb *'Azar* (עָזַר), "to help." The noun is used most often in the Old Testament, not to describe the role

of the woman, but rather to describe God Himself in His helping us. Consider some of the following:

*“...the God of my father was my **help**...” (Exodus 18:4).*

*“...Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people. With his hands he contended for them; and mayest Thou be a **HELP** against his adversaries...” (Deuteronomy 33:7).*

*“There is none like the God of Jeshurun [Israel], who rides the heavens to your **HELP**...” (Deuteronomy 33:26).*

*“Blessed are you, O Israel; who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your **HELP**...” (Deuteronomy 33:29).*

Izer is used a number of times in the Psalms as well as 4 times in the prophets, usually referring as these verses have done to God being the helper for His people.

Does this help us understand our passage in Genesis 2? I think that it does. It helps us to understand that woman was not created to be a mere underling (we would never think of defining God that way), but rather as one who stands beside and works together with him. It was not until later, as a result of the fall, that sin brought about a change which has been reflected all throughout history.

The second word, **כִּנְגֶּד** (*KeNegdu*) is made up of the preposition plus *Negedh* and carries the idea of something that is set over against something else. It usually describes either an adversarial role (as in Genesis 31:32) or a location of being in front of an object (Numbers 25:4, I Kings 8:22, I Chronicles 8:32, Nehemiah 13:21). The context seems to indicate that it is the latter role which is used here.

The **כִּ** (*Ke*) preposition carries the idea of “with” or “according to” or even “like.” Thus, we have in the Divine plan for woman that she is to be a helper who is standing with the man. Where there was one, now there shall be two.

It should be remembered that there was not a separate word in the Hebrew (or in the Koine Greek) for husband and wife. Normally when you see the word “husband” in the Hebrew, it is either *ish*

(“man”) or *ba’al* (“lord” is the same term used of the false god of the Canaanites). By the same token, when you see the word “wife” in the Old Testament, it is nearly always the Hebrew word *ishah* (female of *ish*) and can be translated simply as “woman.” The context makes it clear that all women are not designed to be helpers standing with all men, but rather that this is descriptive of a special husband and wife relationship.

2. The Need Made Known to the Man: *And 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. 20 And 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. (Genesis 2:19-20).*

Verses 19-20 seem at first to be unrelated to what we read in the verses immediately prior and those which immediately follow. Verse 18 speaks of the need of a companion for the man while verses 21-22 proceed to the creation of the woman.

Verse 18	Verses 19-20	Verses 21-22
It is not good that man should be alone	Creation and naming of the animals	Creation of the woman
The need for a companion for the man	The inadequacy of the animals for this companionship	The providing of the woman as a companion for the man

It will be noticed that the creation of the birds and land animals is mentioned here out of the chronological sequence that is found in the previous chapter. Genesis 1 points out that the birds were created on the fifth day. But when we come to Genesis 2, the birds are mentioned along with the land animals.

Genesis 1	Genesis 2
Order of events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of birds on day five • Creation of land animals on day six • Creation of man and woman on day six 	Order of events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of man • Creation of birds and land animals • Creation of woman from the rib of man

This is not a contradiction. It merely underscores the point that Genesis 2 provides events in a topical order rather than in a strict chronological order. We can easily understand the reference to the creation of the birds and the land animals as a summary of what God had previously done.

3. The Fashioning of the Woman: *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. 22 And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:21-22).*

Is there a significance in the woman being fashioned from the rib of man? It has been pointed out that this indicates a portion of his body that would be close to his heart. A portion of man was taken from him and then was brought back to him to complete him.

4. The Naming of the Woman: *And 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.” (Genesis 2:23).*

The Hebrew word for “woman” is **אִשָּׁה** (ishah) and corresponds to the term for **אִישׁ** (ish), the term for “man.” The means we could better capture the essence of this passage by reading it to say, *She shall be called FEMALE, Because she was taken out of MALE.* It can be pointed out that neither of these two terms is used earlier in the Genesis account. Throughout the first chapter, the focus was upon mankind, though that included both male and female (1:27).

5. The Ordinance of Marriage: *For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).*

This is added by way of an editorial explanation. The author takes the fact of the woman's creation from the rib of man and concludes that it points to a one-flesh relationship. Because the woman was taken from the rib of the man, this pictures the sort of relationship into which a husband and wife are to enter. The husband leaves his father and mother and connects himself to his wife and they become a new family.

This contradicted the culture of the ancient world. The ancient world was patriarchal in nature. The culture of the day called for a woman to leave her father and her mother and to cleave to her husband. But this passage says something different. It is the man who is to leave father and mother to cleave to his wife.

This is mirrored in what Christ did for us. He is the husband who left His rightful place in heaven to come to the earth and to be identified with His people. He cleaved to His bride in the ultimate sense when He gave Himself up on the cross for her.

6. The Condition of the Man and his Wife: *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25).*

This account closes with a picture of innocence and unashamedness. There was no shame because there was no sin.

This condition suggests to us what we could call “a theology of clothes.” The very fact that mankind seeks to clothe himself apart from the need of natural protection suggests that his relationship with his fellow man has undergone a change from the original creation. The fall affected, not only our relationship with God, but also our relationship with one another.

THE FALL

GENESIS 3:1-24

The narrative of the temptation and the fall into sin is foundational to the rest of the Bible. If the Bible is a book of Redemption, then the origin of that redemptive message is found in this chapter. We will see the narrative move us from an absence of shame to a shamefulness over sin and then to the promise of redemption from that shame. This chart shows such a flow of thought:

Genesis 2	“They were not ashamed”
Genesis 3	“I was ashamed and I hid myself”
Genesis 4	“Adam knew his wife”

Thus, while there is the fall in chapter 3, there will also be a promise of future restoration through the “seed of the woman.” Sin shall bring forth death, but it will be followed by a promise of redemption and a new life to follow.

The events that we have seen in the first two chapters of Genesis have been bright and cheerful and full of hope. Man is presented as the ruler of his world, second only to his Creator. He is holy and without sin, standing on earth as the very image of God. His environment is a delight and his relationship with his God and with his wife is perfect.

As we come to Genesis 3 and 4, there will be a drastic change. The story will be black and bleak, full of sin and jealousy and death. The earth will be cursed. Innocence will give way to guilt. Loving relationships will be replaced by guilt and murder.

What will shine forth in the darkness of these two chapters will be the grace of God. It will be manifested in a way that is even greater than that which is found in the creation accounts.

The chapter itself falls neatly into two parts. The first section will be the temptation narrative that records the events leading up to the fall into sin. The latter part of the chapter will tell us of the results of that first sin.

Genesis 3:1-6	Genesis 3:7-24
<p>Events leading up to the fall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serpent introduced • Temptation • Sin 	<p>Results of the Fall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God's pointed questions • Curse of sin • Banishment from the garden

In the first section, the serpent is the prominent figure. In the second section, it is the Lord who becomes the prominent figure.

THE CRAFTINESS OF THE SERPENT

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’?” (Genesis 3:1).

Genesis 2 closes with the man and the woman in the garden. At the beginning of this chapter, we are introduced to a new character. It is the serpent.

When we read that *the serpent was more crafty*, we ought to realize that, at the very least, there is a play on words here. It is seen in the word translated “crafty.” The Hebrew word is מִזְרָע (‘arom). It can be translated two different ways.

1. It can refer to the quality of being prudent or crafty.
 - Proverbs 12:16. *A fool's vexation is known at once, But a prudent man conceals dishonor.*
 - Proverbs 12:23. *A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims folly.*
2. This same word can refer to nakedness.
 - Job 24:7. *They spend the night naked, without clothing, And have no covering against the cold.*
 - Job 24:10. *They cause the poor to go about naked without clothing, And they take away the sheaves from the hungry.*
 - Job 26:6. *Naked is Sheol before Him and Abaddon has no covering.*
 - Ecclesiastes 5:15. *As he had come naked from his mother's*

womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand.

This is the same word that was used in Genesis 2:25 to describe Adam and Eve as they were **naked** and unashamed in the Garden. Their nakedness was a sign of their innocence while the craftiness of the serpent suggests to us a motive that was not innocent.

Rabbinic legend has it that the serpent originally walked erect and that it was not until God's curse on this animal in Genesis 3:14 that it was reduced to moving upon its belly. There is nothing in the Bible to specifically state such a position and therefore such an interpretation is reduced to mere speculation.

On the other hand, the description of the serpent is seen in contrast to the beasts of the field. He was more crafty than any beast of the field. Furthermore, this particular serpent had the power of speech. This brings us to a dilemma: Snakes cannot talk.

I believe that the actions of this serpent reflect a supernatural situation — that Satan was the cause of the speech of the serpent. He often works through intermediate agents. He uses fallen angels and he uses human agents and he is able to use animals. One example of demon possession in animals is seen in Matthew 8:28-32 where Jesus cast out a group of demons and allowed them to enter a herd of pigs. In this case, Satan seems to have chosen the serpent as his tool. The fact that Satan was the real power behind the serpent is attested in the book of Revelation where Satan is described as *the devil and Satan* (Revelation 12:9).

The striking thing about this is not that the serpent could speak, but that the woman showed no surprise at the serpent's linguistic ability. While some have speculated that certain animals had the power of speech prior to the fall, it is more natural to conclude that the woman, in her innocence, did not know that all animals were incapable of speech and therefore was not alarmed at the serpent's ability.

THE TEMPTATION

Now the serpent was more crafty than any east 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'?"

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of

the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”

And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die! 5 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.”

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.

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. (Genesis 3:1-7).

The Lord had given some very specific instructions regarding their behavior in the Garden. There was a single prohibition given.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 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 shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17).

This condition gave man the freedom to choose for God or against God. He could obey and live or he could disobey and die. There are several things which we ought to note from this temptation.

An epidemic is often best understood by tracing all cases back to the first. -- Larry Crabb

1. First of all, notice that the temptation came from an outside source.

There was nothing within them to tempt themselves. Allow me to let you in on a secret. I don't need an outside source to tempt me to sin. And neither do you. I have something within me that likes sin, that finds sin fun. It isn't that the “devil made me do it.” It is that I wanted to do it.

We call this a sin nature. It is an orientation to sin. But Adam and Eve were not created in this way. They had no orientation to sin. They had the ability to choose not to sin. And so, their choice to sin was all the more despicable.

2. The temptation began by questioning and misdirection: *And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”*

The serpent did not begin the conversation with an immediate denial of what God had said. Instead, he merely posed the question of what God had said. He did this by means of a deliberate misquote of the words of God. He asked, “Is it true that God will not let you eat from **any** of the trees of the garden?” The question is designed to make the woman focus upon that particular tree that was forbidden.

Satan’s tactics have not changed. He continues to draw your attention to that which is forbidden. In so doing, he draws your attention away from that which God has given you.

It is also notable that the serpent refers to God by His title (*Elohim*) rather than by His name (*Yahweh*). The emphasis is upon God’s position rather than upon the relationship with His creatures.

3. The temptation proceeded with a misunderstanding of the danger: *And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”* (3:3-4).

In repeating the prohibition, the woman says that they are not permitted either to eat or even to touch the forbidden fruit. Yet when the prohibition is initially given in Generis 2:16-17, there is no mention of a prohibition against touching the fruit. It is only eating the fruit that is forbidden.

This may reflect a misunderstanding on the part of the woman. She may have thought there was something physically poisonous about the fruit. This created a conflict in her mind when she looked at the tree and it looked good.

4. The woman looked at the tree and it looked good -- she *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* (3:6).

If you let your life be driven by what looks good, you will doom your life to an existence of sin and misery. We are never called to follow that which looks good. We are called to follow that which IS good.

There are three areas of impact that are mentioned in light of this temptation. These three areas correspond to three types of temptation outlined in 1 John 2:16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (1 John 2:16).*

The tree was...	Good...	Delight...	Desirable...
	for food	to the eyes	to make one wise
	The lust of the flesh	The lust of the eyes	The boastful pride of life

5. A surface reading of the passage seems to indicate that the Serpent initially told the truth.

Their eyes were opened. They did come to the experiential understanding of good and evil. And most importantly, they didn't die! Or did they?

If we may read between the lines, then let me suggest that a death did take place on that day. It was a spiritual death. Their ability to freely communicate with God was disrupted. This is seen in their reaction to the presence of God.

And 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. (Genesis 3:8).

Have you ever walked into a room and turned on the lights and seen a big cockroach? What does it do? It scurries out of the light. It hates the light. It tries to hide from the light. Adam and Eve tried to do the same thing.

And this is judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (John 3:19-20).

It's easy to be dirty in the dark. It doesn't show. But put a bright light on dirt and everyone can see it.

So it is with sin. Sin doesn't look so bad when you get away from the presence of the Lord. But when He comes, sin looks awful. That is why pagans don't like to be around Christians. It makes them feel strangely uncomfortable.

QUESTIONS OF CONDEMNATION

The coming of the Lord is not with lightning or peals of thunder. Instead we read that *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day* (Genesis 3:8). Yet this had been enough for the man and the woman to hide themselves. It is now that the voice of God calls for them.

1. The God who Calls: *Then the Lord God called to the man; and said to him, “Where are you?”* (Genesis 3:9).

There is something winsome about the picture that we see here of God calling for man as he hides in the garden. It isn't merely a game of spiritual hide & seek. It isn't that God did not know where Adam and Eve were hiding. God's questions are designed to force Adam to come to terms with his sin.

We often make the mistake of thinking that our prayers of confession are for God's sake. That is far too limited a view of God. He wants us to confess our sins for our sake. There is something about prayer and confession that is healing to our own dislocated souls.

2. Two Confessions.

And he said, “I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? (Genesis 3:10-11).

The truth comes out. It is that both Adam and Eve had felt the shame of their nakedness. Where there had before been no shame, now guilt came and brought with it shame.

It is not that guilt is necessarily bad. Guilt is a proper thing to experience if you are guilty. When someone is guilty and does not experience the accompanying feelings of guilt, we say that such a one is pathological. This is the kind of person who can commit murders and never feel anything.

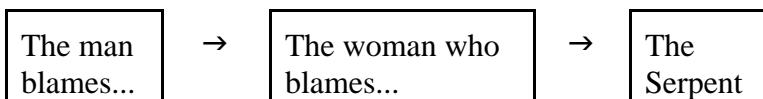
When you are guilty, the first step in resolving your situation is to face your guilt and admit that you are guilty. We call this confession. It involves seeing the reality of your guilt admitting that you are guilty. It is only when we have come to this point that we will be ready to go to the next step of resolving that which has made us guilty in the first place.

- a. The man's confession: *And He said, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12).*

As confessions go, this one is barely adequate. The man enters into what we call the “blame game.” He seems to hint that a part of the reason for his sin is because of the actions of others. He blames the woman. She is the one who gave him the forbidden fruit. Furthermore, she is *the woman whom THOU gavest to be with me*. This suggests that he is also trying to place a portion of the blame on God who gave the woman in the first place.

- b. The woman's confession: *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.” (Genesis 3:13).*

Just as the man placed the blame upon the woman, so she also followed his example and placed her blame upon the serpent. The man did not claim deception, but she does. She states that the serpent deceived her.



By contrast, we are reminded of Jesus who offered no retort or defense when He was falsely accused. In silence, He bore the guilt and the sin that belonged to us so that we could be credited, not with blame, but with His perfect righteousness.

THE PROPHECY OF THE SEED

The first prophecy of a coming Messiah was not made to either the man or the woman, but to the serpent.

And the Lord 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 shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life (Genesis 3:14).

The serpent is cursed in a greater way than all cattle or beasts of the field. All of the creation will come under a curse, but the curse against the serpent will be of a greater nature. His will be a special curse. Keil and Delitzsche point out that *the punishment of the serpent corresponded to the crime. It had exalted itself above the man; therefore upon its belly it should go, and dust it should eat all the days of its life* (2000).

Warren Gage points out that this punishment upon both the serpent and the woman and the man each carry a sort of retributive irony (1984:46).

Examples of Retributive Irony	
The Serpent that had been more crafty than any beast of the field...	...is now made lower than all of the other animals.
Satan bruises Christ on the heel...	...in the process is bruised on the head.
The woman who desires to rule over her husband...	...finds that it is he who shall rule over her.
Man made of dust who would rise to be like God...	...is returned to dust again

Nor are these the only examples of such irony to be found in the Pentateuch. They are also seen in the way Jacob lied to his father by wearing the skin of a goat, only to have his sons lie to him when they brought the coat of Joseph stained with the blood of a goat. They are seen in the brothers who sell Joseph into slavery, only to find themselves bowing down before him at a later date. They are seen in the pharaoh who orders newborn Jewish males to be thrown into the Nile River, only to have his own armies drown in the

Red Sea.³

The nature of the snake will henceforth serve as a symbol. It shall slide along the ground as the lowest of all possible creatures. That does not necessitate us concluding that the serpent originally walked with legs, though this is the interpretation that was regularly given by the rabbis. What it means is that when you look at a snake, you will be reminded that there is a curse upon those who set themselves against the Lord and that there is coming a day when all of the Lord's enemies will be brought low.

The Lord begins by speaking to the serpent. But it seems evident that there comes a time when He is not just talking about snakes, but is addressing the real power behind the serpent - the Devil.

“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.” (Genesis 3:15).

This is perhaps the most important verse in the entire Old Testament. It sets forth the pattern and the message of the rest of the Bible. The first prophecy of a coming Messiah was not made to either the man or the woman, but to the serpent.

This passage goes on to speak of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent which have Messianic implications, but first it speaks of the serpent and the woman. Does this mean that women do not like snakes? No. The conjunction between these two phrases can take the role of definition. Thus we could understand this to say:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, even between your seed and her seed...”

Viewed this way, this passage is not saying something between women versus snakes or even between women and Satan, but instead these two parties are seen in their representation of the seed that follows:

³ Warren Gage reflects further on this theme as he points out: *Likewise the Philistines make sport with Samson in the temple (Judg 16:30), the wicked prepare a pit for David (Ps 9:15-16), Haman prepares a gallows for Mordecai (Esth 7:10), and Satan erects a cross for Christ (1 Cor 2:8).* Ibid..Page 46.

“I Will Put Enmity...”		
The Serpent	Between	The Woman
His Seed		Her Seed
Shall be bruised on the head		Shall be bruised on the heel.

This is the beginning of a spiritual war. The initial antagonists of this war are a serpent versus a woman. The war extends to their progeny. And their progeny includes everyone that exists.

You may not have realized it, but you were born onto a battlefield. There is a cosmic conflict going on. Things are not the way they were supposed to be. This world does not work the way in which it was originally designed. Bad things happen on a battlefield and bad things are happening in the world.

The good news is that we know the end of the story. It is foretold in the prophecy of this verse. There are two bruising that take place in this verse. These affect different portions of the body and they affect two different subjects.

The Seed of the Serpent	The Seed of the Woman
Points to Satan	Points to Jesus Christ
He receives a wound to the head -- this is a fatal wound.	He receives a wound to the heel - - painful but not lasting.
He was fatally bruised for all eternity.	He was temporarily bruised while on the cross.

Though this ultimately points to Satan and to Jesus Christ, this is also the story of the entire human race. All people are in either one of two groups. They are following one of two seeds.

The seed of the serpent is Satan. He is the way of rebellion against God. He is the voice of independence. The seed of the woman is Jesus. He is the One whose “heel” was crushed by Satan.

*But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our
well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are*

healed.

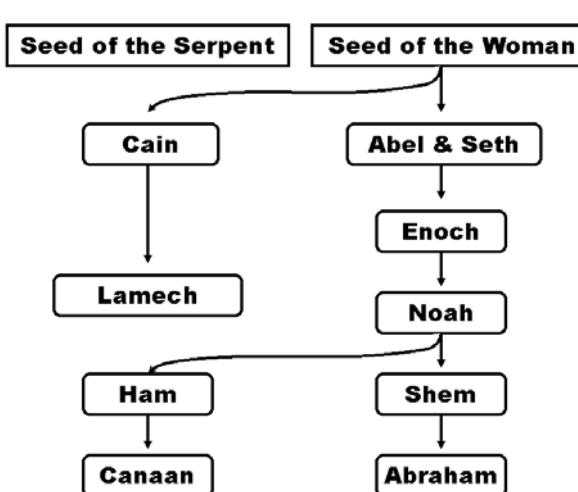
All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. (Isaiah 53:5-6).

When Jesus died upon the cross, it was no mere human death that He died. His death was special. It was special because it also involved a spiritual death. He was judged by God as if He were a guilty sinner. Our sins were laid upon Him.

This verse provides the theme of the rest of Genesis. This will be a book about two seeds. God initially created all life to reproduce after its kind. But man rebelled and sinned against God. And so, a promise was given. It was a promise of two seeds.

The promise is found in Genesis 3:15. The first seed was to be the seed of the serpent. It was the seed of rebellion. It was the seed of sin. It was made up of all who walked in the way of Adam in turning against God.

But there is also a second seed promised. It is the seed of the woman. This second seed is set over against the first seed. The two seeds are at war with one another. And God has decreed that the second seed shall ultimately win.



From our vantage point, we know that this second seed is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ - the One who was bruised for our iniquities as He crushed underfoot the Serpent's Head.

The rest of Genesis is the story of these two seeds. First we read of Cain and Abel.

Although they are brothers descended from the same father and mother, Cain shows himself to be of the spiritual seed of the serpent by murdering his brother. But God replaces murdered Abel with Seth.

We see the genealogy of each. Cain's seed leads us to Lamech - a man who

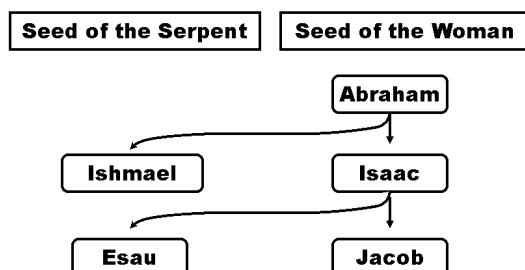
is willing not only to murder a man, but to compose a song in which he boasts of his deed. Seth's seed leads us to Enoch who walks with God, and from there to Noah who is spared the destruction of the Flood.

But the story does not stop there. Noah has three sons. And one of them performs an evil deed which demonstrates that he is of the spiritual seed of the serpent. He and his descendants through Canaan are cursed (the impact of this was not missed by the Israelites to whom Moses wrote the book of Genesis). Noah's other son, Shem, is given the promise of blessing.

The Babel Rebellion is an account of men trying to make a *shem* for themselves (*Shem* is the Hebrew word for “name”). They are dispersed among the nations.

But one is called out to be a blessing to the nations. His name is Abraham. He has two sons. One is seen to be the seed of the serpent; he is cast out. The other is of the spiritual seed of God. He is Isaac.

Isaac also has two sons. They are twins, but one is of the spiritual seed of the serpent. Esau does not hold the blessings of God in high esteem. Jacob, on the other hand, shows himself to be of the seed of the woman.



Jacob has twelve sons. Only one of them shows from the outset that he is of the seed of the woman. The others are rebellious. Two of them murder the inhabitants of a town. Another is involved in a sexual scandal. They sell their younger brother into slavery. But the Lord uses this to His own ends and all of the brothers are redeemed in Egypt; they all receive the promises of God.

As Moses writes the book of Genesis, the children of Israel are in the wilderness. And the question before them is this - which seed are they to be? Will they follow in the footsteps of the serpent? Or will they show themselves to be of the seed of the Lord?

Genesis will be a book about a line of children. Thus, a key word in Genesis will be “generations.”

- The Hebrew word for “generations” is *toledoth*.
- It is taken from the root word **לְדֹת**, “to give birth.”

Each new generation will determine which seed it is. Will it continue in the covenant relation to God and show itself to be a part of the promised seed? Or will it turn from God to join and be a part of the seed of the serpent?

THE CURSE ON THE WOMAN

*To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Yet your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16).*

There are two parts of this promise. They are presented in two parallel couplets. The first part involves the pain of childbirth. The woman had been designed to bear children -- that had been a part of the divine decree in chapter 1. But now there is added to this a new aspect. The bearing of children would be accompanied by undue pain.

Notice that the first couplet contains Hebrew parallelism. It is synonymous parallelism so that the second line repeats the idea of the first line, albeit with different words.

*“I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you shall bring forth children.*

The second line is merely repeating the idea of the first line. When we come to the second couplet, there is also Hebrew parallelism at work.

*Yet your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.”*

This time, it is not synonymous parallelism. Instead I want to suggest that this is antithetical parallelism. Instead of repeating the same idea, the second line of the couplet states the opposite side of the same truth.

The woman had been involved in the temptation. She had been tempted by the serpent and she had then given the forbidden fruit to Adam. In so doing, she had exercised a form of rulership over her husband. That is going to change. Instead of her being permitted to continue to exercise such a role, it is the husband who shall rule over her.

The Woman	The Man
She exercised leadership in the temptation by giving the fruit to the man	He exercised submission in the temptation by accepting that which was given him
She shall be ruled by her husband	He shall exercise dominion over her

Even though the place of the woman is relegated to one of submission as well as of pain in childbirth, the truth is that women throughout history have generally desired both a husband as well as children.

History bears out the fact that man in general has subjugated and ruled over woman with little regard for her own personal feelings and needs. In non-Christian religions and cultures, such subjugation and humiliation has been universal.

It is only as Biblical principles are applied to the marriage relationship that this cursing can be turned into blessing and that the woman finds herself in a role that brings her highest happiness and fulfillment.

THE CURSE ON THE MAN

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 shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:17-19).

The Lord turns now to Adam. He has gone from the serpent to the woman and finally to the man. As President Harry Truman said, “The buck stops here.”

There is a threefold curse given in these verses:

1. The Ground is Cursed.

The earth had been described as “very good” in the first chapter of Genesis, but this now changes. That which had been created now enters a process of degeneration and de-evolution.

2. Man is to Experience Endless, Unproductive, Toil.

He will spend his life in a struggle against the earth, trying to force from its resisting nature a living. It will involve a continuing struggle and will culminate in man’s demise.

3. Man is to Experience Death.

Though Adam is going to live a very long life, the end will be inevitable. It will result in death. This process begins immediately. There is a sense in which the seeds of each person’s death is born in them. Apart from the intervention of God, death is certain.

It is popular these days to describe death as merely a natural part of life and a portion of the beautiful circle of life. People who say this have not seen much of death. I have and I can assure you that death is neither beautiful or natural. It is ugly and unnatural.

The good news of the gospel is that it will not stay that way. The ground that was cursed with thorns was redeemed by the One who wore upon His head a crown of thorns. He has purchased the redemption price and there is coming a day when that redemption will be an observed reality and when the curse will be overturned in a visible way.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:20-21).

Just as Eve was told that she would experience the pains of childbirth, so also the entire creation continues to experience the same birth pangs. The world suffers with Eve today, but there is coming a day when the suffering will give way to the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.

It is in light of this promise that the woman is given a name pointing to this promise of life.

THE NAMING OF EVE

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. (Genesis 3:20).

The naming of Eve comes on the heels of the pronouncements of the Lord. He had pronounced both a series of curses as well as the seeds of a promise that would lead to eventual salvation from that curse. With the curse had come death; but the promise leads to a new life. As if on cue, Adam names his wife Eve (אֵוֹם), which means “living.” It seems as though he understands that it is through her that will come all life.

We have already noted the retributive irony in the curses that were meted out. There is also a redemptive irony at work in the case of the woman. She who was the means of the temptation that brought death into the world will become the mother of all living.

Examples of redemptive irony	
The woman who was tempted to sin...	...becomes the mother of all living.
The weak...	...will conquer the strong
The God-man will die on a cross...	...to bring life to many.

A COVERING PROVIDED

And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21).

Next the Lord makes garments of skin in order to clothe and hide the nakedness of Adam and Eve. Though it is not mentioned in the passage, the fact that these garments were garments of skin is in itself suggestive. It suggests that there was the death of an animal. One of the animals that had been created by God was taken and slain and its skin was taken in order to

be used as clothing for Adam and Eve.

If it is true that there had not yet been any death in the world, then this action would have shocked Adam and Eve to the core. They had heard the warning that eating of the forbidden fruit would result in their death. They had eaten and judgment had been pronounced and

- These skins were taken by the shedding of blood.
- The animals were innocent and picture the principles of the innocent substitute.
- The coats of skin replaced the fig leaves of human righteousness.

now it was time for death to take place. But instead of them experiencing death, it is an innocent animal that is taken and is put to death. The animal had not sinned. It was dying, not because it had done anything wrong, but because Adam and Eve had done something wrong. It died the death they deserved to die.

This is a picture of what Christ did on our behalf. He is our innocent substitute. He died in our place the death we deserved. His righteousness is credited to us so that we are clothed in His righteousness.

BANISHMENT FROM THE GARDEN

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" -- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 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. (Genesis 3:22-24).

This is a familiar passage to us, but did you ever wonder if it had a special significance to the Israelites in the wilderness? After all, they were the original recipients of the book of Genesis. It was written to them just the way that Galatians was written to the Galatians or Romans was written to the believers in Rome. If we are to understand it, then we must put ourselves into their shoes (or sandals, as the case may be).

Notice the parallels between Adam and the people of Israel.

Adam	The People of Israel
He has been banished from the garden.	They have departed from the “garden of Egypt” and are now in the Sinai Wilderness.
Adam leaves the garden by the eastern route.	The Israelites also leave Egypt by the eastern route.

Indeed, there seems to be a predilection for the idea of the "east", for that was the direction of the Garden (Genesis 2:8), it was the direction of Nod (Genesis 4:16) and it was the direction of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:2).

Now, as the Israelites are encamped in the Wilderness, the presence of the Lord is seen in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as it hovers over the Tabernacle. The tents of Moses and Aaron and the sons of Aaron (the priests) were pitched on the east side of the entrance of the Tabernacle (Numbers 3:38).

- To the east of the Tent of Meeting is a flaming altar. It “guards” the entrance to the Tent. Only after a lamb has been slain and its blood applied to the altar can the worshipers enter within.
- Before the Tabernacle was the Laver of Water. It would later be called the Sea (could this relate to the rivers which flowed out of Eden?).
- When the priest entered into the Tabernacle, the light within the Tent was provided by a lampstand which was crafted into the image of a tree with six branches going out of it (Exodus 37:17-22).
- Within the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, topped by the Mercy Seat and overshadowed with two cherubim of gold, one at each end of the Mercy seat.

What is the point of all of this? What is the lesson that the Israelites learned from these images? I believe that it was that the God who had cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden was now offering a way of return - a way that was made through the sacrifice of an innocent substitute.

The New Jerusalem is described in terms of a Garden, the Tree of Life, a river flowing through it, and the presence of God, no longer guarded by cherubim, but open to fellowship with His restored bride.

Verse 24 tells us that *at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim*. The word translated “stationed” is the Hebrew נִשְׁׁבַּע -- it is the Hiphil imperfect of נִשְׁׁבַּע and is usually translated, “to dwell.” It is from this same word that we get the familiar “Shekinah Glory” -- the reference to God’s presence that dwelled and abided with His people.

That which was lost in the fall will one day be recovered. There will come a day when we will again come into the presence of the Lord. Yet the salvation that God provides is more than a mere recovery of lost ground. It does more than to reverse the effects of sin. It transforms the work of sin and changes it into something grand and glorious. Instead of nakedness, we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Instead of a garden, we are given a city that is also a paradise.

THE WAY OF CAIN

GENESIS 4:1-26

When we look at a picture or a landscape, we first let our eyes sweep over the entire panorama, thus soaking up the design in one initial glance. Then after gaining an initial impression, we proceed to look at it more intently, noticing details and specifics. In this way, we are able to appreciate the picture more fully when we have first considered it as a whole.

The same is true of Bible study. As we begin to study any given passage of the Bible, it will become more meaningful if we first look at the passage as a whole and in contrast to the surrounding chapters. In the case of Genesis 4, it is best understood in the light of the previous chapter.

Genesis 3	Genesis 4
Opens with Adam and Eve in the garden	They give birth to Cain and Abel outside the garden
As the chapter opens, Adam and Eve are innocent	As the chapter begins, Cain and Abel are sinners
Satan comes to the woman and speaks with her openly	Satan is tempting Cain in the background where we cannot see him. This attack is much more subtle than the one against Eve
Adam and Eve's sin was in disobeying God by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil	Cain's sin is threefold: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• He offers an unacceptable sacrifice• He becomes angry and jealous• He murders his brother
God seeks out Adam and Eve and interrogates them until they admit their guilt	God seeks out Cain and interrogates him, but he still refuses to acknowledge his guilt
The earth is cursed as a result of Adam's sin	The earth no longer yields its increase for Cain

The chapter ends in Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden

The chapter ends in Cain's banishment to the land of Nod

What we see is that the trend of sin that was begun with the fall in the garden would now continue to spread along with the growth of humanity. In his fictional book, *East of Eden*, the title of which is taken from Genesis 4, John Steinbeck calls this chapter, “The symbol story of the human soul.”

THE BIRTH OF CAIN

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.” (Genesis 4:1).

The old King James Version translates this idiom literally when it says that *Adam knew Eve his wife*. Whereas they were previously the only two members of the human race, their union now brought forth offspring.

This chapter contains a number of “firsts.”

- The first birth.
- The first family.
- The first murder.
- The first civilization.

The name of Cain means “gotten” or “possession.” Eve named Cain as a celebration of his birth and a recognition that he was a gift.

I can still recall when my daughter was born. As I stood there looking at her behind the glass, I was impressed by the fact that she had just the right number of arms and legs. Her eyes and mouth and nose were all in the right places. Her nose was lined up in the center of her face. She gave an audible indication that her lungs were in working order.

I am certain that Eve looked upon the newborn baby and was impressed. This was a man (Hebrew: **אָדָם**)! As impressive as this would have been, another aspect must have also occurred to Eve. It was that she had been given a promise regarding the seed of the woman and now she had given birth to an offspring. Could this be the promised seed? Was this the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled? There is an interesting contrast to be seen between Cain and the Messiah.

Cain	Jesus Christ
Brought an unworthy sacrifice	He was the worthy sacrifice
He offered a sacrifice that did not involve the shedding of blood	He was the sacrifice who shed His own blood
He because angry and jealous	He prayed for the forgiveness of those who wronged Him
He murdered his brother	He gave His life to make us His brothers

Jesus was the ultimate son of Adam who gave Himself for His brothers, laying down His own life in our place that we might live in His place. Whereas Cain offered an unbloody sacrifice that was rejected, Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice that was accepted by God.

THE TWO BROTHERS

And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. (Genesis 4:2).

The name Abel means “vanity” or “emptiness.” It is the same word that is used throughout Ecclesiastes to describe the emptiness of life without God. By contrast with the birth of Cain and the emphasis placed upon his name, there is no mention of such celebration when we come to Abel. He is just born. There is no special mention of how he came to be named.

That often happens with firstborn and second born. There are hundreds of photos taken of the firstborn child. His first step. His first haircut. His first words. By the time the second born child comes along, the camera is broken.

Cain and Abel were brothers. They were the first brothers ever to be born. Sons of Adam and Eve, they had the whole world before them. We don’t know much about their upbringing or their early life, but we do know that there came a time when they each sought to bring an offering to the Lord.

These two are seen in contrast to one another.

Cain	Abel
Disobedient to authority	Obedient to authority
His name suggests the high value of a possession	His name means “emptiness.”
A sinful man	A sinful man
Rejection of God’s grace	Faith in God

Notice that both Cain and Abel were sinful men. A sacrifice was required of both of them because they both needed a Savior. The difference is that one came in faith to the Lord while the other was rejected because of his unbelief.

TWO OFFERINGS

Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. (Genesis 4:2-4a).

Cain and Abel each felt it important to bring an offering to the Lord. We do not know from where they got this idea. Perhaps they recognized the truth that the increase we receive from our labors comes ultimately from the Lord. On the other hand, the Hebrew phrase מִן־יָמִין זֶה translated “in the course of time” means literally, “at the end of days” and signifies what might have been a particular terminus quo that had been established by the Lord.

It was only natural that each would bring an offering that was based upon his particular chosen profession.

- *Abel was a keeper of flocks,*
- *Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

These were both honorable professions and each brought a sacrifice from the area of his own chosen profession. The results of those offerings were quite different.

AN OFFERING REJECTED

And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (Genesis 4:4-5).

Scholars have long discussed why God rejected Cain while accepting the sacrifice of Abel. A number of reasons have been suggested.

- Cain's offering was of the fruit of the ground and the previous chapter of Genesis speaks of how the ground had been cursed. The problem with such a position is that we read later in the Bible of good and legitimate offerings from the ground such as the firstfruits and meal offerings.
- It has been pointed out that Cain's offering was a bloodless offering. While this is true, there were other bloodless offerings that were acceptable to the Lord, although they were not offerings for atonement for sin. It might be argued that the pattern for a blood offering had been set by the making of coats of skin in the previous chapter, but nothing is specifically said of this in the context of the Genesis account.
- Cain's offering from the fruit of the ground was just a portion of his crop and had nothing in particular that was distinguishable. By contrast, Abel's offer is said to have been *of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions* (4:4). Abel brought of the best while Cain's offering was indistinguishable from the rest of the harvest.
- Cain's offering was not accompanied by an attitude of love and faith. This is suggested by the words of the Lord in verse 7, *"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."*

It is possible that each of these reasons was at least one of the reasons for the rejection of Cain's sacrifice. However, it is the last that is suggested by the New Testament commentary given in Hebrews:

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was

righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4).

What made Abel's offering "a better sacrifice than Cain"? The writer to the Hebrews makes no mention here about the differences between a bloody versus and unbloody sacrifice. Rather he points to the fact of Abel's faith as being the determining factor. Further testimony of this is seen in John's first epistle.

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. (1 John 3:11-12).

John describes Cain as being "of the evil one" and that "his deeds were evil." This points to the character of Cain as being the deciding factor in God's rejection of him.

This raises an important lesson. It is possible to be outwardly religious and at the same time to be inwardly far away from God. Jesus often accused the Pharisees of this. They excelled at outward religious practices, but their hearts and attitudes were quite different. Cain had gone through an outward religious practice of bringing an offering to the Lord, but he had a problem with an inner attitude that came to the surface when his offering was rejected.

How did Cain and Abel know that one offering had been accepted while the other had been rejected? The book of Genesis does not tell us. Some have thought that it was through an act of God whereby fire came and consumed the approved offering. Such a thing took place on a number of different occasions.

- Gideon was instructed to prepare an offering and to lay it upon a rock. When he had done this, the angel of the Lord touched it with a staff and fire arose out of the rock and consumed the offering (Judges 6:17-21).
- On one occasion when Moses and Aaron had been in the tabernacle and had returned to bless the people, fire came and consumed the offering on the altar (Leviticus 9:24).
- When David built an altar to the Lord and offered sacrifices, the

Lord responded by sending fire onto the offerings (1 Chronicles 21:26).

- At the dedication of the temple, after Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices (2 Chronicles 7:1).
- When Elijah prayed before all of Israel on Mount Carmel, God showed His presence by sending fire down from heaven and consuming the offering (1 Kings 18:36-39).

Cain became angry. What was at the root of this anger? This anger was born out of envy. Cain was eaten up by envy that his brother's sacrifice had been accepted while his own was rejected.

A TIMELY WARNING

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 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.” (Genesis 4:6-7).

The Lord comes and questions Cain. This is a rhetorical question. It does not really require an answer. It is not as though God is puzzled by Cain's actions. The Lord knows and understands what is in the hearts of men. The question is for Cain's benefit. It is asked to call him to a change of attitude.

The Hebrew word for anger in this instance is **חָנָן**. It is a general word for anger and carries the idea of kindling a fire.

There is also a warning here. It is that *sin is crouching at the door*. Sin is pictured like some wild beast that is waiting around the corner, seeking to pounce upon its prey. This is reminiscent of how Jesus describes Himself in the letter to Laodicea as He stands at the door and knocks.

Unfortunately, Cain did not heed the warning from God. Instead he allowed his anger to go unchecked and it was not long before it boiled over into a murderous rage. This is the first recorded instance of anger in the Bible.

THE FIRST MURDER

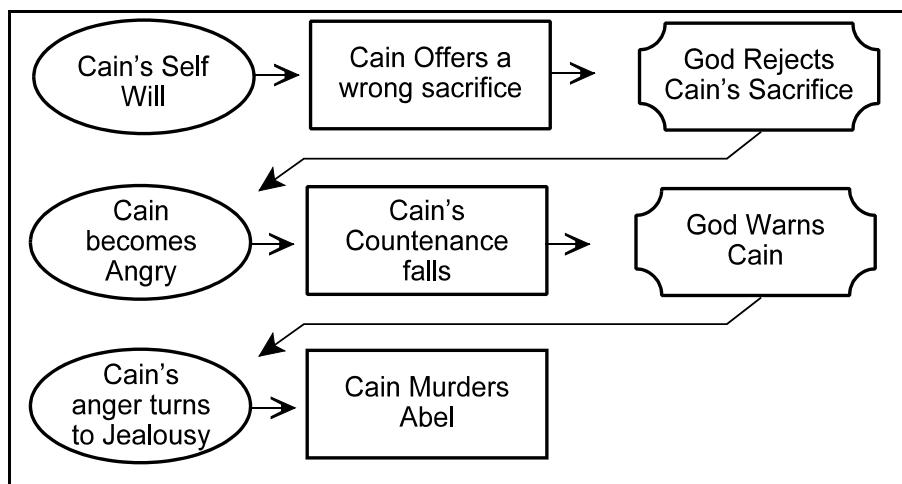
And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. (Genesis 4:8).

Cain became the first murderer. Instead of dealing with the problem of his anger, he allowed it to flow out unrestrained. Instead of repenting of his inner attitude and confessing his sin, he allowed it to remain and to grow until overflowed into outright murder.

It is ironic that Cain kills Abel when his sacrifice was such that it did not involve the killing of even an animal. If Cain's sin involved a refusal to offer an animal sacrifice, then the subsequent taking of Abel's life is an added irony.

Throughout this chapter we see a continuing trend as Cain's attitude against God gives way to a wrong action that is met with a divine correction. It really began with that inner attitude that caused Cain to offer a wrong sacrifice. It began with something that was within Cain from the beginning. It began with his self will.

Sin invariably begins with an inner attitude that underlies the outward action of the outward sin. In the case of Cain, we can chart is out like this:



At any point along the way, Cain could have broken from this destructive cycle through confession of his sin and repentance and a return to the Lord. Instead, he continues to spiral downward throughout this entire chapter. This is seen in the ensuing verses when the Lord comes to question Cain.

Cain's spiraling sin is echoed in our own lives when we continue in sin and do not repent and return at the earliest opportunity. This serves as a reminder to us to keep short accounts with God and to be purposeful in our ongoing repentance.

THE QUESTIONING OF CAIN

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

The Lord directs a question to Cain. We are not to assume from this question any lack of God's knowledge of the events that had transpired. The questioning does not take place for God's benefit or because of God's ignorance of that which had taken place. God knew what would be the outcome of these events before Cain and Abel were even born. The questioning takes place for Cain's benefit. The Lord is giving Cain the opportunity to repent of His sin and to seek forgiveness. This is similar to God's questioning of Adam and Eve in the garden.

This verse stands at the pivot of a chiastic pattern. Everything that comes before leads up to this question and everything subsequently echoes with those events that brought us to this point. This verse is the pivotal point of the story.

Adam and Eve give birth to Cain and Abel (4:1-2)

Cain Rejected: Sacrifice no good (4:3-5)

Cain "Downcast" over sacrifice rejection (4:5b)

Cain warned of sin (4:7)

In the field: Cain kills Abel (4:8)

God: "Where is your brother?" (4:9)

In the field: Brother's blood cries out (4:10)

Cain cursed because of sin (4:11)

Cain "Downcast" over punishment (4:13-15)

Cain Rejected: Out of the Lord's presence (4:15)

Cain and his wife give birth to Enoch (4:17)

God comes to Cain to question him concerning his sin in the same way that God came to Adam and Eve in the garden after they had sinned. The fact of God's coming is a sign of grace. He comes and He questions Cain to give Cain the opportunity to confess and repent of his sin.

It is the same thing that the Lord had done in the case of Adam and Eve. Once they had sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit, the Lord had come and had questioned them. History is now repeating itself in the echo of a continuing sin.

Genesis 3	Genesis 4
The Serpent comes and deceives Eve	God warns Cain that sin is crouching at the door
Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit	Cain murders his brother
Adam and Eve begin the cycle of sin	Cain continues the cycle of sin
God comes in the cool of the day to seek out and question Adam and Eve	God comes to seek out and question Cain about his brother
Adam and Eve are banished from the garden	Cain is banished to a foreign land

The point is that the fall is repeating itself in the next generation. That which took place in the fall of mankind is perpetuated to ensuing generations.

Cain's reply is reflective of his own hardened heart: *Am I my brother's keeper?* The truth is that he has become his brother's murderer when he should have been his brother's keeper and guardian. By contrast, Jesus became our keeper and our guardian and our savior, even at the expense of His own life.

The question Cain asks echoes back to us. Do you see yourself as your brother's keeper?

THE DIVINE JUDGMENT

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your

brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:10-12).

The blood of Abel is said to be calling from the ground. The same ground that had been cursed in the previous chapter now bears testimony to the continuing curse of sin as the blood of righteous Abel has been spilled thereon. Numbers 35:33 speaks of how innocent blood pollutes and defiles the land. The ground is seen to be defiled as a result of the murder of Abel and this defilement has a subsequent result in how Cain will be able to work the land.

...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24).

Notice the reference to better blood. The blood of Abel gave testimony. What did it cry? It cried for justice. While the blood of Abel called for justice, the blood of Jesus calls for mercy.

- The ground was already under a curse from the previous chapter. It would require a labor and a struggle to bring forth food from the ground.
- Cain is cursed from the ground because of his defilement of that ground with the blood of his righteous brother. As a result, even the labors and the struggles of the previous chapter will not be enough for him to gain a living through the cultivation of the ground.
- Cain will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. Since he can no longer make a living by tilling and laboring and struggling with the ground, he will be forced to travel to other lands in order to make a living.

Psalm 80:1 and 99:1 speak of the Lord being enthroned above the cherubim. Though this points to the symbolism of the ark of the covenant, in the early days of Genesis, the cherubim were said to be stationed at the entrance of the garden.

It would seem that both Cain and Abel and the community of mankind had originally elected to remain in the vicinity of Eden. Though they had been expelled from the garden, they now lived in the area that was near to the garden. They were outside the garden

but still near to the presence of God. But Cain would no longer be permitted to remain here. He was now to become a wanderer from his fellow man and from the presence of God.

CAIN'S APPEAL

And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! 14 Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me." (Genesis 4:13-14).

Cain's appeal makes no mention of repentance over his deeds or sorrow for the death of Abel. He is only concerned with what he considers to be the harshness of his punishment. He is not sorry for his sin, but only sorry that he has been caught and that now he will have to suffer the consequences of his actions. His story calls to mind the proverb:

*A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood
Will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him.
(Proverbs 28:17).*

Cain expresses a fear of those who might seek to avenge the murder of Abel. Who would be these hypothetical avengers? Cain does not say, but they would presumably come from the ranks of any other future children of Adam and Eve. Cain had not been overly concerned about taking his brother's life, but now he is afraid that someone might come and take his own life.

THE MARK OF CAIN

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, lest anyone finding him should slay him. (Genesis 4:15).

This mark is for Cain's protection. God's work of protection on behalf of Cain is given on the basis of grace. Cain does not deserve protection. His actions have resulted in the death of his brother and he is deserving of death.

On the other hand, the laws of capital punishment had not yet been given. They would be established in Genesis 9:6 following the flood but, for now, Cain will be permitted to live and he will even be protected.

The Bible does not tell us what this mark involved or how it appeared or even what part of Cain's body bore the mark, though many have engaged in various sorts of speculation. One reason for the Bible's silence on this matter might be due to our tendency to label those today who might have a similar mark and think it a sign of their moral failings.

CAIN'S BANISHMENT

Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (Genesis 4:16).

This reference to "the presence of the Lord" is another indication that the Lord had made His presence manifested outside the garden. This may have been located at the entrance of the garden where the cherubim were stationed (Genesis 3:24). This would have been the natural place for Cain and Abel to offer up their sacrifices. But from this time on, Cain will be banished, not only from others of his family, but also from the presence of the Lord.

He travels to an area that is called Nod (נוֹד). This is a play on words, for in verse 12 God had said that Cain would be a wanderer (נוֹד). He is a wanderer who travels to the land of wandering.

CAIN'S DESCENDANTS

And 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. 18 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. (Genesis 4:17-18).

Cain's wife has not been mentioned prior to this point. From where did she come? We read in Genesis 5:4 that Adam and Eve *had other sons and daughters*. We can naturally assume that Cain took one of these other

daughters to be his wife. The laws against incest had not yet been given. Even in Abraham's day, a marital union between brother and sister was not unknown.

Cain leaves the presence of the Lord and the community of mankind that lives in the shadow of that presence to go to another land where he builds a city. He has been banished from humanity, so he will form his own human society.

Name	Hebrew	Significance of Name
Enoch	חֶנוֹךְ	“Gracious” or “Dedicated”
Irad	עִירָד	From עִיר, the word for “city.” עִירָד describes a city dweller, a “citizen.”
Mehujael	מְחוּיָאֵל	“Smitten of God”
Methushael	מְתוּשָׁאֵל	“Who is a man of God?”
Lamech	לָמֶךְ	Meaning uncertain; possibly “to my own.”

It is noteworthy that there is some resemblance between these names and the names of the line of Seth as given in Genesis 5. This similarity might suggest that there eventually came to be communication and correspondence between these two groups.

THE FAMILY OF LAMECH

19 And Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 20 And Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. 21 And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.

22 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. (Genesis 4:19-22).

Lamech marks the culmination of the line of Cain. If Cain shows an

expansion and a development of the sin of Adam and Eve, then Lamech shows an expansion and a development of the sin of Cain. There is a lesson here for parents. It is that your children will always take and develop the legacy you have given them. We ought therefore to consider the legacy we are leaving and to be intentional about how we shape that legacy.

Lamech's legacy begins with polygamy. He takes for himself two wives. This was contrary to the creation design. God had not created Adam, Eve and Gertrude. Though there was no law against polygamy, neither was it authorized or condoned. The Mosaic law would warn the future kings of Israel against the multiplications of wives (Deuteronomy 17:17).

The Scriptures accurately record both the polygamy of Lamech as well as that of a number of the patriarchs, but they also tell of the family problems that were engendered by those relationships.

- Jealousy between the wives (Genesis 29-30; 1 Samuel 1:6).
- Trouble among the children (Genesis 37; Judges 9; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9).

We are not told that the polygamy of Lamech led to any specific problems, but we shall see in the next paragraph that his attitude toward others was not that of a godly man. For now, we are given an overview of his children and of their accomplishments.

Name	Meaning	Significance
Jabal	<i>To bring or carry along</i>	He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.
Jubal	<i>Ram's horn</i>	He was involved in music (from which we get our English word "Jubilee").
Tubalcain	<i>Metal smith</i>	The eastern Massoretes understood this to mean <i>Tubal the metal worker</i> . ⁴

⁴ Tubal-Cain was the forger of implements of bronze and iron. Bronze (*Nechosheth*) is an alloy of copper mixed with about 10% tin which increases its strength (the greater the ratio of tin, the lower the melting point). Examples of copper implements date back as early as 6000 B.C. while bronze artifacts have been dated at 3700 B.C.

Naanah	<i>Beautiful</i>	We can assume the attributes of physical beauty.
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The reason for this genealogy is that we might have a snapshot of the characteristics of the descendants of Cain. They were a civilized and a cultured people and perhaps even a religious people, but they were without the Lord.

THE SONG OF LAMECH

*23 And 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;
 24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
 Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold." (Genesis 4:23-24).*

This is one of the first recorded songs in history. It is the song of a boastful man. While Cain had committed murder, Lamech had done much more. He had killed a man and he had also written a song to commemorate his deed. We are led to compare these two men.

Cain	Lamech
Murdered his own brother	Killed a man for wounding him
God promised to protect Cain.	Lamech promises to protect himself.

Lamech's song points out his world view. He is a humanist. He places his own well-being as supremely important. His humanism does not give him a high view of his fellow man. To the contrary, he presents a very low view

Iron (*Barzel*), on the other hand, is a more recent discovery. Iron beads have been found in Egyptian jewelry as early as 3400 B.C. and is thought by many to have been used even earlier. But it was not until 1400 that the Hittites developed a closely guarded monopoly of smelting the iron ore which they mined from the mountains of eastern Anatolia.

of man. He sees his fellow man as having no worth and no value.

There is a principle here. It is only when you have a proper God concept that you can hold to a high view of man. Rather than elevating man, humanism does the reverse.

Humanism ⁵	Christianity
The universe is self-existing and not created.	The universe was created by God and exists by His hand.
Man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.	Man is created in the image of God and therefore has value as he exhibits that image.
The nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values.	Because He is the Creator, the Lord has the right and authority to establish the concepts of right and wrong which give us a basis for human values.

The humanist has no basis for right or wrong other than Darwin's survival of the fittest. Lamech demonstrates a similar philosophy by showing his fitness by killing a man who sought to harm him.

ANOTHER BIRTH AND A NEW HOPE

And 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." 26 And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD. (Genesis 4:25-26).

Now our perspective shifts back to Adam and Eve. They had given birth to Cain and Abel and we have traced the careers of both men. It was a tragedy. One son was killed and the other became a murderer. Now we see the birth

⁵ From the Humanist Manifesto, Copyright © 1973 by the American Humanist Association.

of another son. This son brings a hope of good things to come.

- Seth (שֵׁת): His name means “appointed” and he is given this name because God had *appointed* (שָׁתַּח) another offspring to replace the murdered Abel. It is through Seth that the Messiah shall come.

There is a sense in which Seth can be seen as a type of Christ. He is appointed by God to take the place of Abel who has been put to death. In the same way, Christ was appointed to take our place and was even put to death in place of us.

- Enosh (עֲנוֹשׁ): This is the normal word for “mortal man” and is regularly found in the books of Job and Psalms (*What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? - Psalm 8:4*). It could be that we are to see this name in contrast with Lamech who had pointed to his own strength and self sufficiency. While Lamech boasted of his strength, Seth points to his weakness. It is only when you come to terms with your own weakness that you will be ready to call upon the name of the Lord.

It is now that we read that men *began to call upon the name of the LORD*. This suggests that, even in the midst of the growing corruption of the descendants of Cain, there was a remnant who sought to follow the Lord. The idea of calling upon the name of the Lord is a concept that we will trace throughout the rest of Genesis. We will be able to gauge the spiritual temperature of Abraham and his descendants by how we see them call upon the name of the Lord.

We can do the same today. How is your spiritual temperature? You cannot measure it by knowledge or even by activities. You can measure it by your prayer life and by how you call upon the name of the Lord.

*To Thee I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And call upon the name of the LORD. (Psalm 116:17).*

THE DAYS OF NOAH

GENESIS 5:1-32

37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:37-39).

Jesus said that, if you want to know what the earth will be like at the time of His return, then study the days of Noah in the time before the coming of the flood. The conditions will be of a similar nature. There will be eating and drinking. There will be marrying and giving in marriage. In other words, it will be business as usual. The coming of Christ will be as unexpected as was the coming of the flood.

Everything we know about the days before the flood are given to us in Genesis 4-6. These three chapters form a subset of the larger narrative in which they are found. They give us the condition of the world prior to the flood.⁶

Genesis 4	Genesis 5	Genesis 6
The descendants of Cain	The descendants of Seth	The intermarriage of sons of God and daughters of men

⁶ There has been a great deal of speculation on what were the conditions upon the earth prior to the flood. Speculations have been set forth with a wide degree of imagination. Immanuel Velikovsky's *World's In Collision*, penned in the 1950's, suggested the year was once only 360 days long and cited Babylonian and Hindu calendars that referenced a 360 day year. While these are interesting observations, they can be explained in a variety of ways and are more likely the result of the use of a numerical base 6 being rounded off. Velikovsky has long since been dismissed as having very little in the way of scientific observation to support his outlandish theories.

A picture of those following in the way of Cain	A picture of those descended through Seth	A picture of moral wickedness
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The Biblical picture of life prior to the flood as seen in these three chapters is one of a growing apostasy as pictured in the descendants of Cain, or a believing remnant as seen in the persons of Enoch and Noah and a polluting influence that is pictured in the intermarriage described in the first several verses of chapter 6.

In particular, there is a contrast that is set up between the two genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5. These two genealogies, presented as they are in parallel, are meant to be seen in contrast to one another.

The Line of Cain	The Line of Seth
We can theorize that Eve named Cain as she says, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD" (4:1).	We are told that Adam called his name Seth (5:3).
Cain murdered his brother Abel (4:8).	Seth was appointed to take Abel's place (4:25).
Cain's son was named Enoch - קַנּוֹךְ - "Dedicated" (4:17).	Seth's son was named Enosh - אֶנוֹשׁ - "Mortal" (5:6).
Lamech was the seventh from Adam through Cain; he killed a young man.	Enoch was the seventh from Adam through Seth; he walked with God and did not die.

As we come to Genesis 5, our focus shifts from the line of Cain and the rebellious attitudes to the line of Seth and the godly remnant that was preserved amidst the growing apostasy. Each reference to a patriarch follows a specific pattern.

- His name.
- His age at the birth of his first son.
- The length of his remaining life (along with a statement that he begot other sons and daughters).
- His age at his death.

There are only three variations from this formula. They take place when we speak of three of the patriarchs: Adam (5:3), Enoch (5:22-24) and Lamech (5:28-29).

THE GENEALOGY OF ADAM

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

3 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. 4 Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. 5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died. (Genesis 5:1-5).

We have already seen in Genesis 2:4 the introduction of that section described as *the generations of the heavens and the earth*. This time we are introduced to the *BOOK of the generations of Adam*. This suggests that these records had long since been reduced to writing and passed from father to son until they came into the hands of Moses. While these might have originally been made up of oral traditions, they were now known as a book.

Just as the generations of the heavens and earth were given in chapters 2-4, so now we read of the generations of Adam. These will be the “histories” of Adam and what came as a result of his legacy.⁷

1. Adam’s Age: *When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years... (5:3).*

When we read through the creation narratives of both Genesis 1 and 2, we get the sense that creation took place with an appearance of age. Plants were created yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit. In a similar manner, Adam himself seems to be fully formed as an

⁷ There is a subtle difference between the Hebrew spelling of תּוֹלְדֹת in Genesis 2:4 versus the תּוֹלְדָת of Genesis 5:1. This does not reflect a different meaning, but perhaps it does reflect an archaic spelling (it also appears in Ruth 4:10).

adult rather than as a baby. This would indicate that he was created in such a way as to appear as though he had gone through the natural maturing process.

Adam and Eve were apparently in the garden only a short time prior to the temptation and fall. After their expulsion from the garden, Eve gives birth to both Cain and Abel and perhaps a number of daughters, one of which will ultimately become Cain's wife. It is only after the murder of Abel and the departure of Cain that we read of Adam and Eve having a son to replace the fallen Abel.

Thus by the time Adam was 130 years old (marking time from his creation), his first two sons had already grown to adulthood, the murder of one had taken place and Cain had been banished to the land of Nod where he was engaged in building a city.

2. Adam's Likeness and Image: *He became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image (5:3).*

Adam had been created after the image and likeness of God. We do not read here that his sons were born in the image and likeness of God, although we understand from other passages of Scripture that this relationship continues today.⁸ Instead we are told that they were born in the likeness and image of Adam. Is this significant? Perhaps it is. This might indicate that Adam's son was born with the fallen image and likeness of his father and that he was born as a sinner.

What is involved in being in the likeness and according to the image of Adam? We have already noted the context of Genesis 1:26-27 points in the following verse to the aspect of rulership. Man was created to exercise dominion over the animal and the plant kingdom. He served as the representative of God to the rest of creation. There is a sense in which this same pattern continues in Adam's descendants.

At the same time, we must admit there may be additional aspects to being in the likeness and image of both Adam and in the likeness and image of God. We are in God's likeness and His image as...

⁸ James 3:9 speaks about how men in general have been made in the likeness of God. This is seen again in Genesis 9:6 where capital punishment is mandated for murder because human life is in the image of God.

- We are thinking and rational beings.
- We are self aware.
- We have a sense of that which is beyond the physical; we are spiritual beings.
- We have an immortal aspect to us that shall transcend this mortal body.

Christ came, not only to restore us to the previous image, but more specifically, to conform us to His own image. Romans 8:29 describes how we have been predestined by God to become conformed to the image of His Son.

3. Adam's Sons and Daughters: *And he had other sons and daughters (5:4).*

This chapter records some extraordinarily long life spans. If we take this report at face value (and it is difficult to take it any other way), then this would suggest that both Adam and Eve and their descendants were able to have a great many children, leading to an extensive population explosion.

SETH TO JARED

And Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. 7 Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had other sons and daughters. 8 So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

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

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

15 And Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. 16 Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he

had other sons and daughters. 17 So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

18 And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. 19 Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters. 20 So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died. (Genesis 5:6-20).

What are we to make of this list of names? It brings up a number of questions and poses a number of problems for the Bible student.

1. The Age of Humanity.

If we treat this genealogy as a strict history by which we are to derive the dates of our ancestors, then we could count backwards from Abraham (around 2000 B.C.) to arrive at a date for the creation of around 4000 B.C.

It was by the use of such methods that James Ussher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland, and Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College in Dublin published his chronology establishing the first day of creation as Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC.

The problem with such a chronology is that it is flatly contradicted by archaeological finds, not to mention those of geologists and biologists. One would be hard pressed to postulate a creation in 4004 B.C. and a subsequent flood in 2348 B.C. when we can date the beginnings of the Egyptian monarchy to around 3100 B.C.

Fortunately, the Scriptures themselves bear testimony that such genealogies are understood to be stylized so that they contain deliberate omissions. This is seen in the genealogy of Matthew 1 where a number of kings are omitted.⁹

⁹ In Matthew 1:8, the names of Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoash and Amaziah are left out between the kings Joram and Uzziah. This deliberate manipulation of the text to achieve 14 names in each of the three sections of this chapter is done because the Hebrew language used letters as numerical equivalents beginning with the Hebrew נ (1), ב (2), י (3), etc. The name “David” in Hebrew consists of only three letters: דָוִיד. Jesus is being shown to be the son of David.

2. Antediluvian Longevity.

Even a cursory look at the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 indicate a great difference in the average life span of mankind before the flood to what it is today. For example, Noah lived to be a total of 951 years old. Neither is he an isolated case. The patriarchs living prior to the flood are all typically presented as living up to eight or nine hundred years. A notable and dramatic change takes place after Noah. Was this one of the judgments of God upon the postdiluvian world? Was it the result of different ecological conditions? We do not know. The Bible does not tell us.

There are some who have suggested that this reflects only a different means of measuring time. For example, it has been suggested that each of these years actually represents only a month. This presents its own set of problems, since this would mean that Enoch was only five years old at the birth of his son. Other views that see these numbers as either symbolic or else as a literary device fail to account for the variations and for the extensive attention to detail.

It is perhaps significant that the oldest names from the Sumerian King lists also reflect very lengthy ages among those kings (some of these kings were said to have lived for over 20,000 years). This can be seen as an independent testimony to this same phenomenon of an extended longevity in mankind's past.

3. A Repetitious Requiem.

One of the striking things about these series of names is the repeating refrain with which each account closes: "And he died." It is a droning drumbeat of death. It is a reminder that the effects of sin continued to be felt throughout history. A great fall had taken place and death is now seen to be reigning throughout these genealogies.

4. A Listing of a Godly Line.

This genealogy lists only the Godly line of Seth. We do not read here of any that followed in the way of Cain or Lamech. These are the men who stood for God in the midst of a generation that was so bad

that God would rather remove them from the earth than to allow them to remain. It is a listing of faithful men.

The people in this line were a minority. They stood up against the people of the day and they held to their faith. They are a reminder that you need not be discouraged when you are alone.

You might be the only one in your family who believes. You can be the beginning of such a godly line in your family. Determine today that every generation coming from you will be a part of a godly line. Make this your life's priority.

The marvelous thing is that these men are listed by name. God has the names of His book recorded in a book.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. 17 “And they will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” (Malachi 3:16-17).

Have you ever met a VIP who called you by your name? It would be a man who meets hundreds and thousands of people each day, but who knows you by name. The God that we worship is greater than any VIP and yet He knows your name and He tells you to call Him “Father.”

ENOCH

Just as Genesis 4 spotlights the rebellious nature of the seventh from Adam through the line of Cain in the person of Lamech, so now Genesis 5 spotlights the seventh from Adam through the line of Seth by focusing on the person of Enoch.

Lamech	Enoch
Seventh from Adam through Cain	Seventh from Adam through Seth

He killed a man and wrote a boastful song of his deed.	He walked with God and did not die.
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These two men stand in contrast to one another and they serve to exemplify the two lines of mankind that were living upon the earth in the days before the flood.

1. Enoch Walked with God.

21 And Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. 22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5:21-24).

Twice in this passage we are told that Enoch “walked with God.” This suggests an ongoing relationship with God. The same will be said of Noah in Genesis 6:9 -- He walked with God. We are reminded that our relationship with God can serve as a family legacy to be passed on from father to son to grandson.

At the end of Enoch’s life, we read that *he was not, for God took him.* This is a deviation from the normal pattern of this genealogy that regularly ends with the death of the patriarch whose history is given. Instead of reading, “And he died,” we read that *he was not.* We understand this to mean that Enoch did not die and that he was taken in a manner that did not involve death.

Hebrews 9:27 tell us it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, but this is a general principle and has some notable exceptions.

This is not a unique circumstance, for the New Testament teaches that *we shall not all sleep* (1 Corinthians 15:51). Those who are alive when the Lord returns shall not die. Instead they shall be changed and shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The Enoch narrative reminds us of two things. First, it reminds us that death is an enemy. There are some who maintain that death is

merely a natural part of existence and that it is nothing more than the end of life and that it is to be embraced and cherished. This is not true. Death is unnatural. We look at death and something within us tells us, “That is not the way it is supposed to be.” Death is an enemy.

The Enoch narrative also reminds us that death is an enemy that shall be destroyed. There is One who has overcome death and there is coming a day when the experience of Enoch will be shared by all who are alive and remain at the Lord’s coming.

2. Enoch Proclaimed God: *And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."* (Jude 1:14-15).

This isolated reference to Enoch seems to be derived from the apocryphal book of Enoch. That does not mean we must take everything in the book of Enoch to be authoritative, for the New Testament even quotes pagan philosophers on occasion and even a stopped clock can be right twice a day.

This passage contains a prophecy of the second coming of Christ. Enoch was evidently given this prophecy in his day and he preached it to the people of his generation. Already at this early date in history, mankind was being warned of God’s coming judgment.

3. Enoch was Pleasing to God: *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.* (Hebrews 11:5).

The writer to the Hebrews indicates that the characteristic about Enoch that was pleasing to the Lord was his faith. This is not exclusive to Enoch. Anyone who is pleasing to God will be a person of faith, for *without faith it is impossible to please Him* (Hebrews 11:6).

This does not mean there is something particularly meritorious about faith. Instead, faith is the empty hand that admits its emptiness. It is

the confession of personal helplessness. It is the admission that we need One greater than ourselves to save us.

METHUSELAH

25 And Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech. 26 Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had other sons and daughters. 27 So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died. (Genesis 5:25-27).

We have already noted that Enoch had a prophetic ministry and that he gave a prophecy regarding the coming of the Lord. A further aspect of Enoch's prophetic ministry may have been indicated in the name he gave to his son.

Scholars have wrestled with the meaning of the name Methuselah (מֹתָה וּשְׁלָחַ). Several suggestions have been presented.

- “Man of the weapon” -- from מִתָּה (“man”) and שָׁלַח (“weapon”).
- “He shall be sent” -- from מִתָּה (“man”) and שָׁלַח (“to send”).
- “Sending forth of death” -- from מִתָּה (“death”) and שָׁלַח (“to send”).

If we assume the absence of gaps in the genealogy between Methuselah and Noah and then calculate the years of their lives, we find that the death of Methuselah corresponds to the exact year as the coming of the flood. His name may have been prophetic, indicating that at his passing, the deadly weapon of God would be sent to judge the earth.

If this is true, then the interesting fact that Methuselah is the oldest of all the patriarchs is a sign of God's grace in withholding judgment and giving men every possible opportunity to repent before the coming judgment.

LAMECH AND NOAH

And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. 29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one shall give us rest from our work and

from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed." 30 Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had other sons and daughters. 31 So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died. 32 And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Genesis 5:28-32).

We have already seen that Enoch was a prophet and we have suggested the possibility that he gave his son a name with prophetic significance. Now we learn that Enoch's grandson, Lamech, also was a prophet. His prophecy regards his own son, Noah. The name Noah means "rest." He was given this name because *"this one shall give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed."*

To what sort of rest did this refer? It was a promise to the restlessness of the soul that had been seen in Cain and which was passed down to Lamech and which was now making itself known to an entire generation.

SONS AND GIANTS

GENESIS 6:1-8

The first four verses of Genesis 6 is one of the more puzzling passages of Scripture and has led to considerable speculation. Standing as it does just prior to the flood narrative, it sets the stage for the judgment that is to follow.

MINDFUL MARRIAGES

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.
(Genesis 6:1-2).

We have two groups of individuals that are mentioned in this passage. The first are the daughters of men. This seems quite straightforward as the history of Genesis to this point has been the history of mankind as descended from Adam and Eve. The other group is described as the sons of God. The Hebrew calls this the בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים – the *Beni-haElohim*. Several interpretations have been offered.

The word for "wife" (*Ishah*) in Genesis 6:2 can also be translated "woman" and does not indicate whether she was married or not. By the same token, the verb "they TOOK wives" is used in Genesis 34:2 to describe an act of rape.

1. Fallen Angels.

This is the view held by the translators of the Septuagint as well as by Josephus. It says that certain angels sinned by entering into physical relations with humans (Jude 6; 2 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:4).

- a. The phrase *Beni-haElohim* is only found three other times in the rest of the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). In each of those instances, it seems to refer to angels. On the other hand, the Old Testament DOES describe Israel as the son of God (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1).

- b. The phrase *Beni-haElohim* denotes a direct creation from God. Such were the angels and such was Adam (Luke 3:38). However, Adam's natural descendants are not the special creation of God and can only become "sons of God" through a new birth.

Some have argued that angels do not marry and are not given in marriage, but this is only said to be true of the elect angels who are in heaven (Matthew 22:30).

On the other hand, the Scriptures indicate that angels often appear to be indistinguishable from men (case of Lot entertaining angels in Sodom).

The major problem with this view is the context. Up to this point in the Genesis narrative there has been no mention made of angels, fallen or unfallen. To introduce them at this point in the narrative is contrary to a natural reading of the text. Furthermore, the cause of the flood will be said to be due to the wickedness of men and there will be no mention of the actions of angels in bringing this judgment.

2. The Line of Seth.

A second view of this passage is that the "sons of God" are a reference to the line of Seth. This view sees the male descendants of Seth taking wives from among the daughters of the descendants of Cain.

- a. The previous two chapters which form the context of these verses are taken up in detailing a contrast between the two lines of Cain and Seth. This passage then serves as the culmination and the conclusion of those two lines, showing how they were joined together to bring out the worst in both groups.
- b. Genesis 4:26 says that after Seth began his line "men began to call upon the name of the Lord." This is said to reflect the spiritual relationship that would lead to them being described in chapter 6 as "sons of God."
- c. Warnings against marriage between believers and unbelievers is a common theme in Genesis (24:3-4; 27:46; 28:1-3). This

motif is seen in Isaac and Jacob who take great care to choose for themselves godly wives in contrast to Ishmael and Esau who take for themselves wives outside of the covenant community.

d. In addition to the passages in Job where the Beni-haElohim do indeed seem to refer to angels, we find the use of Beni El (“sons of God”) in Hosea 1:10 where we read that, in the place where it is said to them, “You are not My people,” It will be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God (Beni El-hai) .”

The problem with this interpretation is that there is no specific mention made of the line of Seth or the line of Cain and we are forced to take the reference to “daughters of men” and to make it refer only to those daughters of Cain when the term itself begs a more general understanding. The other interpretations have the advantage of being able to take this term at face value.

3. The Dynastic Interpretation.

One of the interpretations suggested by certain rabbinic sources points to these “sons of God” as being a reference to rulers or princes. Along these lines, Meredith Kline suggested that the “sons of God” was a designation similar to that which was used among the Sumerians to refer to their kings who were considered to have been divine. These kings rose up in the tradition of Cain and Lamech, rejecting the authority of God and proclaiming their own deification as well as that of their ensuing dynasty.

Each of these various kings established his own city-state from which he reigned with absolute authority, forcibly taking whatever woman might suit his fancy since he would consider them to be his property.

This sort of action is reflected in the Gilgamesh Epic where the people of the city complain of how the mighty king Gilgamesh has ravished their wives and daughters.

*Gilgamesh watches the flocks of Uruk himself
as if he were a loose bull, nose up in open field.
No one else could come close to fighting like that.
His clan is roused by howling dreams*

*And with them all he goes howling through sanctuaries.
But would he ever let his child come
To see him ravish others?
"Is this shepherd of Uruk's flocks,
our strength, our light, our reason,
who hoards the girls of other men for his own purpose?"
(Tablet 1).*

This same theme continues in Genesis when the pharaoh of Egypt takes Sarah, the wife of Abraham to become a part of his harem (Genesis 12:15) and again at the end of Abraham's life when Abimelech king of Gerar takes her (Genesis 20:2). These incidents reflect a culture where the strength of the king will not permit a common man to deny a king's demand for his daughter or sister.

This interpretation sees the actions of these tyrants as following the temptation offered by Satan in the garden when he had told Eve, "You shall be as Elohim – as gods." In their actions, these men take for themselves the prerogatives of God as they elevate themselves to the position of the divine and take for themselves whatever wives suit their fancy.

These three views are summarized in the following chart:

Angels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Septuagint supports this interpretation• Sons of God are angels in Job• Angels in heaven do not marry, but these angels were not in heaven• The resulting offspring produced giants• Supported in Apocryphal book of Enoch as well as in Jude 6.• Nephilim are giants elsewhere in the Old Testament
Descendants of Seth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preceding chapters set forth contrast of two lines• Men began to call on the name of the Lord• It is mankind that is punished in the flood• Sonship is a common theme in the Old Testament• Marriage of godly seed to ungodly people is a common theme in Genesis

Kings and Rulers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aramaic lends itself to this interpretation• Elohim refers to human judges in Ex 21:6; 22:8-9 and in Psalm 82:1, 6• Similar use in Babylonian texts• Kings often referred to as Elohim in east• Actions paralleled in Lamech• Nephilim refer to fallen ones
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A STRIVING SPIRIT

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.” (Genesis 6:3).

The statement of the Lord regards the ministry of His striving Spirit. It is a prophecy that His Spirit would not always continue to strive with man. There would come a time when the striving would cease.

This brings us to a question. What kind of striving does this describe? It is the striving that takes place when the Spirit of God convicts mankind. Jesus speaks in John 16:7-8 of the Helper that would come to convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. What we find in the Genesis account is that there was a similar convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament era, though the power of the cross had not unleashed that ministry to the extent we see today.

When the Lord speaks of how man's days *shall be one hundred and twenty years*, there have been two interpretations set forth.

1. Some have seen this as a lowering of man's longevity and that, as a rule, mankind would no longer enjoy the very long lives that were reflected in the ten generations listed in Genesis 5. The problem with this view is that we continue to see people living in excess of 120 years after the flood, though it is true that the average life span is greatly reduced.
2. A more reasonable interpretation is to see this as a prophecy of the coming judgment upon mankind. It would be 120 years from this point that the judgment of the flood would take place. In keeping with this view, we read in 1 Peter 3:20 how *the patience of God kept*

waiting in the days of Noah.

CHILDREN OF FAME

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. (Genesis 6:4).

Our English text comes to this word Nephilim (translated “giants” in the King James Version) and merely gives us a transliteration, transposing the Hebrew letters of נְפָلִים into an English rendition of Nephilim.

Who or what are the Nephilim? The exact derivation of this word is unknown. Several possibilities have been suggested.

- נְפָל - To fall or lie down. It is this passive sense from which we derive our term for the Niphal stem that brings the passive idea to a verb.
- נְפָלָה - An untimely birth or an abortion.

The Septuagint translates this with the Greek word γίγαντες, referring to big people. Interestingly, the Septuagint uses this same word to also translate the Hebrew רְפָאִים - the Rephaim. There are several passages that can be used to indicate that both of these Hebrew terms can refer to people of unusually large size.

- Numbers 13:33. *There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.*
- Deuteronomy 3:11. *For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit.*
- 1 Chronicles 20:4-6. *Now it came about after this, that war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines; then Sibbecai the*

*Hushathite killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the **giants** [Rephaim], and they were subdued. 5 And there was war with the Philistines again, and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 6 And again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature who had twenty-four fingers and toes, six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot; and he also was descended from the **giants** [Rephaim].*

Who were these Nephilim in Genesis 6? We are not told. What is suggested is that the world was a difficult place in those days. There were Nephilim. Whether these were fallen ones or giants, they made the land dangerous and difficult. It was into this scene that these sons of God came to the daughters of men and raised up from them *the mighty men who were of old, men of renown* -- literally, “men of the name.”

JUDGMENT AND FAVOR

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. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 And 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.” 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:6-8).

The culmination of the mighty age of mighty men and of men of renown is described here in terms of great wickedness. This is in contrast to the way in which man had originally been created.

The Way Man had been Created	The Way Man had now Become
Man was created to glorify God.	Man turned away from God and rebelled against his Creator.
Man was to multiply and fill the earth.	The earth was filled with wickedness.

<i>Let Us make man in Our image.</i>	<i>I will destroy man whom I have created.</i>
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Regarding man's condition, we read that *every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. When the Bible speaks of the heart, it is looking at the deepest intent and core of a person. This passage teaches that man's core was only evil. That situation has not changed. Romans 3:12 says there is none who does good, not even one. The theological term for this is total depravity. Every thought of man's heart is only evil. Notice the modifiers. Every thought was only evil. That leaves no place to run. Man cannot save himself. He needs a savior.

1. The Repentance of God: *And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart (6:6).*

When we read of God's sorrow and God's grief, we cannot help but to wonder how we are to understand this in light of what the Bible teaches us of God's foreknowledge and sovereign election. How can God be sorry that He had made man when He knew all along what would be the result of that creation?

On the one hand, we understand that this description of God contains a degree of anthropomorphic language. In other words, God is being ascribed with human-like characteristics and we should take care not to read human-like failings in that description. On the other hand, we should not go to the opposite extreme of de-personalizing God to the point that He is seen as uncaring or unfeeling. God is the Creator of emotion and this suggests that God Himself possesses the strongest possible emotion. It is not an emotion without control and it is not an emotion that lends itself to sinful actions, but we should not water down the Scriptural references to God's sorrow, His grief or His joy.

2. The Grace of God: *Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD (6:8).*

This is the first use of the Hebrew word *chem* (חֵם). It is rendered in the Septuagint by the Greek *charis* (χαρις), the word we normally translate as "grace." Noah was the recipient of grace in the eyes of the Lord. As such, he is the perfect picture of the Christian.

We live in a world that is under the condemnation and the promise of judgment. Yet we have found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This

grace is not earned or deserved. That would not be grace. By its very definition, grace involves that which is given apart from merit.

When we read that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, it is not that Noah was deserving of such favor. Instead, we read that he became *an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith* (Hebrews 11:7). Noah was saved in the same way that you are saved. It is through faith in the Lord who has made provision on your behalf.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FLOOD

GENESIS 6:9-22

Storm preparations. Anyone who has lived in South Florida has been through them. Thanks to modern satellite technology, we have plenty of warning these days for an oncoming hurricane. That has not always been the case. My wife's grandparents lived through the 1926 hurricane that claimed hundreds of lives. It came without warning on a Sunday evening and the wind continued to rise until it had pushed large ocean barges a mile inland. By contrast, we enjoy today the benefits of an early warning system that allows us to prepare for the coming of a storm. I have gotten used to putting up the shutters and taking down the wind chimes and bringing the outdoor furniture indoors as a storm approaches. There is water that has to be stored and batteries that have to be charged and candles and matches that have to be placed for easy access. All of these preparations make it possible to weather the oncoming storm.

In this chapter of Genesis, we are told of the preparations Noah was instructed to make for the approaching storm. A flood was about to come that would destroy all mankind.

THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH

These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Genesis 6:9-10).

We have already seen the generations of the heavens and earth (2:4) and the book of the generations of Adam (5:1). We now come to the third section of the book of Genesis. It is the records of the generations of Noah. It will consist of the story of Noah and his sons.

There is an interesting contrast to be seen in the first six chapters of Genesis with the second of the six chapters of this book.

Genesis 1-6	Genesis 6-11
Creation History	Noahic History
Adam's sons (4:1-16)	Noah's sons (9:18-29)
Technological Development of Mankind (4:17-26)	Ethnic Development of Mankind (10:1-32)
Ten Generations from Adam to Noah (5:1-32)	Ten Generations from Noah to Terah (11:10-26)

When we come to the close of the Flood narrative, we will see language very much like we saw in Genesis 1 as Noah is given the same commission that was given to Adam – to go and to multiply and to fill the earth.

1. The Character of Noah: *Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time (6:9).*

Noah's life was characterized by righteousness and blamelessness. These two qualities are somewhat synonymous. The King James Version is a bit closer to the Hebrew when it translates this as “just” (צַדִּיק) and “perfect” (תָּמִימִים). The second of these qualities bespeaks the idea of integrity and lends itself to a wholeness of character. Our English word “integrity” comes from the Latin *integer* and describes that which is whole or complete. This idea finds a similar concept in the Hebrew תָּמִימִים (*tamiym*) and its root תָּמַם (*tam*).

Noah lived in a day where men had turned away from God. He lived in a day that had seen the outgrowth of Cain's rebellion. It was a day when Lamech's song made the top ten in popular music.

In such a day, Noah had something about him that spoke of righteousness and wholeness. He was a man of integrity before God and before his fellow man.

2. The Walk of Noah: *Noah walked with God (6:9).*

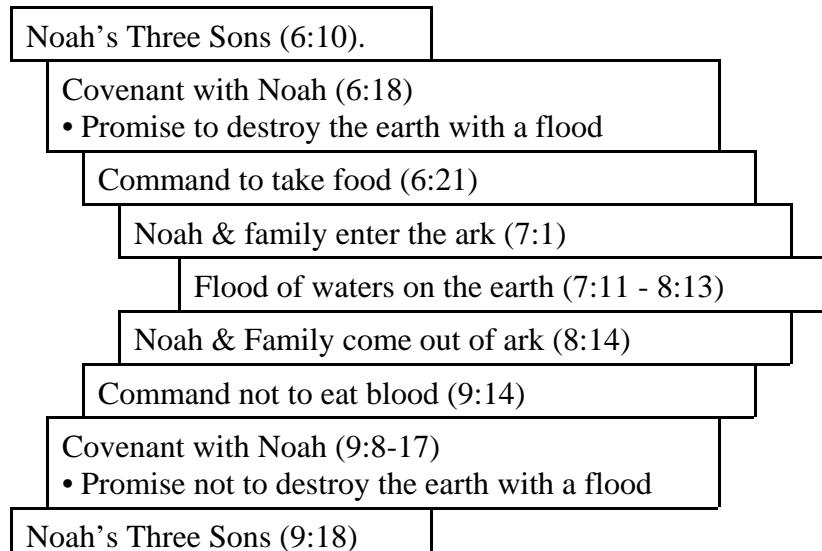
In Genesis 5 we were told that Enoch walked with God. Now the same thing is said of Noah. The relationship that had taken place with Enoch was reflected in the life of Enoch's great grandson, Noah.

There is a lesson here. It is that you are called to pass on your

spiritual heritage to future generations. If you are a believer, then you have entered into a covenant with your Creator. It is a family covenant and you are to share that relationship with your descendants.

3. The Sons of Noah: *And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (6:10).*

The mention of Noah's three sons begins a chiastic parallel that makes up the flood narrative. These elements can be viewed as the rising and falling actions within the story.



The central section of this chiasm becomes even more extensive, but we will look at it in greater detail in the next chapter.

The three sons of Noah are introduced here, but they shall be the subject of a great deal of future study when we come to Genesis 10-11. Shem is mentioned first. Perhaps this is because it is from Shem that will come the nation of Israel.

PROPHECY OF COMING JUDGMENT

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted

their way upon the earth. 13 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. (Genesis 6:11-13).

This section is in parallel with verses 5-7 in that they both speak of God looking at the earth, passing judgment upon it and announcing the coming judgment. In this paragraph, the announcement is made to Noah by way of a prophecy.

Genesis 6:5-7	Genesis 6:11-13
Yahweh is the designation for God.	Elohim is the designation for God.
The Lord is grieved in His heart	The Creator moves to judge
<i>The wickedness of man was great on the earth (6:5).</i>	<i>The earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence (6:11).</i>
<i>Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (6:5).</i>	<i>All flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth (6:12).</i>
<i>And 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." (6:7).</i>	<i>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. (6:13).</i>

What was true of the world of that day can also be said of the world today. Man's wickedness today is also great upon the earth. The world today is filled with violence. In keeping with this likeness, Peter points out that there is a continuing promise of coming judgment.

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice

that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:3-7).

Peter speaks to the uniformitarian philosophy of his day and points out that a similar sort of unbelief was exhibited in the days before the flood. The world of that day was destroyed by water and the world of the future is being reserved for destruction by fire.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ARK

“Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 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.” (Genesis 6:14-16).

The instructions of the building of the ark are detailed and exact. This is striking because at the end of the book of Exodus we have another detailed set of building instructions. In that case, it is the tabernacle that is the subject of the instructions.

I believe we are meant to see these in parallel. There is a sense in which the ark was to Noah and his family what the tabernacle would be to Moses and the children of Israel. Each was a picture of Christ. Each had as its focus salvation from the judgment of God. In the case of the ark, it would be the vehicle for saving Noah and his family from the flood. In the case of the tabernacle, it was the vehicle for covenant worship of those who had passed through the “flood” of the Red Sea.

1. The Word “Ark.”

The Hebrew word is *Tebah* (תֵּבָה). This same word is used in Exodus 2:3-5 to refer to the ark that the mother of Moses used to hide her child.

This is different from 'aron, (אָרוֹן) which is used to describe the ark of the covenant.

Tebah is thought to be an Egyptian loan-word to describe a box.

There are four different “arks” mentioned in Scripture.

- Noah’s ark - *Tebah* (תֵּבָה).
- The coffin in which the bones of Joseph were placed - *Aron* (אָרוֹן).
- The ark into which the infant Moses was placed - *Tebah* (תֵּבָה).
- The Ark of the covenant - *Aron* (אָרוֹן).

Each of these was a symbol of judgment; each carried a reference to death. But each was a place of peace and safety in the midst of a hostile environment.

2. The Size of the Ark.

The dimensions of the ark are given in cubits. A cubit was the distance from a man's elbow to the tip of his fingers - generally about 18 inches.¹⁰ There was also a royal cubit which was a few inches longer (kings suffered from the same malady known to Texans, they liked to be thought of as bigger than everyone else). Assuming the standard cubit, we are left with the following dimensions:

	Cubits	Feet
Length	300	450
Width	50	75
Height	30	45

It has often been noted that these are the dimensions of an ocean-going barge, the size of which would have been sufficient to carry a large selection of animals.

3. The Building Materials: *Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood* (6:14).

¹⁰ This is called “a cubit of a man in Deuteronomy 3:11.

The ark was to be made of *atsey-gopher* (עַצִּים־גּוֹפֵר). Our English text reads “gopher wood.” Rather than a translation, this is actually a transliteration. The word *gopher* (גּוֹפֵר) is a hapaxlegomena — it is not used elsewhere in the Bible. This makes it difficult to determine what type of wood it is. It has been suggested that this is a textual error, but there is no textual evidence for this. It is more likely that this is either an Akkadian or a Sumerian loan word.

The Greek Septuagint translates this as ξύλων τετραγώνων (*xulon tetragonon*), literally, “squared wood” and may refer to the necessity of having the wood cut into squared planks rather than the type of wood.

Noah was also told to *cover it inside and outside with pitch* (6:14). This literally reads “cover it within and without in covering.” The word for “cover” is *kaphar* (כִּפֵּר). It is the same word which describes the act of atonement. Indeed, we still use the same word today when we speak of the Jewish Festival of Yom Kippur.

4. The Shape of the Ark: *You shall make a window for the ark* (6:16).

The reference to a window has puzzled Bible scholars. The term used here for “window” (צָהָר) is not the same word that is used in Genesis 8:6 where Noah opens the window (גּוֹלְחָה) to send forth the various birds from the ark. The reference here is not a window at all. It refers, instead, to the “roof” and has so been translated by the NIV.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ARK

“And 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.

18 “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 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. 20 Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every

kind shall come to you to keep them alive. 21 And 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.”

22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did. (Genesis 6:17-22).

The purpose of the ark was to provide a way of escape for the destruction of the flood. All flesh on the surface of the earth was to be destroyed. This was the only place of safety. There is a striking parallel between God's salvation of Noah and his family with the salvation that is provided by Christ.

The Ark	Jesus Christ
All flesh was to be destroyed in the flood.	All mankind is under condemnation.
The only place of safety would be within the ark (Genesis 7:23).	The only place of safety is for those who are in Christ (John 14:6).
The ark was designed and planned by God (Genesis 6:14-16).	Our hope in Christ was designed by God before the world began (Ephesians 1:4).
Noah's part was to build the physical structure of the ark (Genesis 6:22).	Christ was born of a human mother (Matthew 1:21).
God made known to Noah this plan of salvation (Genesis 6:13).	God has made known to us His plan of eternal salvation (Romans 16:25-26).
Noah believed the Lord (Hebrews 11:7).	We must believe in Christ (John 3:16).
The ark had only one door (Genesis 6:16).	Christ is the only door to salvation (John 10:9).

This parallel is set forth in 1 Peter 3:20-21 where Peter speaks of the events of the flood and how it relates to the symbolism of baptism.

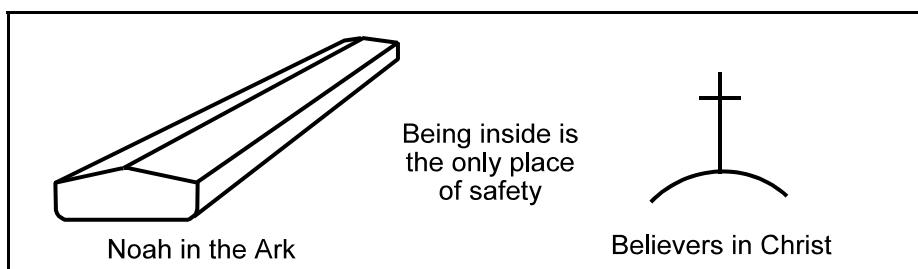
...the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the

removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:20-21).

Peter tells us that the ark is a picture. This is not to deny the historical reality of the ark, but it also serves as a picture and a type of Jesus Christ. There was a coming judgment in the same way we face a coming judgment. In Noah's day, that judgment involved a flood. The ark was the only way of salvation. When the flood came, only those who were inside were saved; all those on the outside would die.

The water was not the means of salvation. The water was the means of judgment. All who were in the water drowned. The ark was the place of refuge. The ark went through the water of judgment. The waters of the flood threw themselves upon the ark. It received the judgment so that those within the ark could remain safe. In the same way Christ bore the brunt of God's judgment so that those who are in Christ would remain safe.

In verse 21 we are told that a part of this picture is seen in baptism. It is not that getting wet saves you, but it is a picture of the salvation that saves you. There is a parallel between baptism and the flood. That which saves some is the same which results in the judgment of others.



In the case of the flood, the same water that destroyed the earth raised up the ark and took it to a place of safety. This is alluded in this verse when we read how baptism saves as *an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

How does baptism reflect judgment? It is because baptism represents the death of Christ. His death is salvation to us, but that same death is condemnation to those who do not believe.

This does not mean that it is the ritual of baptism that saves. Putting water on a sinner merely makes him a wet sinner. It is like trying to have pure

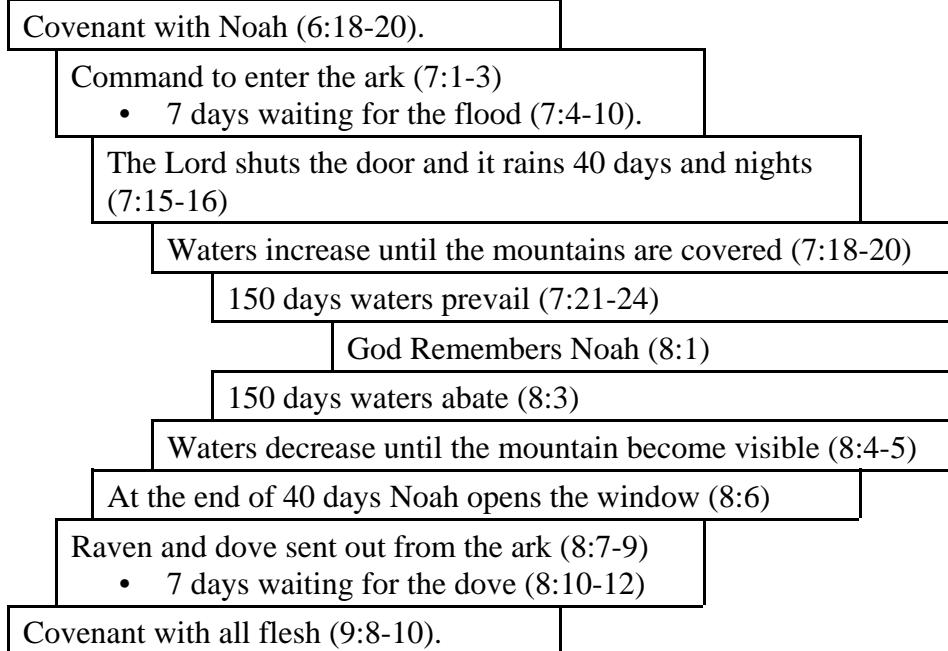
thoughts because you used a special brand of shampoo.

This is a metonymy, a figure of speech in which one part is used to describe the whole. For example, when I hear that the White House has issued a statement of policy, that does not mean that an inanimate building began to offer vocalizations. Instead it represents the one who lives in the White House. So also here, baptism represents the entire gospel. It is not the ceremony of baptism that saves; it is what baptism represents that saves.

THE FLOOD

GENESIS 7:1 - 8:22

The flood narrative is given to us as a chiastic parallel that begins and ends with a covenant being established with Noah.



This literary rise and fall of the narrative places at the center a vision of God's grace and care in remembering His people and His covenant. The point is being made that God remembers his covenant promise and He moves to protect His people.

There is a contrast to be seen in the ebb and flow of the three chapters that make up the flood narrative.

Genesis 6	Genesis 7	Genesis 8
God warns Noah	God delivers Noah	God remembers Noah
The ark is built	The ark is used to save Noah from the flood	The ark comes to rest in the mountains of Ararat

Noah building the ark	Noah in the ark	Noah coming out of the ark
The earth filled with violence	The earth filled with water	Noah to go out and replenish the earth
Preparation for the flood	Precipitation of the flood	Promise that there will be no more flood

ENTRANCE INTO THE ARK

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. 2 You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; 3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. 4 For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made." 5 And Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. 7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. 8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, 9 there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. 10 And it came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:1-10).

We are not told how long it took Noah to build the ark. The reference in Genesis 6:3 to the days of man being limited to 120 years has led some to believe that this was the period during which Noah was involved in the construction of the ark.

1. The Clean and Unclean Animals.

Animals were divided into two separate categories. There were the clean animals and the unclean animals. These designations are

further described in the book of Leviticus, so the details are not needed in this passage.

Clean Animals	Seven of each type taken onto the ark
Unclean Animals	Two of each type taken onto the ark

What was the reason for this unequal distribution? The clean animals would serve for both food as well as for sacrifices after the flood.

2. The Objectivity of the Narrative.

One of the remarkable features of the story of the flood is its objective character. Noah's subjective feelings or emotions are not mentioned. We are simply told that God commanded and that Noah obeyed.

3. Final Preparations.

Noah is told by the Lord to take his family and enter the ark where they are to wait for seven days. It was not yet raining. They are not to wait until the rain begins. They are to move into the ark while the sun is shining and while there is nothing visible on the horizon. This is a test of faith.

We can only imagine the feelings with which they must have wrestled. They have spent a great deal of time and effort in constructing this giant barge. Their neighbors have not shared their faith or their resolve. There has been mocking and disdain. Now they are told to enter the ark and to wait. A day passes. Then two. Day after day goes by and still nothing happens.

This is a test of faith. James 1:3 tells us that the testing of your faith produces patience, resulting in a stronger faith. Just as the exercise of the muscles of your body produces a stronger body, so also the exercising of your faith results in a stronger faith.

THE NATURE OF THE FLOOD

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. 12 And the rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. (Genesis 7:11-12).

It is evident from the chronological formula given that we are meant to understand this as an actual historical event. But what is the nature of this event?

The phrase that NAS has translated “floodgates of the sky” is more properly “windows of heaven” as is found in the KJV. This exact same term is found in Malachi 3:10 where the Lord is pictured as opening the windows of heaven to pour out blessings on His people. This kind of usage is also seen in 2 Kings 7:2,19.¹¹ We are not meant to read this phrase with a rigid literalism. It is a figure of speech, similar to when we speak of it ‘raining buckets.’

The idea of the windows of heaven being opened in order to bring destruction is pictured in Isaiah 24:18.¹² In the same way, “all the fountains of the great deep” has its parallels such as Deuteronomy 4:18 where we read of fish that are “in the water below the earth.” Thus, the picture is that of the sky and the ocean loosening their bonds so that their waters fall upon the land.

However, we must add that the rain waters from the sky were not the only source of water. The Genesis account lists two sources for the flood.

- *The floodgates of the sky were opened:* Points to the sky as a source for the waters of the flood.
- *The fountains of the great deep burst open:* Points to the oceans as a source of the water of the flood.

¹¹ 2 Kings 7:2. *And the royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" Then he said, "Behold you shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it."*

¹² Isaiah 24:18-19. *Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, And he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake. 19 The earth is broken asunder, The earth is split through, The earth is shaken violently.*

The water for the flood did not magically appear at the appointed time and then disappear after the event. Our planet is mostly covered by water even today. The oceans are very deep. The source of the water for the flood is said to have come both from above and from below.

This brings us to a question. Was this a world-wide flood or was it merely limited to the geographical area of that part of the world? Was it a universal flood or was it localized?

ARGUMENTS FOR A UNIVERSAL FLOOD

Those holding to a universal flood generally believe the Bible to describe the flood in such universal terms that we can only interpret it to mean the flood covered the entire planet.

1. The depth of the flood.

Genesis 7:19-20 says that all the high mountains which were under all the heavens were covered by the waters of the flood. This double use of the word “all” emphasizes the universality of the event.

Water flows downhill. The peak of Mount Ararat extends to an elevation of around 17,000 feet. If only this one single peak was covered, then most of the world would also be covered.

2. The duration of the flood.

When we calculate the chronology of the flood as given in the Genesis narrative, we find the flood is said to have lasted 371 days - a little over a year. Local floods do not last this long.

Furthermore, we read of divine intervention, not only in bringing the flood, but also in removing the waters of the flood. This also suggests the necessity of a world wide flood.

3. The need for the ark.

If the flood was to be merely confined to a certain isolated area, it would not have necessitated Noah spending all that time and effort in building the ark. He could have moved to high ground.

Over against this point, it could be argued that Noah's was a test of faith and not a means of the last resort. The question is whether he would obey the Lord to utilize the salvation provided for him rather than seek other means to save himself.

4. The testimony of the Apostle Peter.

...the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."
(2 Peter 3:6-7).

Peter's words would seem to imply a total destruction of the entire world as he compares the destruction of the flood in Noah's day with the future judgment and destruction..

ARGUMENTS FOR A LOCAL FLOOD

There are scholars who hold to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture while at the same time admitting the possibility of the flood of Genesis being only local in nature.

1. *HaAretz* is "the land."

The Hebrew word which is translated "the world" (גָּתָן) throughout the flood narrative can be translated "the land."

"The LAND of Nod" (Genesis 4:16).

"In the LAND of Shinar" (Genesis 10:10).

"Out of that LAND went forth Asshur" (Genesis 10:11).

"Go forth from your COUNTRY, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the LAND which I will show you..." (Genesis 12:1).

"And in you all the families of the EARTH shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

2. Universalist terms can be used in a limited sense.

We need not go very far in the book of Genesis to prove this point.

Note the following verses:

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20). Was Eve the mother of all life? Or merely the mother of all human life? The answer is that this universal term was being used in a limited sense.

"Of EVERY living thing of ALL flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark..." (Genesis 6:19). Most people who advocate a universal flood do not take this command to refer to ocean animals (no goldfish bowls on the ark).

3. Where did the water go?

Mount Everest rises over 5 miles above sea level. There are many other mountains in the world which are over the 3 mile height. For flood waters to cover the earth would mandate that either the mountains were not there (thus they would have to be very recent in origin) or else that water came from some supernatural source and then went away again. Hugh Ross points out this problem:

Genesis 8 gives us the most significant evidence for a universal (with respect to man and his animals and lands), but not global, flood. The four different Hebrew verbs used in Genesis 8:1-8 to describe the receding of the flood waters indicate that these waters returned to their original sources. In other words, the waters of the flood are still to be found within the aquifers and troposphere and oceans of planet Earth. Since the total water content of the earth is only 22 percent of what would be needed for a global flood, it appears that the Genesis flood could not have been global. – “The Waters of the Flood,” <http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/flood.shtml>.

It is also interesting to note that sediment deposits have been found underneath the Sumerian ruins at Ur, at Fara and at Kish. However, these flood deposits would seem to be extremely local in nature and not significant enough even to account for the Genesis account as a local flood.

Recent theories have arisen from scientific studies in and around the Black Sea that suggest a large inundation cause, at least in part, by the overflow of the waters of the Mediterranean into what is today the Black Sea. Though such theories might be appealing, we ought to be careful not to come too quickly to a conclusion in attempting to reconcile various scientific theories with the Bible.

4. Summary of Arguments for a Universal / Local Flood.

UNIVERSAL FLOOD	LOCAL FLOOD
The Biblical account says that the waters covered the whole earth.	The word <i>aretz</i> is often used to describe a local area.
The Biblical language goes out of its way to use language of totality.	The account is given from the viewpoint of the narrator is from his perspective the destruction is total.
The size of the ark indicates that this was no local flood.	The size of the ark is not related to the extent of the flood.
The purpose of the ark was punishment of world-wide sin. In a local flood some could have escaped.	God could have made certain all flesh was destroyed without flooding the entire globe.
There are world-wide traces of a flood.	The evidence is scattered and sometimes seemingly inconsistent.
The promise of no future floods (Gen. 9:15) is not true if this is only a local flood.	The promise is for no flood to "destroy all flesh."

As various theories are considered regarding the cause and extent of the flood, we must point out that the Bible does not deny cause and effect. Indeed, it is because of the "natural laws" that God has instituted that we have come to expect such causes and effects in our world.

On the other hand, we do not believe that cause and effect operate apart from

and independently of divine intervention. The atheist states that everything is explained only by the material universe and he makes a leap of faith to deny that any spiritual force is at work in history. By contrast, we know that God works in history and that He acts in the lives of men. He is the Master Cause of all things and He intervenes in history, both through His divine power and also through the agency of cause and effect and those means that we normally think of as “natural causes.”

THE OCCUPANTS OF THE ARK

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, 14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds.

15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed it behind him. (Genesis 7:13-16).

We are given a listing of all of the occupants of the ark. They encompass Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives. Eight souls. It would be through the eight that the human race would be saved.

1. The Entrance of the Animals.

Verse 15 states that the animals *went into the ark to Noah*. We are not told by what means this was carried out, but we need not conclude a supernatural movement that brought them to the ark. To assume that the animals came of their own initiative is to read more than the text necessarily says.

2. The Shutting of the Ark: *The LORD closed it behind him (7:16).*

While we are not told what role the Lord played in bringing the animals, we are told that it was the Lord who closed them in the ark. This must certainly be understood to say that it was the Lord who closed the door to the ark. This is striking in its parallel when we remember that Jesus described Himself as the door to the sheepfold

(John 10:1-9).

It was not enough to make a mental assent to the warning of the impending judgment. It was not even enough to have constructed the ark and gathered the animals. Noah and his family had to enter the ark in order to be saved from the flood. In much the same way, it is only our entry into Jesus Christ through faith in Him that we find salvation and deliverance from that which threatens to destroy.

One of the questions that I am sometimes asked is whether God will give people a second chance. The answer is that He IS giving people both a second and a third and an entire multitude of opportunities to come to repentance. It is not that the Lord is slow or late in His promise of judgment. Rather, *He is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

On the other hand, there comes a day when the waiting is over and when judgment comes and there are no further chances. *It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment* (Hebrews 9:27), not the second chance. In the same way, there came a day when the Lord shut the door to the ark. Those who were within were safe; those who had ignored the preaching of Noah faced the onset of judgment.¹³

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DESTRUCTION

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. 18 And the water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the surface of the water. 19 And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.

20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. 21 And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; 22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.

¹³ 2 Peter 2:5 refers to Noah as a preacher of righteousness.

23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. 24 And the water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days. (Genesis 7:17-24).

Forty days and forty nights. It was a number that had particular significance to the original readers of Moses' manuscript. They had also undergone a period of testing that lasted forty days and forty nights. This was the period during which Moses had gone up onto Mount Sinai to receive the law of God (Exodus 24:18).

Forty days and forty nights. A rain that came and that did not stop as the waters rose and flooded and choked the very life of all flesh. The ark was borne up on the waters and those within were safe while death reigned just beyond the wooden beams and planking.

Forty days and forty nights. Instead of a flood, the people of Israel had found themselves in a desert before the very mountain of God. It served as a reminder that there had once been a time when all of the mountains were covered. Such was the power of the Lord that this mountain could be swept away and hidden by the flood of His might.

Forty days and forty nights. That was how long Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. He faced the desert and the dry places and He also faced the destructive judgment of God as it was poured out and rained upon Him. He died for us that we might find life in Him.

As we read this section of the narrative, we will be impressed by the description that emphasizes the universality of the judgment. While this does not necessarily mitigate against the theory of a largely localized flood, it emphasizes the universality of the judgment.

- The waters lifted the ark up above the earth (7:17).
- The waters prevailed and increased upon the earth (7:18).
- The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth (7:19).
- All the high hills were covered (9:19).
- The water rose 15 cubits above the mountains (7:20).
- All flesh died upon the earth (7:21).
- The waters prevailed for 150 days (7:24).

The Scriptures could not be more emphatic. They go so far in verse 21 as to name all of the different categories of life that died and then to rename them again in verse 23. The repetition is given for the sake of emphasis. It is that we should not miss the point that all the animal and human life died in the flood.

THE RECEDED OF THE WATERS

1 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. 2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; 3 and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. (Genesis 8:1-3).

We noted at the beginning of this chapter that the statement that *God remembered Noah* stands as the pivotal point in the chiastic structure of the entire narrative. Everything from this point will echo of the previous destruction and will involve a movement to restoration and the renewal of the creation.

This is a wonderful picture of salvation. When it seems as though God had turned His back on all life, both animal and man, God remembered Noah. This is not to suggest a previous forgetfulness on God's part. The point is not that God had been forgetful, but to underscore the exact opposite -- that Noah had not been forgotten and that the ark had not "slipped God's mind."

Just as God used natural agencies in bringing about the flood, so now we see Him using natural agencies to remove the waters of the flood.

1. A Wind: *God caused a wind to pass over the earth (8:1).*

The blowing of the wind would help to increase evaporation and even the distribution of the waters. It would also dry the ground once it appeared. But this is not the only reason for the mention of the wind.

Do you remember the state of the original earth at the time of the creation? It was unformed and unfilled and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was moving upon the face of

the waters (Genesis 1:2). There is a play on words here in that the word for “Spirit” and the word for “wind” is the same word -- *ruach* (רֹאשׁ).

This description is deliberately designed to view this restoration from the flood as a new creation. God is doing again what He did at the beginning. He is bringing life from lifelessness.

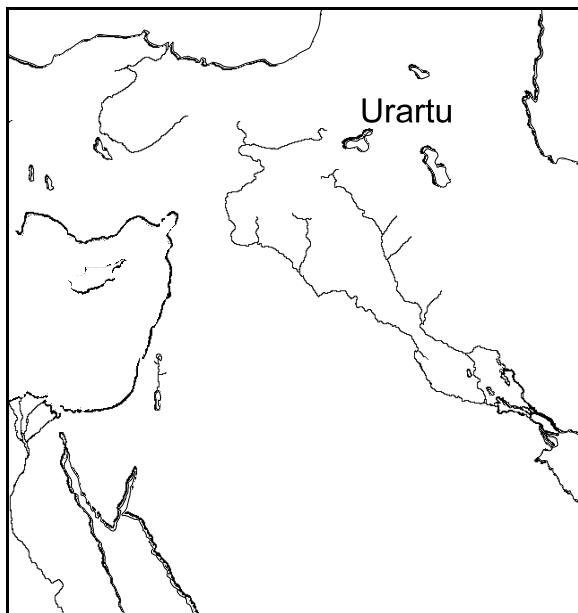
2. The Waters Stopped: *The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained* (8:2).

The onslaught of water from both below and from above was halted. The sea began to return to where the sea belonged. Eventually dry land would appear, just as it had done at the beginning.

THE ARK COMES TO REST

4 And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. 5 And 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. (Genesis 8:4-5).

We are not told that Ararat was the name of the mountain on which the ark landed. Instead, it is the name of the country in which the mountains were located. This land is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:37 and Isaiah 37:38 where the assassins of Sennacherib escaped to the land of Ararat. This evidently refers to a portion of the land of Armenia. Its ancient name among the



Assyrians was *Urartu*.

This is the land from which both the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers find their headwaters. It is a mountainous region and has a particularly high peak that boasts the name of Ararat, but our Biblical text does not say the ark landed on this peak.

There have been a number of expeditions to Mount Ararat to search for the ark, but none have produced any documented evidence of an ark. Various claims continue to be unsubstantiated. What happened to the ark? It is unlikely that a vessel made of wood thus exposed to the elements would be preserved over thousands of years. On a lighter note, the manifest of animals would have included at least two termites.

THE SENDING OF THE BIRDS

Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; 7 and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.

8 Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; 9 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.

10 So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. 11 And 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.

12 Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again. (Genesis 8:6-12).

This is the first reference to a window in the ark. It had previously been closed to keep out the rain and the destruction of the flood. Noah opens the window to send forth a series of birds. They will serve as his scouts to determine the condition of the world. In this action, there are echoes of the first creation event. Gage makes the following observation:

Just as the first creation began with the earth covered with the waters of chaos, so this new creation begins with the earth covered with the waters of wickedness. As God's Spirit had found no rest hovering upon the surface of the waters, so the dove finds no rest hovering upon the face of the deep (1984:129).

The first to be sent out is a raven. The raven is a scavenger. He will eat any waste he happens to find that has been left from the destruction of the flood. For this reason, the raven does not return to the ark.

Next a dove is sent out. The dove is a cleaner, gentler bird and would not tend to alight on some of the wasted areas that might attract the raven. As a result, the dove would continue to return to the ark until living conditions on the earth had improved.

The image of a dove returning with an olive leaf in its mouth has become a symbol for peace. It is an appropriate image, for the destruction of the flood had been tantamount to warfare waged from heaven against mankind.

LEAVING THE ARK

This marks the end of the flood. The judgment was past. Mankind had been destroyed save for a small remnant. It was a new year and a new beginning for the world.

1. The Earth Dried: *13 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. 14 And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. (Genesis 8:13-14).*

Noah *removed the covering of the ark*. This might be a reference to the door that God had closed in Genesis 7:16. And yet, Noah and his family remain within the ark. For what are they waiting? For divine permission. They were told to enter the ark and now they wait for the same sort of instructions before departing from the ark.

2. Out from the Ark: *Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 16 "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.*

17 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." 18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. 19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark. (Genesis 8:15-19).

Both Noah and his family and the animals they have brought into the ark are now permitted to depart to start their new life on the earth. Once again, they are told to *be fruitful and multiply on the earth*. It is to be a new beginning.

Throughout this chapter, God has been described as *Elohim*, the all-powerful One. But in the next section, there is a change.

NOAH'S SACRIFICE

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. 21 And 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.

*22 "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night Shall not cease." (Genesis 8:20-22).*

As Noah builds an altar, we see the name for the Lord change from *Elohim* to *Yahweh*, the covenant-keeping God. The altar is a sign of worship. It is offered to the Lord in realization that God is worthy of praise and adoration.

The sacrifice that Noah makes involves a very real sacrifice. Remember that there are only seven of each of the clean animals that have been taken off the ark. Such a number would make any endangered species list. Yet Noah is going to prepare a sacrifice of one of these animals to the Lord. It is a sacrifice that demonstrates the importance of worship and faith and thankfulness to the Lord.

This is the first reference to an altar in the book of Genesis. In chapter 4, we read how Cain and Abel both brought their offerings to the Lord, but there was no mention made of an altar.¹⁴ When we come to the narratives of Abraham and his descendants, we will be able to gauge their spiritual walk by whether or not they build an altar to the Lord. For example, Abraham comes into the land of promise and he builds an altar to the Lord (12:7). A bit later, he moves down to a mountain to the east of Bethel and he again builds an altar (12:8). On the other hand, when he goes down to Egypt, he builds no altars.

Verse 21 tells us that *the LORD smelled the soothing aroma* (הִנֵּיחַ – וַיַּרְא יְהוָה אֶת־רִיחַ – literally, “The Lord smelled the soothing smell”). This seems a bit odd until we remember that the book of Leviticus makes regular mention of the aroma of the various offerings. Leviticus 4:31 uses exactly the same term when it speaks of how the peace offering would be offered up *in smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the LORD*. It seems reasonable to think of Noah’s offering as a peace offering that was accepted by God, especially when we note that this same word for “smell” (רִיחַ – *Riyah*) is used in 1 Samuel 26:19 to speak of how the Lord would **accept** an offering.¹⁵

In keeping with this offering, the Lord gives to Noah a promise of peace. It is a promise that the world will not again be cursed to be destroyed by a flood and that, as long as the seasons continue, so man will also continue upon this planet.

THE FLOOD AND THE CREATION ACCOUNT

There is a sense in which the chapters setting forth the culmination and recovery from the flood echo the events of Genesis 1 as the Lord moves to bring a re-creation to the world following the destruction of the flood.

¹⁴ The Hebrew word for “altar” (מִזְבֵּחַ) is related to the root word for “sacrifice” (זִבְחַ). Hence it refers to that construct upon which a sacrifice was offered.

¹⁵ The same word for “aroma” is used in Exodus 5:21 where the Hebrew Israelites complain how that Moses and the Lord have made them to have a “stinking smell” (הַבָּשָׂר תְּמַמָּן אֶת־רִיחַ) before the eyes of Pharaoh.

Genesis 1	Genesis 7-9
Waters cover the earth (1:2).	Floodwaters cover the earth (7:18-19)
Spirit hovers over the waters (1:2).	The dove hovers over the waters (8:9)
Dry land comes forth with vegetation on the third day (1:12).	Dove returns with an olive leaf indicating dry land (8:11)
Creation finished and God rests (2:2)	Restoration finished; God receives the sacrifice of rest (8:21)

As we come to the account of the flood, we are coming to a renewal and a restoration of the earth as it had become polluted by sin. This is not to suggest that there will be no further sin in the postdiluvian earth, but that there is a hope for a new beginning.

PAGAN FLOOD MYTHOLOGIES

A number of “Flood Traditions” have come down to us from a number of ancient cultures. The most popular of these is the one found in the Gilgamesh Epic.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a long Akkadian poem on the theme of human beings' futile quest for immortality. A number of earlier Sumerian stories about Gilgamesh, the quasi-historical hero of the epic, were used as sources, but the Akkadian work was composed about 2000 BC. It exists in several different editions, none of them complete.

In the story, Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu seek immortality through fame, but when Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh finds that fame to be hollow.

Unable to accept the finality of death, he goes to Utnapishtim, the Babylonian counterpart of the biblical Noah, to learn the secret of his immortality. This interview takes place on the 5th of seven tablets. Utnapishtim tells the story of how he was spared the destruction of the great flood through the building of a giant square barge.

Utnapishtim means "the joining of *nephesh*," the soul.

- The boat consisted of seven decks and was overlaid with pitch.
- It took only seven days to build it.
- Utnapishtim saved his family and relatives along with animals and craftsmen.
- The flood began when "the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninutra the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame."
- The storm lasted for 6 days and nights after which "the surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top."
- The boat landed atop the mountain of Nisir. After seven days on the mountain, Utnapishtim released a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven before leaving the boat and making a sacrifice to the gods.

Utnapishtim goes on to explain that he received it due to the unique circumstances of the flood, but he consoles the dejected Gilgamesh with news about a plant of life. A snake swallows the plant before Gilgamesh can use it, however, and he finally returns home, reluctantly accepting death without future resurrection as inevitable.

What are we to make of the fact that a document predating the book of Genesis by hundreds of years also contains a story of the flood with many of the same aspects of the Biblical account? Some have argued that this is proof that the Biblical narratives were adopted from pagan myths and have no bearing on the truth. I believe that it demonstrates just the opposite. It is an independent testimony to the truth of the actual events.

COVENANTS AND CURSES

GENESIS 9:1-29

This is a chapter of new beginnings. The destruction of the flood is past. The judgment of God has come and gone. Those who were in the ark were spared; all else was destroyed. Now we come to a new beginning. That new beginning has echoes of the first beginning.

Adam	Noah
Adam was the father of the human race.	Noah is the new father of the human race.
Adam was told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.	Noah is told to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.
Adam was to rule over the animals and God brought them to him to be named.	The fear of Noah and his descendants will be on all the animals. They are given into his hand.
God gave to Adam the herbs and fruit of the ground as food.	God adds to Noah's choice of food the flesh of animals.

As Noah and his family come out of the ark, it is possible that they were a bit apprehensive. God had just destroyed the world because of its wickedness in an awesome display of power. Perhaps they begin to wonder if God might not send another flood if they step out of line. I can imagine their fears escalating when the first thunderstorm strikes. To alleviate their fears, God established His covenant with Noah in which He will promise never again to destroy the world with a flood.

COVENANT STIPULATIONS

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the terror of you shall 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. 3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you;

I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. 4 Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 And 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. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. 7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it." (Genesis 9:1-7).

Noah is to be the new Adam for the human race. Accordingly, to him is given the same mandate that was first given to Adam. It is the mandate to *be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*. However now there is a difference.

There is a subtle difference between this command versus the one given to Adam in Genesis 1:28. Man is no longer told to rule the earth. Romans 8:21-23 suggests he lost his ability to rule in the fall.

1. Mankind to Instill Fear: *And the fear of you and the terror of you shall 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 (9:2).*

The relationship between mankind and the animal kingdom was not previously described as involving fear or terror. Man exercised a rulership over the earth, but it seems to have been a benign rulership. This now changes in the new age. This does not give us carte blanche to treat animals in a cruel manner. The Proverbs remind us of this:

*A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast,
But the compassion of the wicked is cruel. (Proverbs 12:10).*

On the other hand, this is not a call for mankind to become vegetarians or to disallow the possibility of taking the life of an animal. Rather it is a call to refrain from needless cruelty toward animals.

2. Mankind to Live by Eating Animals: *Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant (9:3).*

This also seems to reflect a change from the previous age. In Genesis 1:29 God gave to man plants and the fruit of trees for food. This is expanded to include the flesh of animals as a part of the diet of mankind.

3. A Prohibition against Blood: *Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (9:4).*

The exception to man's diet in the including of the flesh of animals is that he was not to eat *flesh with its life*. On the one hand, this means that the eating of an animal must necessarily cause the death of that animal prior to the eating. But more specifically, it is a prohibition against the drinking of blood.

Blood was to be special and sacred. Why? Because blood represented life. That is seen in both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. When we speak of the blood of Jesus being shed, we are not speaking about some magic quality in His hemoglobin, but the fact that He gave His life for us.

4. Capital Punishment: *Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man (9:6).*

Some have seen the institution of capital punishment as the basis for human government. The phrase *by man his blood shall be shed* suggests, not the actions of a vigilant or seeker of vengeance, but of an organized governing body. Capital punishment has two results:

- It eliminates the offender.

This is rather obvious. One way to stop murder is to get rid of the murderer. Those who argue against the effectiveness of capital punishment have to admit that, at the very least, it stops repeat offenders.

- It demonstrates the high value of human life.

That is the point being made in this passage. It is underscored by the explanation that reminds us that *in the image of God He made man*. The point is that, when a man is murdered, a being who is in the image of God is killed. This is such a terrible crime that it calls for a terrible

punishment -- the death of the murderer.

At the same time, we must remember that capital punishment was not to be lightly or carelessly administered. The Mosaic Law recognized the difference between premeditated murder versus accidental manslaughter and judged accordingly.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COVENANT

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 9 “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 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. 11 And 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.” (Genesis 9:8-11).

God establishes His covenant with Noah and with his descendants. This same covenant was promised prior to the flood in Genesis 6:18, but it is here that the covenant is established.

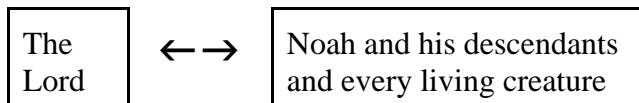
1. The Covenant Concept.

The term “covenant” is translated from the Hebrew word בְּרִית (Beryth). Some have suggested that this word comes from the terms for “eating” and “binding.” Noth suggests that it derives from the Akkadian *birit*, which relates to the Hebrew בּין (“between”). A third suggestion points to the Akkadian root *baru*, “to bind or fetter.” It is used in the Bible as that which binds two people together. It involves a verbalized commitment, but it is more than that. It is a relationship of life and of death. This is seen in the fact that you did not write a covenant; you always cut a covenant. The making of a covenant was always sealed with the death of an animal. This was so ingrained in the ancient culture that, at a later date, the word “covenant” sometimes disappears entirely as you read of two parties “cutting together.”

2. The Parties of the Covenant: *IMyself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 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 (9:9-10).

A covenant is always between at least two parties. One of these parties is the Lord. He is making this covenant. God makes this covenant with Noah, his descendants and with every living creature.



This is generalized even further when we come to verse 13 where God establishes the covenant between Himself and the entire earth.

3. This is an Everlasting Covenant: *All flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood (9:11).*

God promises that there will never be another flood to destroy all flesh from the earth. This is a message of comfort to Noah and to his family who had been witnesses to the terrible wrath of the judgment of God. They can believe this promise and be at rest.

THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT

And 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; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. 14 And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, 15 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. 16 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." 17 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." (Genesis 9:12-17).

God gives a sign to remind man of His promise never to destroy the world again by a flood. The rainbow will serve as His divine signature to His everlasting covenant with man and the earth.

1. The Nature of the Sign: *I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth (9:13).*

The bow was one of the modern weapons of war for that day. It served to the armies of antiquity what guided missiles do for armaments of today. It allowed death to be delivered from a distance. The bow of God represents His weapon of warfare that had been utilized in bringing the destruction of the flood.

That bow is to be set in the cloud in the way a man might take his weapon of war and place it over the fireplace mantle. It is to be set on display for all to see that it is no longer in use. It serves now, not as a weapon of present warfare, but as a reminder of the conflict that once took place.

2. The Uniqueness of the Sign.

Some have suggested this to be the first rainbow that man had ever seen. Genesis 2:5-6 speaks of how it had not previously rained upon the earth and that a mist would come and water the earth. On the other hand, we need not read into this sign the idea that a rainbow had never before been seen. It is just as possible for the Lord to take existing phenomenon and to invest it with new meaning and significance.

3. The Sign as a Reminder: *I will remember My covenant (9:15).*

Just as rain upon the earth during this present age reminds man of God's former judgment in bringing the flood, so the rainbow is to serve as a reminder of God's promise never to flood the earth again. The sign is an assurance to us that God is remembering His covenant.

The rainbow as the sign of the covenant is appropriate when we contrast it to the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Noahaic Covenant	Abrahamic Covenant
The sign is the rainbow.	The sign is circumcision.

The sign reaches out to all creation because it is a covenant with all living things.	The sign is private and personal because it marks an individual as one of God's covenant people.
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Circumcision is a sign in man's body. This was appropriate because man alone is involved in the covenant with God. It marked that individual as being one of God's covenant people.

By contrast, the Noahic Covenant involves all created life. As a result, the sign is not given in the body of Noah, but in the sky where it is identified, not just with Noah, but with all of creation.

The rainbow is mentioned only three more times in the Bible. It always indicates the presence of the Lord in judgment over mankind.

- Ezekiel's vision of the glory of the Lord: *As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. (Ezekiel 1:28).*
- The Apostle John's vision of the Lord: *And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance (Revelation 4:3).*
- The Great Messenger from Heaven: *And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire (Revelation 10:1).*

THE SONS OF NOAH

Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. 19 These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was populated. (Genesis 9:18-19).

This is the fourth time we have been given the names of all three of the sons of Noah (Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 7:13). This time there is a difference. This

time we are told that Ham was the father of Canaan. The mention of Canaan foreshadows the events in the following section.

We are inclined to read over this and barely take note of the reference to Canaan, but the effect of his name in the narrative would have had an electrifying effect upon the original recipients of this book. The Israelites in the wilderness for whom Moses writes this account knew they would soon be facing the people of Canaan. They would soon be entering into the land of Canaan and fighting against the Canaanites who were the present inhabitants of the promised land.

NOAH'S DRUNKENNESS

*Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. 21
And he drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered
himself inside his tent. (Genesis 9:20-21).*

Noah had stood steadfast against the attacks of those mighty men of old who set themselves up against God. He had demonstrated his faith during the flood while he was in the ark. Now that it was over, there comes a failure on his part. This serves as a reminder that it is possible for one who is strong in faith to be tempted and to fall into reproach.

Noah took up farming. In the course of his labors, he planted a vineyard and, when harvest came, he produced wine. The sin of Noah was not that he drank the wine, but that he kept on drinking in an immoderate manner until he became drunk.

- Drunkenness is always condemned in Scripture: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18; see also Isaiah 5:22; 28:7-8; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11).
- The drinking of alcoholic beverage is permitted and even advised under certain circumstances. Jesus demonstrated this at a wedding when He changed water into wine (John 2:1-11). Paul told Timothy to utilize wine for medicinal purposes.¹⁶

¹⁶ *No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23).*

- Paul instructed believers in the church not to associate with drunkards who were claiming to believe in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:11). The point is that being drunk is inconsistent with being a Christian.

HAM'S INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. 23 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. (Genesis 9:22-23).

When we read that Ham *saw the nakedness of his father* and then read of the extreme curse that is placed upon Canaan, we are left with one of two possibilities.

1. This could merely be the impious action of a son looking disrespectfully upon the nakedness of his father. By contrast, his two brothers take care not to allow their eyes to even see the nakedness of their father, holding a garment and walking backward with gaze averted as they move to cover their father's nakedness.
2. This language could be a euphemistic reference to a homosexual act. There are several places in the Old Testament where we see examples of this.¹⁷

A further hint that this may have been the case is seen in verse 24

¹⁷ To “look” on or “uncover” a person's nakedness was sometimes used in the Old Testament as a euphemism for various sorts of sexual interaction. *None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD* (Leviticus 18:6). The context makes it very clear that this is speaking of sexual intimacy. *“Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans. For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers. Your nakedness will be uncovered, Your shame also will be exposed; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.”* (Isaiah 47:1-3). *In you they have uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity* (Ezekiel 22:10).

where *Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.* This seems to refer to more than Ham seeing his father's nudity and then speaking about it in an improper manner.

The magnitude of the curse would seem to suggest a greater sin involved than the immodest look or the ill-advised communication of what had been seen.

Whichever interpretation is chosen, Ham's actions are seen in contrast to his two brothers who are careful not even to look upon their father's nakedness. He has looked and then he has spoken in what apparently has been a dishonorable manner. They resolve that they will do neither. Instead they show their respect for their father's privacy by taking care not to see him in this condition.

NOAH'S PROPHECY

When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25 So he said,

*"Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers."*

26 He also said,

*"Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.*

*27 "May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant." (Genesis 9:24-27).*

Adam sinned and became naked. Noah does the same thing. He becomes drunk and he lies naked within his tent. We are reminded that the last Adam became naked as He hung upon the cross in our place.

Adam	Noah
Placed into a Garden	Plants a garden
Eats the fruit of the tree	Drinks of the fruit of the vine

Results in recognizing his nakedness	Results in lying naked in his tent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in a curse • Results in a lasting division of the seed • Followed by a genealogy to demonstrate the division 	
His eyes were opened and he knew he was naked.	He awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done.
He was judged and cursed by God.	He placed a curse upon Canaan.

The prophecy comes in three parts, dealing with each of the three sons of Noah. On the one hand, there is a cosmological significance to this prophecy, since all mankind is descended from these three men.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that this prophecy had a special meaning to the original recipients of the book of Genesis. The Israelites in the wilderness will soon be given the directive to enter the promised land and destroy all of the Canaanite inhabitants who are there. This curse is a part of the reason for that destruction.

1. The Curse against Canaan: *Cursed be Canaan* (9:25).

Why is Canaan cursed instead of Ham? We are not told. One suggestion is that Noah would not curse Ham because he had been blessed by God (Genesis 9:1) and you don't curse someone whom God has blessed. However, further investigation may indicate that Canaan was actively involved in the sin.

Verse 24 says that Noah knew what his *youngest* son had done to him. It has been traditional to assume this is a reference to Ham, but there are hints it might instead be a reference to Canaan. Consider the following:

- a. Shem was a hundred years old when he became the father of Arpachshad and this took place two years after the flood (Genesis 11:10). Since the flood took place on the 600th year of Noah's life, that would put the birth of Shem when Noah was 502 years old.
- b. Noah began having children when he was 500 years old.

- c. Shem was older than Japheth (Genesis 10:21).
- d. It is therefore suggested that Ham was the oldest of Noah's sons and that he was the son born when Noah was 500 years old since we read in Genesis 5:32 that Noah was five hundred years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

A problem with this interpretation is that verse 24 makes reference to Noah's youngest son rather than to his grandson. The term for grandson (בֶּן־בָּן – *ben benu*), literally, “son of my son,” is familiar to the Genesis narrative and is used in Genesis 11:31, but is absent here. While it is true that the Hebrew word for “son” can refer to a descendant, it is equally possible to view the statement of Noah's age in Genesis 5:32 as a rounded number and thus understand Shem to be the oldest and Ham the youngest of the three sons of Noah.

It should be noted that the Canaanite race was noted for its moral decadence.

- Sex worship.
- Bestiality.
- Child sacrifice.
- Homosexuality.

Thus, the judgment would not be upon an “innocent” people merely on the basis of the sin of a past ancestor. Instead, the words of Noah become a prophecy that foretells what kind of people will come from the descendants of Canaan. The Israelites need to know this because they will be given the mission of entering the land of Canaan and bringing God's judgment against that people. It should be noted that the descendants of Canaan went on to show the highest level of sinfulness and this curse would not take effect until that sinfulness reached its zenith (Genesis 15:16).

Finally, I would point out that any Canaanite was able to turn this cursing into blessing by repenting and turning to the Lord. How do I know this? Because one Canaanite did exactly that. Her name is Rahab and she was a prostitute-turned-believer and we find that she became one of the ancestors of the Messiah.

2. The Blessing of Shem: *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and*

let Canaan be his servant (9:26).

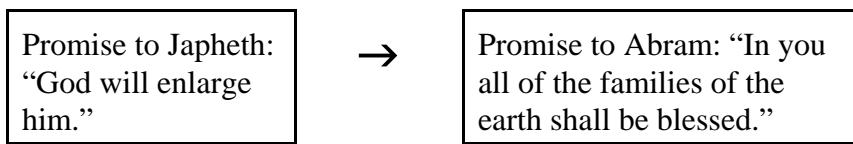
By virtue of this phrase, it is indicated that the spiritual leadership of the world is to come through the line of Shem. It is from Shem that the nation of Israel would be descended. This prophecy indicates that the promised seed would come through Shem.

3. The Enlargement of Japheth: "*May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.*" (Genesis 9:27).

There is a play on words off the name "Japheth" (גַּפְתֵּה). His name means "to enlarge" or "be wide" and this blessing calls for God to enlarge (גַּפְתֵּה) Japheth.

May God YAPHETH Japheth...

The other nations of the world are promised a blessing which shall come through Shem. This promise will be explained in more detail as the Lord reveals Himself to Abraham.



Is there a particular way in which God has enlarged Japheth? When we consider that the descendants of Japheth are largely made up of the Indo-European people, we can think of several ways in which this prophecy might have seen fulfillment.

- A physical enlargement can be seen as the descendants of Japheth have been the rulers of some of the greatest empires of the world.
- A mental enlargement can be suggested as Japheth has produced great philosophers and scientists.
- A spiritual enlargement has been seen throughout most of church history as the world of Japheth is largely the world of Christendom. The Orthodox Catholic and Protestant churches have been the legacy of the descendants of Japheth.

However, there is some question as to who the pronoun refers to in the middle of verse 27.

*May God enlarge Japheth,
And let HIM dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant. (Genesis 9:27).*

Most people think that this is Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem. But there is another possibility. It is GOD Himself who shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

Think of it! The God of the universe, Creator of heavens and earth, taking residence in a tent! Preposterous! And yet, that is exactly what God did. As Moses was writing this book, he could look to the center of the Israelite camp and see the tabernacle - the tent of meeting.

This is also a Messianic prophecy. God tabernacled with us, taking upon Himself a Jewish “tent.” He who was from the beginning and who was without beginning became flesh. Forever He shall dwell in the Tent of Shem.

NOAH'S LATER LEGACY

And Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. 29 So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died. (Genesis 9:28-29).

We tend to think of Noah's ministry as that which took place prior to the flood and in the survival through the flood, but Noah continued to live another 350 years after the flood. Though we are not told the details of his post-flood ministry, I have little doubt that a ministry did continue to take place.

We have already mentioned several points of comparison between Adam and Noah. This parallel suggests that Noah played the part of a second Adam in guiding the human race.

- Both were commanded to fill the earth and to exercise control over it. In such a manner, Jesus sent His followers into the world to make disciples of all the nations.

- Both were blessed by God. By contrast, Jesus took upon Himself the wrath of God that was our due.
- Both sinned by the taking of a fruit; Adam by eating of the forbidden fruit and Noah by drinking of the fruit of the vine until he became drunk. By contrast, Jesus was without sin, yet drank the cup of God's wrath for us.
- As a result, each was naked and then covered by someone else; Adam was naked and given coverings of skin by God while Noah was naked and covered by two of his sons. By contrast, Jesus became naked upon the cross in order to provide the covering for our sins.
- In each case, their sin resulted in the giving of a curse; Adam's sin brought a curse upon all of his progeny while Noah's sin brought a curse upon Canaan. By contrast, Jesus became a curse for us so that we might receive the blessings of God.
- Both had three sons mentioned in Scripture, one of whom headed the Messianic line. Jesus is the Second Adam and the One who gives eternal rest.

Both of these men looked forward to the coming of the promised Seed of the woman who would come to earth to destroy the works of Satan.

THE TABLE OF NATIONS

GENESIS 10:1-32

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. (Genesis 10:1).

The book of Genesis does not suffer from a lack of popularity. Many have undertaken to read the accounts of creation and the fall, of the murder of Abel and the flood of Noah. But as they come to Genesis 10, they usually transform into speed readers and within seconds they have passed over this section of Scripture.

The table of nations as found in Genesis 10 is unique among the writings of antiquity. Most of the ancient literature we have found are interested primarily in their own origins. It is rare to find a work that even attempts to catalog the ethnic origins of the entire human race.

THE PURPOSE OF THE TABLE OF NATIONS

There are several important reasons for this chapter being in the Bible and for its inclusion in the book of Genesis.

1. To demonstrate the fulfillment of Noah's Prophecy as found in Genesis 9. That chapter closes with a curse upon Canaan and blessings upon the descendants of Shem and Japheth. As we turn the page, we are brought into the fulfillment of that prophecy. This shows the faithfulness of God in always keeping His promises.
2. To give the background for the account of the Tower of Babel as well as the rest of Bible history. This serves as a reminder that the book of Genesis is not a fictional story of mythological events. It is a historical narrative about real people in real places.
3. To follow the line of Canaan. In keeping with the prophecy of Genesis 9, we learn exactly who is involved in the descendants of Canaan.

Remember that the book of Genesis was written to the Israelites in

the wilderness who would soon be going into the promised land. They would be commanded to destroy and displace the Canaanites. This chapter identifies who are the Canaanites.

4. To give a sense of belonging and identity to the people of Israel. Everyone needs to know who he is and how he fits into the world. The Israelites had been a race of slaves. They need to know that they are much more. They are a chosen people who have been called by God for a special purpose.

A COMPARISON OF GENESIS 9, 10 AND 11

Genesis 9:24-27 gives the prophecy of the future descendants of Noah. It is a prophecy that foretold a curse upon Canaan and blessings for Shem and Japheth.

Genesis 10 gives the fulfillment of that prophecy in the table of nations. In verse 5 of this chapter we are told that the division of nations was based upon two criteria.

- After his language.
- After his people.

Genesis 11 goes back and tells exactly how this division was accomplished in the confusion that took place at Babel. Therefore there is a sense in which the action of Genesis 11 takes place before that of Genesis 10. This is the normal pattern that we have seen in Genesis. First we are given the overview, then we go back to look at the details.

Genesis 9:24-27	Genesis 10	Genesis 11
Prophecy of the nations	Table of nations	Division of the nations
Curse on Canaan	Description of Nimrod	Focus on Babel

Though the sons of Noah are normally listed as Shem, Ham and Japheth (Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1; 1 Chronicles 1:4), it is the sons of Japheth who are first presented to us. This is because, from the point of view of the author and his readers, Japheth is the least important. The focus of the narrative will lead us from Japheth to Ham and finally to Shem.

THE SONS OF JAPHETH

The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras.

3 And the sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. 4 And the sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. 5 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. (Genesis 10:2-5).

For the most part, the descendants of Japheth make up the Indo-European people. The languages spoken by these people groups are related.

1. Gomer.

The descendants of Gomer moved northward, skirting the Black Sea and then moved west into central Europe. They gave rise to the Germans, the Gauls and the Celts. Three groups are mentioned as coming from Gomer.

- **Ashkenaz:** The people of Ashkenaz settled to the north of Mesopotamia near a lake that still bears the name Ascanius. *Ashkuza* was the Assyrian word for the Scythians, the rugged horsemen who roamed the lands to the north of Assyria. Roman mythology had Ascanius of Troy escaping the fall of Troy and journeying to Italy where he gave rise to the Latins.
- **Riphath:** Josephus describes him as the ancestor of the Paphlagonians, a people who lived on the Black Sea to the west of the Halys River.
- **Togarmah:** Gave rise to the people of Armenia. Tradition has it that Togarmah was the ancestor of the Turkic-speaking people. Ezekiel 27:14 makes reference to the people of Togarmah trading in war horses and mules with the inhabitants of Tyre.

2. Magog.

The term “Magog” seems to refer to the land or people of Gog. Josephus identified Magog with the Scythians, but he seems to be

using that as a general term for anyone living north of Mesopotamia. This family settled to the north of the Caspian Sea and included settlements along the northeastern shores of the Black Sea.

3. Madai.

They settled to the east of Mesopotamia and gave rise to a strong mountain people known as the Medes. One branch of the Medes joined with the Semitic Elamites to form the Persians.

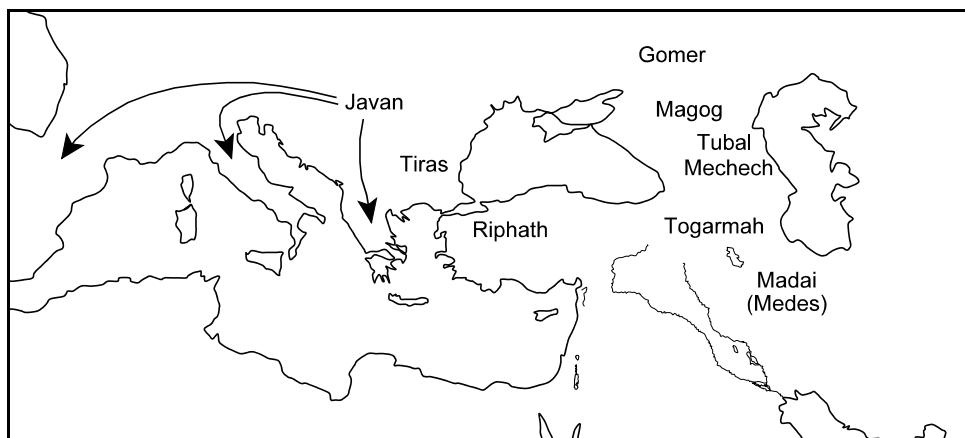
4. Javan.

The descendants of Javan settled along the north Mediterranean coast and gave rise to a number of people groups.

- The Mycenaean Greeks.
- Early Italians and Latins.
- Early inhabitants of Spain.
- Later Hittites.

5. Tubal and Mechech: These two tribes settle in the mountains of Armenia to the north of Assyria.

6. Tiras: Gave rise to the Thracians in northeastern Greece.



THE SONS OF HAM

6 And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.

7 And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

8 Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

13 And Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim 14 and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Captorim.

15 And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth 16 and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Gergashite 17 and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite 18 and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. 19 And 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.

20 These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations. (Genesis 10:6-20).

While we can largely identify the sons of Japheth as being the Indo-European people, the descendants of Ham do not so easily fall into such a simple designation. There is not a single separate Hamitic language group that we find with the Indo-European or the Semitic languages. The languages spoken by the nations making up the sons of Ham are much more diversified.

1. **Cush.**

This is the Hebrew term for Ethiopia, the lands along the Nile to the south of Egypt from the first to the sixth cataract. Around 730 B.C. the kingdom of Cush conquered Egypt and the two kingdoms were joined for a period of sixty years until Egypt was invaded by the Assyrians.

2. Nimrod: *Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth (10:8).*

The name Nimrod (נִמְרָד) seems to be derived from the Hebrew verb meaning, “to rebel” (מִרָּד). If this is correct, then his name becomes indicative of his character and we can see a contrast between this man and Noah.

Nimrod is called a “mighty hunter” while Esau is called a “skillful hunter.” Both of these men demonstrated a desire for independence from God.

Noah	Nimrod
He built an ark and an altar.	He built a tower and a city.
God-centered.	Self-centered.
He became a farmer.	He became a hunter.
His name means <i>rest</i> .	His name seems to mean <i>rebel</i> .

The Bible gives very little about Nimrod that is not found in these verses. Micah 5:6 refers to “the land of Nimrod” as a reference to Assyria. In spite of this, a great many ancient legends have grown up around the person of Nimrod. Josephus describes him as a rebel against God.

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers. (Antiquities 1:4:2).

Nimrod is described in the Biblical text as *a mighty hunter before the LORD* (10:9). Three different times in this passage, he will be called "mighty." Judging from the fact that his kingdom was centered at Babel, we can assume that his might was manifested in rebellion against God. The motif of a mighty hunter king is common in antiquity. Kings and pharaohs regularly had themselves depicted as victorious hunters.

Genesis 6:4 told of a time when there were *mighty men* (הַגְּבָרִים) who were of old. Now we read of one who is "the first to be a mighty man" (הַגְּבָרִ). What was the significance of Nimrod being *a mighty hunter before the Lord*?

- One possibility is that, after the devastation of the Flood, a great hunter would be acclaimed, both for being able to provide meat as well as for protection from carnivorous animals.
- The addition of the phrase "before the Lord" might simply be an old-fashioned way of saying that he was considered the best in the land.
- It has also been suggested that Nimrod was a hunter of men and that he was in rebellion before the Lord. In favor of this view is the mention of Babel as the beginning of his kingdom and its subsequent history given in the next chapter.

In verses 10-11 we learn that Nimrod's kingdom spanned two great lands. It began in the land of Shinar and also took in the land of Assyria. These lands encompass both southern and northern Mesopotamia, called thus by the Greeks because it was "the land between the two rivers."

Erech is 100 miles southeast of Babylon and was the legendary home of Gilgamesh, the hero of the Sumerian Epic.

We have already described Noah as a second Adam who goes out to replenish and fill the earth following its re-creation. We can also see Nimrod as a second Cain who goes out from the presence of the Lord to build a city and a kingdom. The kingdom begins with Babel, but it does not stop there. It takes in a number of city-states throughout

Mesopotamia.

We can also see a contrast between Nimrod the mighty hunter versus the One who is still mightier, yet who chooses to call himself instead “the good shepherd.”

Nimrod	Christ
A mighty hunter	The good shepherd
He rules over Babel.	He rules over the New Jerusalem.
Rebellion against God.	Submission to God.

There is a sense in which you will find yourself serving one king or the other. You will either follow in the footsteps of the one who attempts to build up his own kingdom or else you will follow the One who gave His own life that we might enter His kingdom.

3. Mizraim: *Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim 14 and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Capthorim (10:13-14).*

Mizraim was the ancient name for the Egyptians. They settled up and down the Nile River, for the ancient borders of Egypt did not extend past the Nile River Valley. This passage tells us of a number of other people groups that descend from Mizraim.

- *Ludim.* These are the Lydians who lived in western Anatolia.
- *Anamim.*
- *Lehabim:* Literally, “the flames.”
- *Naphtuhim:* This seems to be a reference to Lower Egypt. The land of Egypt is divided into two parts. Lower Egypt is in the north and takes in the Nile Delta. Upper Egypt is in the south and involves the length of the Nile River.
- *Pathrusim:* Pathros is a reference to Upper Egypt and includes the cities of Luxor and Thebes. The lands of upper

and lower Egypt were considered by the Egyptians to be two separate lands joined under a single pharaoh. Thousands of years later, this distinction would be maintained as the pharaoh's crown would bear the symbols of both upper and lower Egypt.

- *Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and the Caphtorim:* The Casluhim and the Caphtorim are both said to be the ancestors of the Philistines. Amos 9:7 describes the Philistines as being from Caphtor. Caphtor is thought to be an ancient name for the island of Crete. This was the home of the Minoan civilization and their colonies are in evidence throughout the Mediterranean world including the lands along the southern coasts of Israel.

4. Put: This is thought to be ancient Lybia, located to the west of Egypt.

5. Canaan: He is the son of Ham who had been cursed by Noah in the previous chapter. This was especially significant to the Israelites to whom Moses wrote the book of Genesis, for they would soon be facing the Canaanites when they came into the land. It is for this reason that we are told the specific boarders of the lands of Canaan.

And 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. (Genesis 10:19).

This narrow strip of land provided a land bridge from Mesopotamia to Egypt. It was strategically located at what was in that day the center of the world. In addition to this territory, descendants of the Canaanites also gave rise to a number of other people groups.

- Sidon (10:15). Sidon was a city located on the Mediterranean to the north of Israel. It was the chief of the cities of the Phoenicians. They went on to become a race of sailors whose ships traveled the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, planting colonies in Sicily, Spain and Africa.
- Heth (10:15). These are the forerunners of the original Hittites. However, these were eventually overrun and amalgamated with an Indo-European people who took for

themselves the same name and eventually became the Hittite kingdom.

- The Jebusites (10:16). These were the original inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem.
- The Amorites (10:16). Although the Amorites were a distinct people group, they grew so large that it became customary to speak of all Canaanites as Amorite.

THE SONS OF SHEM

And also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born. 22 The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.

23 And the sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.

24 And Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. 25 And 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. 26 And Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah 27 and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah 28 and Obal and Abimael and Sheba 29 and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. 30 Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.

31 These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations. (Genesis 10:21-31).

The sons of Shem make up the Semitic people of the world. We tend to think of Semitic people and think primarily of Jews, but there are a great many others who would also be classified as Semitic.

Shem is said in verse 21 to be *the father of all the children of Eber*. The Israelites are told this so that they can be assured of their own place in this table of nations. The purpose of this account is so that they might know of their own place in the world.

1. Elam: The Elamites settled to the east of Mesopotamia. They later combined with the Medes to produce the Persians.
2. Asshur: This was the ancient name of Assyria. This is different from Syria. The Assyrians lived in the northern part of Mesopotamia along the Tigris River.
3. Arphachshad: We do not know the meaning of this name. Some have thought it to be related to the Hebrew word for “healing” (אָפָּחֵשׁ). It is through him that Abraham and the Jews would be descended.

Josephus maintained that Arphachshad was the ancestor of the Chaldeans. (Antiquities 1:6:4).
4. Lud: This may be a reference to the Lydians who settled in southern Anatolia.
5. Aram: Gave rise to the Aramaens. Their capital city was Damascus and they spread out over the plains of Syria to the northeast of Canaan.

CONCLUSION

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. (Genesis 10:32).

There are a total of 70 names given in this table of nations if we do not count the three sons of Noah. This perfect number will be significant later in the book of Genesis. When the Israelites enter into Egypt in the days of Joseph, we read that *all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy* (Genesis 46:27). Is this merely a coincidence? Not according to Moses.

*7 Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of all generations.
Ask your father, and he will inform you,
Your elders, and they will tell you.
8 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of man,*

*He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the sons of Israel.
9 For the Lord's portion is His people,
Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. (Deuteronomy 32:7-9).*

Moses says that the boundaries of the people are *according to the number of the sons of Israel*. This means Israel will eventually be seen as a microcosm of the entire world. What is true of Israel will also eventually be true for the world. The blessing given to Israel in the Abrahamic covenant will extend outward to be a blessing to all men.

This is seen in the ministry of Jesus when He appointed seventy disciples and sent them out *to every city and place where He Himself was going to come* (Luke 10:1). They were going out to the land of Israel, but that was only a precursor of the day when the disciples would be sent out to the whole world.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

GENESIS 11:1-26

Throughout our study of the book of Genesis, we have noted the literary style of the book. This literary style is consistent in that the factors not central to the main theme are quickly dealt with first and then the record returns to the central theme to deal with it at length.



This same pattern is seen in Genesis 10-11. The genealogy of Genesis 10 is given as a panorama of the nations. Then Genesis 11 goes back to the Tower of Babel to describe God's judgment against man's rebellion. From there, we trace a single line running from Noah to Abram.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BABEL NARRATIVE

Why is this story included in the Genesis account? A number of reasons could be cited, each with a certain degree of validity.

1. To Show the Origin of the Division of Languages.

Secular philology has wrestled with the question of the origin of languages and whether all languages stem from a common ancestor. We do know that languages change over time and that new languages grow and develop, but this does not tell us where this process began in the first place. Only in the Bible do we have a definitive answer.

2. To Show the Origin of the Babylonian Religious System.

Moses is writing this narrative to the Israelites who have recently come out of Egypt. They will soon be entering the land of Canaan. It is a land that is filled with idolatry. The religious system of that land had its roots in the paganism of Babel. It was from that same paganism from which Abram had been called. This serves as a warning against returning to those pagan roots.

3. To Show the Results of Rebellion against God.

The close of the book of Deuteronomy contains a series of blessings and curses for either obedience or disobedience to the covenant. These are found in Deuteronomy 28. If Israel will obey the Lord, they will receive great blessings. But if they rebel against the Lord, they will be cursed with great curses. In verse 49 of that chapter, the curse culminates when God brings against rebellious Israel *a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand.*

There is a point here. It is that the curse brought against Babel will have repercussions against the children of Israel if they also rebel against God.

THE BABEL REBELLION

1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. 2 And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:1-4).

When the passage says that *the whole earth used the same language*, we need to remember that the word for “the earth” is **הָרָקֶד** and can refer to “the land.” On the other hand, if we understand this to be the origin of all major language groups (and that certainly seems to be the case), then it would naturally follow that this universality would have been mirrored in a universal flood.

The area where the ark had landed was a mountainous area to the north of Mesopotamia called Urartu. The descendants of Noah subsequently migrated southward into the land of Shinar, the land we know as Mesopotamia. It is no accident that the land of Mesopotamia contains the ruins of a number of ziggurats — large temple towers which served as the religious centers of the city-states where they were located.

Not only is there confirmation of this account in the existence of such towers, but even the mode of their construction is described. There is a special mention of the specific building materials.

Instead of stone...	They used brick
Instead of mortar...	They used tar

Why is this significant? Remember that this is written to the Israelites who have just come out of Egypt. They have spent their lives making bricks in Egypt. When they reach Mount Sinai and are given the Law, they are ordered to build an altar to the Lord. But that altar will not be made of bricks.

"You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause your name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 25 And if you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it." (Exodus 20:24-25).

The altar was not to be a monument to men's architecture, but rather a monument to the Lord. By contrast, the Tower of Babel was to be a monument to the makers — they were seeking self-glory.

The tower was to serve as the religious and social focal point of the people. It was to be their symbol of unity and strength. In short, it was a symbol of their rebellion against God.

1. The tower was to have its top oriented toward heaven — בְּשָׁמָיִם וְרָאשׁוֹ — literally, “and its head in the heavens.” Some have suggested the initial idea of a “flood-proof tower.” More likely is the idea that it was a tower which was dedicated to astrology and the worship of the heavens.

The Sumerian name for Babylon was Esagila, meaning "the structure with the upraised head."

2. There was also a cult of egotism at work. This is seen in the continued use of the personal pronoun: *And 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. And they said, "Come, let US build for OURSELVES a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let US make for OURSELVES a name; lest WE be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:3-4).

Notice that a part of this plan was to make a name (שם) for themselves. Was this in reaction to the promises which had been made to Shem (שם)? It would seem that the plans described here in the building of the city and the tower were the acts of deliberate rebellion against the decree of the Lord.

We fall into this same sort of rebellion when we set out to build our own kingdoms instead of seeking the Lord and His kingdom. You are building a kingdom. The only question is what is the nature of that kingdom and for whom are you building?

THE DIVINE COUNCIL

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And 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. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Genesis 11:5-7).

The pivotal point in this narrative takes place in verse 5 when the Lord comes down to see the city and the tower.

People come together; One language (11:1-2).

People say: "Come let us... build" (11:3-4).

God came down to see... (11:5).

God says: "Come let us... confuse them" (11:6-7).

People scattered; Many Languages (11:8-9).

Warren Gage points out the impact of such a description upon the original recipients of this book: "Moses mocks the colossal self-assertion of man by exposing his infinitesimal accomplishment. This great tower, which should pierce the heavens, falls so far short of the divine prominence that the Lord must "come down to see" what man is doing" (1954:140).

As men had gathered and counseled together over their plans, so we have a picture of the Lord holding a divine council to determine the fate of mankind. The use of the plural is reminiscent of the same type of usage in Genesis 1:26. As we noted in that passage, so also here the plural is most likely reflective of a plural of majesty.

We should not take this to mean that every dialect and language spoken today was immediately changed into its present form. The growth of languages has been a slow, on-going process.

On the other hand, there are a number of specific language groups that are recognized as being separate and distinct from one another. Philologists have observed that most languages fall into one of three major groupings.

- Indo-European (corresponds to Japheth): English, Spanish, Greek, German, French, Latin, Italian.
- Semitic (corresponds to Shem): Hebrew, Arabic, Akkadian, Aramaic.
- Hamitic (corresponds to Ham): Egyptian, Berber, Cushitic, and Chadic.¹⁸

Of these three groups, the most diverse and scattered is the Hamitic family. Similarly, philologists today recognize a number of other groupings and are uncertain how they relate to one another.

THE NAMING OF THE CITY

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the

¹⁸ This latter designation has now been combined with the Semitic languages to make up the Afroasiatic language group. This represents an effort to depart from the older Biblical references.

city. 9 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. (Genesis 11:8-9).

There is a play on words used here. It was of a kind that delighted the Jewish mind.

- The name of the city is given as Babel (בָּבֶל). Elsewhere this name will be rendered “Babylon,” but that change does not reflect a different Hebrew term. Babel and Babylon are one and the same.
- The Akkadian name for Babylon (*Babelu*) means “Gate of God.” This may have been reminiscent of the stairways leading up to the top of the ziggurat that was representative of a stairway to heaven.
- The verb “confuse” is בָּלַל.

In a very real sense, what happened at Babel was a curse. The nations were scattered through this confusion of languages. But the cursing will be turned to blessing in the next chapter when God calls one man - Abram - and promises to make him a blessing to all the nations.

This promise would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Within a few days of Christ's ascension into heaven, the curse of confusion would be seen to be overturned in a dramatic way by the Pentecost Incident - when Jews from all over the world would hear God's word proclaimed in all of the Gentile languages. Furthermore, there is coming a day when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11). On that day, the rebellion that began at Babel will give way to a new city whose builder and foundation is the Lord.

Babel	The New Jerusalem
Built upon brick and mortar	Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets
Tries to build a tower to the heavens.	God brings His city down from heaven.

The city that led to the scattering of the nations will one day give way to a

city that will unite all the nations.

THE GENEALOGY OF GENESIS 11

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; 11 and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters.

12 And Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; 13 and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters.

14 And Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; 15 and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters.

16 And Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; 17 and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters.

18 And Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; 19 and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters.

20 And Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; 21 and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters.

22 And Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; 23 and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters.

24 And Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; 25 and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters.

26 And Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. (Genesis 11:10-26).

Genesis 11 contains a genealogical table that is symmetrical with the one in

Genesis 5 (but only when the name “Cainan” is added from the Septuagint - see also Luke 3:36).

Genesis 5		Genesis 11
Adam	1	Shem
Seth	2	Arphachshad
Enosh	3	Cainan
Kenan	4	Shelah
Mahalel	5	Eber
Jared	6	Peleg
Enoch	7	Reu
Methuselah	8	Serug
Lamech	9	Nahor
Noah	10	Terah
Shem Ham Japheth		Abram Nahor Haran

There is a contrast to be seen between the genealogy that is found in Genesis 5 versus the one presented here in Genesis 11.

Genesis 5	Genesis 11
Begins with Adam, but is preceded by a genealogy of the antediluvian world found in Genesis 4.	Begins with Shem, but is preceded by a genealogy of the postdiluvian world found in Genesis 10.
Ten generations are listed.	Ten generations are listed.
The average age at the birth of the firstborn is between 65 to 187 years.	The average age at the birth of the firstborn is between 29 to 35 years.
Ends with the birth of three sons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shem • Ham • Japheth 	Ends with the birth of three sons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abram • Nahor • Haran

It has been suggested that the genealogy given in Genesis 11 does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a strict chronology. Several factors combine to suggest the possibility of intentional gaps within this genealogy.

1. The Number of Years is not Totaled.

If the list of names in Genesis 11 had been given for the purpose of determining the length of time from the flood to Abraham, we would expect the author to give us the total number of years at the end of the account, especially when he gives us the total years of each patriarch's life when that could easily have been added and totaled by the reader.

2. The Name and Years of Cainan are Absent from the Hebrew Text.

The genealogy of Jesus as found in Luke 3 contains the additional name of Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad. Luke evidently follows the Septuagint reading of this text.

3. Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 are Symmetrical in Form.

Each has ten generations, culminating in a man who has three sons. This pattern suggests a deliberate stylization such as is found in Matthew 1 where a pattern is used to provide three groups of fourteen to correspond with the name David which has a numerical value of fourteen when the Hebrew letters that make up his name are added together.

4. If we take Genesis 11 as being a strict chronology, then all of the postdiluvian patriarchs (including Noah) would have still been alive when Abraham was 50 years old. However, Genesis 10:25 says that the earth was divided in the days of Peleg, not in the days of all of the postdiluvian patriarchs (who would have all been contemporaries if this was a strict chronology).

Furthermore, Genesis 25:8 says that Abraham "died at a good old age" being 175 years old. This could not be stated if three of his ancestors who outlived him were contemporary and still living when he died.

5. The ancestral connections between people in Biblical genealogies are often abridged. This is seen in Matthew 1:1 where Abraham is the father of David who is the father of Jesus. That same genealogy deliberately omits other names so that it can fit into a stylized format of three sets with fourteen names in each set. The reason for this is to show Jesus as the Son of David (the numerical equivalent of the

Hebrew name “David” is fourteen).

At the end of the first genealogy, people called on the name of the Lord. After the Flood, man desired to make a name for himself. But eventually, the Lord chooses a man out from the line and gives him a new name - Abraham.

THE WORLD OF ABRAM

GENESIS 11:27-32

Throughout the first part of the book of Genesis, there is a pattern seen concerning the Judgments of God. After God pronounces a judgment upon sin, He follows that judgment by offering a way of escape and salvation from that judgment.

JUDGMENT	WAY OF SALVATION
Adam & Eve cast out of Garden of Eden.	Promise of redemption through seed of the Woman.
Cain banished from the presence of God for murdering his brother.	God places a mark on Cain so that no one will take vengeance.
Flood brought upon the earth.	Eight souls saved in Ark.
Confusion of languages and nations dispersed.	Abraham to be a blessing to the nations.

When God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, He also gave them the first promise of redemption through the Seed of the Woman.

When God banished Cain from His presence after he had murdered Abel, He set a mark upon Cain to protect him from anyone who might be seeking revenge.

When the Lord brought a flood upon the earth to destroy all life, He allowed eight people to be saved within the ark.

When God confused the languages at the Tower of Babel, He doomed the world to an existence of misunderstanding, strife and confusion. We have seen the account of this judgment in chapter 11. Now at the end of chapter 11, we have the introduction to one particular individual whom God chooses to bless. His name is Abram. It will be through Abram that all of the nations in the world will be blessed, just as they have previously been judged.

DATING THE PATRIARCHS

Assuming a date of about 1440 B.C. for the Exodus, we suggest the following dates for the life of Abram.

We are not told how old Abram was when he and his family left Ur of the Chaldees, but in Genesis 12:4 we find that he was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. This would have taken place in the year 2085 B.C. and the date of Abram's birth would be placed at 2160 B.C.

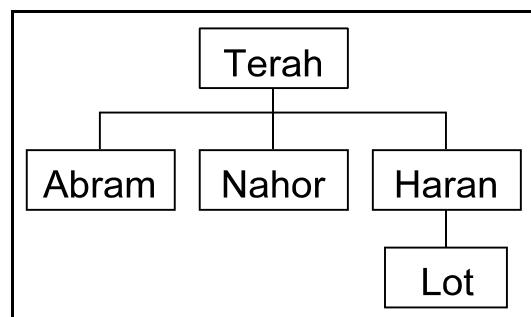
2160	- Birth of Abraham.
2085	- Abraham leaves Haran.
2060	- Birth of Isaac.
2000	- Birth of Jacob & Esau.
1870	- Israel enters Egypt.
1440	- The Exodus.

This would mean that Abram departed from Ur of the Chaldees at a time when it was at its zenith.

THE FAMILY OF TERAH

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. 28 And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. (Genesis 11:27-28).

Thus begins another section of the book of Genesis. We have already seen the generations of the heavens and the earth, the generations of Adam, the generations of Noah, and the generations of Shem. In each case, this introductory phrase has gone on to tell about the descendants of the one who was named.



The name Terah (תְּרָאֵה) is used of no one else in the Bible. The origins and the meaning of his name are unknown.

The family of Terah was beset by an untimely tragedy in the death of Haran. We are not told the details of his death, but he left his son Lot fatherless. It would be Abram who would act as guardian for this young man.

UR OF THE CHALDEES

And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. (Genesis 11:28).

Sir C. Leonard Woolley spent 12 years excavating the city of Ur located in Southern Mesopotamia (1922-1934). Since that time, most scholars have felt that this was the city of Abraham's birth. Woolley found an ancient metropolis with a population of 34,000 in the inner district and as much as a quarter of a million in the outlying districts.

Ur was the scene of great war and great culture during the days which Abram lived. For a time, the king of this city was the supreme monarch over all of the cities of Southern Mesopotamia, restoring Sumer to the glory that it had held in the days of Sargon the Great, 300 years earlier.

Ur contained a number of schools where students were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. They learned to write in Sumerian cuneiform, pressing their wedged-shaped markers onto the lumps of soft clay.

The religion of Ur involved the entire pantheon of Sumer. The city itself was home to the patron god Nanna, the moon-god. Abram and his family originally participated in this pagan worship.

From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. (Joshua 24:2b).

Even the name "Abram" reflects his pagan origins. It means "exalted father" or "father of high places." It is possibly a reference to the regular worship atop the Ziggurat of Ur.

This was the period of the golden age of Ur. That would not be the case a hundred years later, but now Ur was the key city in Mesopotamia. It was in the midst of this great economic prosperity that Yahweh would have revealed Himself to Abram and commanded him to leave his home in Ur and travel to a faraway land. Abram was not called out of a country that was on the verge

of destruction, but from one that was at its very peak of prosperity.

A NORTHERN LOCATION FOR UR?

Several problems arise in the identification of Leonard Wooley's Ur as the city of Abram's birthplace. Therefore some have speculated on the existence of another city by the name of Ur located in northern Mesopotamia.

1. Southern Ur was not associated with the Chaldeans until the 10th century B.C. It is possible that the mention of the Chaldeans in our Genesis text is a scribal insertion to assist us in determining the location of Ur (it would be like speaking of the Ancient Mayans of Mexico).
2. The Septuagint reading of Genesis 11:31 does not say that Abram came from Ur. Instead of “they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans...” the Greek reads, “led them out of the land of the Chaldeans...”
3. When Abraham was going to send for a wife for his son Isaac, he gave his servant the following instructions:

The Hebrew for
Chaldea is פְּשָׁדִים.

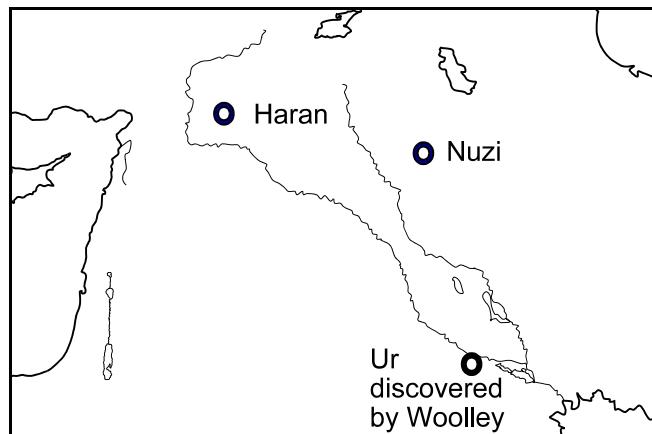
“But you shall go to MY COUNTRY and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (Genesis 24:4).

The phrase translated “my country” is אל-ארצִי (el-aretsi) and refers to “my land.” This was not just the people of Abraham. This was also his land! Where did the servant go? He went to Haran.¹⁹

- There continues to be a city in what is today western Turkey known as Urfâ. It is located very close to Haran and the local traditions of this city designate it as the birthplace of Abraham. In support of this locale, Gary Rensburg points out that “if you were to go from Ur in southern Iraq to Canaan, you would never go through Haran; it is simply not on the

¹⁹ There is a difference in spelling between Haran the city to which Abram and his family moved (חָרָן) versus Haran the brother of Abram who died (חָרָן).

way. But, if you began in this northern Ur, you would indeed go through Haran on your way to Canaan" (2006:162).



- This area of Northern Mesopotamia is from where the original Chaldeans are said to have come. Xenophon, writing a thousand years after Moses, states that the Chaldeans lived close to the Armenians.
- An examination of the Nuzi Tablets indicates that the Patriarchs reflect more of northern Mesopotamian culture than that of the Sumerians.
- The fact that the author goes out of his way to designate the city as Ur of the Chaldees suggests that it was not that familiar of a city to the original readers of Genesis. Rensburg points this out by way of analogy — *London, the great city of London, England, and London, Ontario.* We know, of course, that *London, Ontario* must have been founded by people who came from *London, England*, but let's make one further point on that. If I just said, "London," you would correctly think I was referring to *London, England*. If I have to refer to a second London, I have to add another term and I will indeed say, "London, Ontario." That's why the Bible, to my mind, says "Ur of the Chaldees" or "Ur of the Chaleans," because if you just said "Ur," people would know you're talking about the great Ur, the one in the south.²⁰

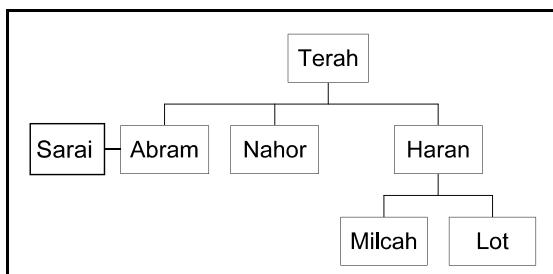
²⁰ Ibid. 163.

On the other hand, if the phrase “Ur of the Chaldees” were reflective of a later insertion, it would identify the southern location of the city. If this reference is a scribal insertion from a later period, then at least it informs us that the scribe intended us to consider this to be the city that was excavated by Woolley.

Does it really matter whether Abram came from the northern city or the better known southern city of Ur? Not really. People traveled throughout the ancient world of that day and cultural habits were regularly imported from far away places.

THE WIVES OF THE SONS OF TERAH

And 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. 30 And Sarai was barren; she had no child. (Genesis 11:29-30).



Haran evidently had a wife who gave birth to Lot, but she is not mentioned. Instead we are introduced to the wives of Abram and Nahor. Of the two, it will be Sarai who shall play a key role in the family narrative. Note that there was no injunction against marrying one's niece. Even the law prohibiting the marrying of one's sister was not yet in effect.

The name Sarai (שָׂרָאִי) means “my prince.”²¹ If Abram will be the father of the chosen people, then Sarai will be their mother. However, there was a problem. Sarai was barren. This must be seen in the light of the culture of that day to understand the seriousness of this issue. A woman who was

²¹ שָׂרָאִי is the word for “prince.”

barren was considered to be less than a woman. She would have no one to sustain and to care for her in her older age.

RESETTLEMENT IN HARAN

And 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. 32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran. (Genesis 11:31-32).

When Stephen stood before the high priest in Jerusalem, he stated that God had first appeared to Abraham while he was in Ur, before he moved to Haran.

Haran was at the crossroads of the main highways from Mesopotamia to the west. Indeed, the name “Haran” means “crossroads.” Located on the Bilikh River sixty miles north of where it empties into the Euphrates, the city sits at the crossroads of three different continents. It is a central hub with spokes leading out to Europe, Asia and Africa.

“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘Depart from your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’” (Acts 7:2-3).

This initial revelation of the Lord to Abram took place while he was still living in Ur. He was told to leave both his country as well as his relatives. The Genesis account of Abram’s departure tells us that Abram was accompanied by his father and his brothers. Was this corporate move in disobedience to the command to leave his relatives? Perhaps not. It is possible that this part of the command was not made known to Abram until after he had come to Haran.

We have already mentioned that Abram was an idol worshipper before leaving Ur. There is no indication that Abram’s family ever stopped worshiping these pagan gods. In the case of Laban, the nephew of Abram and the uncle of Jacob, the most that we can say is that he considered Yahweh to be one of many tribal gods. Only in Abram do we find a man who worshiped Yahweh exclusively.

It is not until the following chapter that we read of the Lord's call to Abram, yet already we see both Abram and his father and family relocating from their original home of Ur of the Chaldeans to the city of Haran. Furthermore, we are told that this was done *in order to enter the land of Canaan*.

This sort of migration was not unknown in the ancient world. There were not only families, but entire people groups that are known to have migrated during this period. Yet the migration of Abram's family had a particular destination. It was *in order to enter the land of Canaan*. I do not think this necessarily means they knew that Canaan was their final destination. They were leaving their home in Ur and this was in order to enter the land of Canaan, but that does not mean they were aware of what was that final destination. Why do I say that? Because the writer to the Hebrews tells us that *Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going* (Hebrews 11:8).

There is an interesting lesson here. It is a lesson of destination. Being unaware of your final destination does not preclude you from getting there. The reason Abram made it to the Promised Land was not because of his good planning; it was because he acted in faith and the Lord brought him here.

THE CALL OF ABRAM

GENESIS 12:1-8

As we come to the 12th chapter of Genesis, there is a sudden and dramatic change in the character of the book. We have already noted the literary style of Moses. He always deals first with the overview, stating it in brief and concise terms. Then he returns to that part of the narrative which is central to his main theme to cover it at length.

He does the same here. The first 11 chapters have gone through primeval history of man at breakneck speed. Now the pace shall slow down as we take a more careful look at the history of the Patriarchs and the Covenant.

Genesis 1 - 11	Genesis 12 - 50
Events are Central... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation• Fall• Flood• Tower of Babel	People are Central... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abraham• Isaac• Jacob• Joseph
Takes place over a period of more than 2000 years.	Takes place over a period of about 250 years.
Human Race as a whole	Family of Abraham

Thus, the main emphasis of Genesis is on people. This ought to be our emphasis in ministry, as well.

As we study the narrative accounts of the first three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), a certain similar pattern in these accounts will emerge.

1. Each is given a series of promises by God which includes the following:
 - A Seed.
 - A Land.
 - A Blessing.
 - Blessing to the Nations.
2. Each live as aliens in the land of Canaan, wandering among the

inhabitants of the land.

3. Each had wives who experienced barrenness before giving birth to the promised sons.
 - Sarah (11:20; 15:2-3; 16:1).
 - Rebekah (25:21).
 - Rachel & Leah (29:31; 30:9; 30:17; 30:22).
4. Each had to deal with rivalry among his sons.

Abram, or as he is later called, Abraham, is seen in history as the father of both the Jews and the Arab nations. Judaism, Christianity and Islam hold him up as a spiritual leader. This means that a study of the life of Abraham will be important to our understanding, not only of the major religions of the world, but also to western culture.

CALL AND COMMISSION

*Now the Lord said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
So you shall be a blessing;
3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
(Genesis 12:1-3).*

The early chapters of Genesis tell of the creation of mankind and his placement into a garden. But then came the fall and man was cast out of the garden. There had been a promise of eventual redemption and now that promise begins to see fulfillment. Where man had been driven away, now one particular man would be brought back into a special land. A land flowing with milk and honey. A land that shall be likened to a garden.

Where man had once been told to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the

earth, now we read of a promise given to one man that he would be a great nation and that he would be a blessing. Where the earth had once been cursed on man's behalf, now we read that through this one man all of the families of the earth will be blessed.

1. A Call to Leave.

*Now the Lord said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).*

Abram had already been described in the previous chapter as having left Ur of the Chaldees to come to Haran. But more is required. He is called to leave his country and his relatives. They will remain in Haran. He must travel to another land.

2. The Promise of a Land: *To the land which I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).*

The Lord promised that He would give Abram and his descendants all of the land of Canaan for an eternal inheritance. This promise was fulfilled when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan.

The promise of a land was a key theme in the book of Genesis. This is understandable when we consider who were the original recipients of this book. They were the children of Israel who were in the wilderness and they would soon be entering into the land of Canaan. They needed to know from the outset that God had promised them this land.

- The land of Canaan is presented in the Scriptures as being situated at the center of the earth. *Thus says the Lord God, “This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her.”* (Ezekiel 5:5). Likewise, Ezekiel 38:12 describes the Jews as being those *who live at the center of the world*. It is a matter of fact that Israel sits astride a land-bridge that connects three continents together.
- This land was described as a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8; 3:17; 13:5; 33:3; Leviticus 20:24;

Numbers 13:27). As such, it was a paradise for Abram and his descendants.

- This land belongs to the Lord. In Leviticus 25:23, He makes the statement: *“The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.”* The people of the land were merely its tenants. The reason God can say such a thing is because the whole earth belongs to God (Exodus 9:29; 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 10:26).
- Psalm 37 has as its repeated refrain a mention of those who will inherit or dwell in the land (9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34). The point of this Psalm is that the promise of the land is not merely to those who might be of the physical descent of Abraham, that is, it is not given to those who do evil, but to those who keep the covenant of God and who follow in the footsteps of Abraham.

While the promise of the land had an initial fulfillment in the taking of the land under Joshua and the subsequent kingdom of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital city, the final culmination of this promise of a land points to a heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly one.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Abraham and Sarah and the other Patriarchs never saw the fulfillment of the promise which God had given. They only welcomed that promise from a distance. But it was no earthly country that they were seeking. It is not merely a different country that they were seeking - it was a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

The promise of a land overflows, not merely to those who happen to live in the physical land of Canaan, but to all who believe as Abraham believed and who become his spiritual descendants (Galatians 3:7). This is seen in Ephesians 6:2-3 where Paul, though speaking to a primarily Gentile congregation, echoes the command of the Law for children to honor father and mother and then goes on to cite the Old Testament promise of that command, *that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth*, literally, “in the land.”

3. A Promise of Greatness.

*And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
So you shall be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2).*

This promise of greatness has at its core the promise that Abram will be a great nation. This sets up the problem that will run throughout the narrative history of this man. The problem is that he has no son. This has already been established in the previous chapter. In Genesis 11:30 we read that Sarai was barren and that she had no child.

This promise is given in the setting of a difficult situation. God says Abram is going to bring forth a great nation, yet he does not even have a single child, let alone an entire nation of children.

God promised that He would make a great nation from the descendants of Abram. This was fulfilled in part when Moses led an entire nation out of Egypt. The nations of Israel, Edom, and Arabia all descend from the loins of Abraham. But that is not all. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise is the Church - the spiritual seed of Abraham made up of every nation, tribe and people. This is seen in verse 3.

4. A Promise of Blessing.

*And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3).*

Paul alluded to this promise as being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ when he tells us that *the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed in you.”* ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Galatians 3:8-9).

The significance of this promise is that the Abrahamic Covenant forms the basis of the New Covenant that we enter into when we trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We are promised a new country; not of this world, but a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells. We have been given a commission to spread the seed of the gospel, a seed that, brings blessings to all who experience its harvest.

This section began with the Lord speaking to Abram. This is a call for Abram to receive a gift. Abram was to become a manager of that gift.

- It was a sovereign call. God did not call Abram on the basis of some merit on the part of Abram. It was not a matter of Abram initiating the call. It was God who began this process.
- It was a gracious call. Abram was to receive abundant blessing that he did not deserve and which he had not earned. These blessings would overflow Abram to touch the lives of others.
- It was a demanding call. In order to accept this call, Abram would have to leave his home and his family and travel to a place he had never been.

INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN

So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. (Genesis 12:4-5).

Abram responded to the call of God by leaving his home and extended family

and departing for the land to which he had been directed. From Haran, a traveler desiring to go down into Canaan can take two different roads.

- The King's Highway.

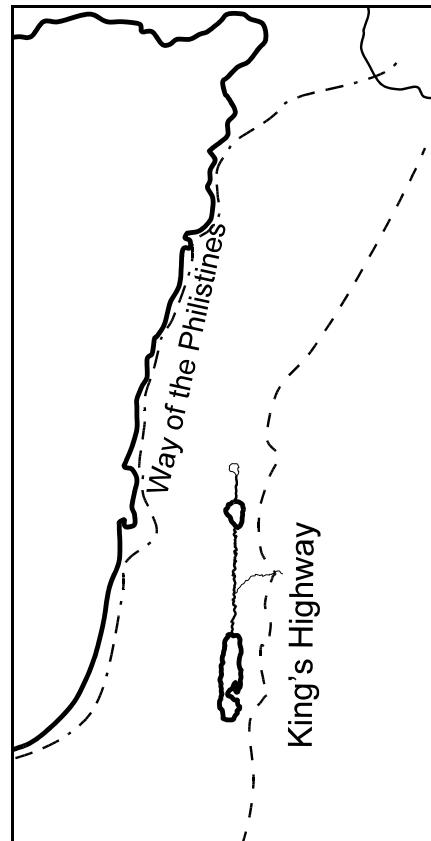
This road ran down through Damascus. From there, its course ran along the west bank of the Jordan River Valley, past the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and down into the Sinai Desert, which it reached Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba.

- The Way of the Philistines.

This route ran along the Mediterranean Sea, past the Phoenician cities of Sidon and Byblos, along the Plains of Sharon and the cities of the Philistines, and then into Egypt.

If Haran is the hub of the wheel, then Canaan is one of the major spokes of that wheel. The land of Canaan acts as a narrow land-bridge between Mesopotamia and the continent of Africa. This is a relatively small area of land, no larger in area than Lake Erie or the state of Maryland. The name "Palestine" takes its name from the ancient name Peleset, meaning "land of the Philistines." That would be a later designation. For now, it was known as the land of Canaan.

1. The Topography of Canaan.



Canaan is one of the most diverse lands in the world. Within its small area, one can find snow-capped mountains, fertile plains, steaming deserts and lush forests. It is home both to sparkling waterways full of fish as well as the most desolate body of water in the world.

a. The Coastal Plain.

The coastline of Canaan is devoid of any natural harbors from Tyre all the way down to Egypt. The plain itself is generally low, fertile and open. It is broken only once where the Mount Carmel Promontory juts out into the Mediterranean.

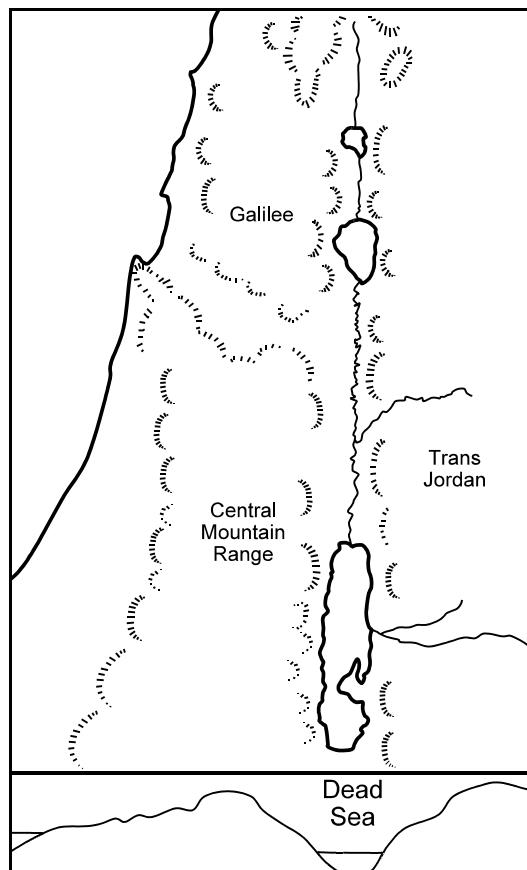
b. The Central Mountain Range.

A long ridge of mountains runs parallel to the Coastal Plain from the Mountains of Lebanon all the way down to the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The lowest point of this ridge is 15 feet and many of its segments rise to twice that height.

This Central Spine is a natural impediment to east-west travel. At some places it consists of up to five parallel ridges, each separated by deep valleys. This Mountain Range is broken only once by the long Valley of Jezreel, also known by the more popular name of Armageddon.

c. The Jordan River Valley.

This valley is a part of the Afro-Arabian Rift Valley, one of the longest and the deepest fissures in the world, following a geological fault line from the Amanus Mountains of southeastern Turkey through Syria, Lebanon and Israel, down the Gulf of Aqaba and then running the



entire length of the Red Sea to Ethiopia and then continuing southward to become a part of the Great African Rift Valley.

The Jordan River finds its major source in the melting snows of Mount Hermon which towers 9,200 feet above sea level. Hundreds of small streams cascade down to flow into Lake Hula. In Abram's day, Lake Hula was a shallow marsh. Since the formation of the nation of Israel in 1948, the lake has been drained for farmland. This has created an ecological imbalance in the Sea of Galilee. The swamp used to act as a natural filter, straining out any impurities from the waters which flowed southward into the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee rests in the crater of an extinct volcano which, in ages past, spewed out its lava over the Golan Heights to the east. The Sea is 600 feet below sea level and is surrounded on all sides by steep hills.

From the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River runs south down the sunken rift. This narrow valley used to be a fertile forest full of wildlife, including lions and boar. The word "Jordan" derives from a verb meaning "to descend." It flows downhill in its long, meandering course until it reached the Dead Sea.

The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest point on the surface of the earth, lying 1300 feet below sea level. The salt level of this sea is six times that of the ocean and, as a result, no fish can live in its waters.

d. The Transjordan Plateau.

Rising up sharply from the Jordan Valley is a high, fertile tableland between 30 to 80 miles in width and stretching from Damascus to the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern regions of this tableland are well-watered and fertile.

The Arabian Desert was not nearly so impassable in antiquity as it is today. Several trade routes dissected its breadth.

To the east of this plateau, the land gives way to the impassable Desert of Arabia.

2. The Climate of Canaan.

In Egypt, the chief deities were the sun and the Nile River. The most important deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the storm god of wind and rain.

It never needed to rain in Egypt or Mesopotamia, since their river systems were fed by mountains hundreds of miles away. Canaan, on the other hand, had no great rivers and depended heavily upon the regular rainfall to feed the small mountain streams which irrigated the land. The chief deity of the Canaanites was Baal, the god of rain and thunder.

The “Early Rains” begin in October and the rainy season continues through until the “Latter Rains” of April and May. The heaviest rainfall comes during the winter months. There is not a drop of rain from June to September.

The topography of the country is broken enough to provide some striking local variations in temperature. In summer along the Coastal Plains, the winds tend to hold down temperatures from reaching oppressive levels. Further inland, where the wind has lost its affect, the temperatures can rise to stifling degrees.

In the winter months along the Coastal Plain the climate is mild and frost is virtually unknown, due to the incoming wind of the Mediterranean Sea. As one travels up into the mountains, temperatures decrease markedly with height. The winter months in the mountain region produce a long-lying snow cover.

This was the land to which Abram was called. It was the land of promise. Abram’s response to this call was threefold.

1. Abram Responded with Unquestioning Obedience: *So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him (Genesis 12:4).*

We do not read of any debate. There is no argument. We are not told that Abram asked any questions or that he set down any conditions. God said, “Go!” and Abram went as he had been told.

2. Abram Responded with Justifying Faith. How do I know this? After all, Abram’s faith will not be mentioned until chapter 15. I know that

Abram responded with faith because I can read of his actions.

There is a lesson here. It is that your inward faith will always result in outward actions. Faith without works is not really faith at all. Abram's obedience serves as a sign of his faith.

3. Abram Responded with Evangelistic Worship. There are two references in this passage that suggest these elements. The element of evangelism is seen in verse 6 where we read that *the Canaanite was in the land*. The element of worship is seen two verses later when Abram built an altar and *called upon the name of the Lord* (12:8).

We are called to do the same thing. We are to call upon the name of the Lord in the midst of a pagan society so that they might hear us and see us and be drawn to the One whom we worship.

ABRAM IN CANAAN

As Abraham first entered the land of Canaan, he traveled down the Central Mountain Ridge to the site of the ancient town of Shechem.

And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land." (Genesis 12:6).

The town of Shechem would later be built in the pass that runs between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It would be on this site that Jesus would later hold an afternoon discussion with a woman by the well.

When the Scriptures say that *the Canaanite was then in the land*, it is a reminder that the land of Canaan was not some uninhabited wilderness. It was a land of cities and towns, of merchants and farmers and shepherds.

In Genesis 9 a curse was placed upon the descendants of Canaan. Now we see a promise that Abraham and his descendants would inherit their land.

Abraham came into this land as a nomadic shepherd-merchant. He did not take up residence in any of the Canaanite cities, but remained a pilgrim and a nomad. This led to some seasonal migrations, especially in times of famine.

ABRAM'S WORSHIP

And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. (Genesis 12:7-8).

We have already seen the idea of sacrifices and altars in the book of Genesis. Moses built an altar to the Lord after coming out of the ark (Genesis 8:20) and both Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. It could be argued that the coats of skin given to Adam and Eve constituted the first sacrificial offering.

This instance of worship was instituted by the Lord. He appeared to Abram and reiterated the promise that had been previously given. Instead of being "*the land which I will show you*" (12:1), the Lord says, "*To your descendants I will give THIS land.*"

In response to the assurance of the Lord that this is the land that will be given to him, Abram builds an altar to the Lord. This will be the beginning of a series of altars built by Abram. Each place in the land to which he comes, he will be seen building an altar to the Lord. In verse 8, he moves to a location between Bethel and Ai and again builds an altar. This time we read that he calls upon the name of the Lord.

This promise must be seen in contrast to the exile from Eden. In the early chapters of Genesis, Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden. Now Abram is brought to a new land and is told that this land will be given to him.

Adam and Eve	Abram
Exiled from the garden of Eden	Brought into the land of Canaan
Exile was the result of his sin	Coming into the land was the result of his faith and obedience
The loss of their land	Promise of a new land

We normally think of the first promises of the land being given to Abraham. But the idea of a land that was given is found first here in Genesis 2 where the first man was given the first land. It was a paradise. This means that the promise of a land that was given to Abraham is a promise of a redeemed land. It is a promise of a return to a new paradise.

ABRAM IN EGYPT

GENESIS 12:9-20

When we were first introduced to Abram in Genesis 11:27-29, we also saw the mention of two other characters who will play significant roles in the Abraham narrative. They are Sarai and Lot. They were introduced for a specific reason. First we see a problem involving Sarai, then in the next chapter we will see a problem involving Lot.

The way some preachers present the gospel, you would think that once you respond to the call of God in faith and repentance, all your problems are solved and you can be happy all the time without a care in the world. The truth is that the Christian life is a life that faces regular problems.

This is seen here in the life of Abram. He had been responsive to the call of God in his life and he acted on faith, setting out for a land that God would show him. He arrived in the promised land and he built an altar to worship the Lord and he called upon the Lord. You would think that the next verse would tell us that Abram lived happily ever after. But it doesn't say anything of the sort. Instead we read of the onset of a famine in the land.

Why? Why does the Lord allow troubles to come our way? Wouldn't it be a lot nicer if we never had to face any difficulties in life? The problem with such a question is that it ignores the positive benefit of our problems. James 1:2-3 calls you to count it all joy when you encounter various trials. Why? Because the testing of your faith produces endurance. Just as the only way for a muscle to grow is by exercising it, in the same way, the only way for your faith to grow is that it be tested. Warren Wiersbe put it this way, "A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted."

That is not to say that we should be out looking for trouble. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that they might be delivered from the evil one. But when trouble does come, we are to utilize it as an opportunity for growth.

FACING A FAMINE

And Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev. 10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in

the land. (Genesis 12:9-10).

The world of Abram's day was rooted in an agricultural economy. A famine meant mass starvation. The crops would die and the watering places for the animals would dry up and disappear. This particular famine was catastrophic, for it was severe in the land.²²

Because of the famine, Abram goes down to Egypt to escape starvation. This was a natural choice since the Nile River was not so affected by the vagrancies of climate as are the smaller rivers of Canaan. We are not told that Abram did the wrong thing in entering Egypt. Some have assumed that, because God brought him into the land, he should have remained here and trusted the Lord. Perhaps there is some truth to such an idea. But the book of Genesis provides an interesting parallel to the case of Abram. It is found in the entrance of Jacob and his family into Egypt.

The word Negev (נֶגֶב) refers to the desert area to the south of Canaan and came to be the general Hebrew word for "south."

When we come to Genesis 46, we shall see Jacob and his entire family migrating to Egypt. The reason for this migration will be the same as that of Abram's migration. It will be due to a famine in the land. At that time, the Lord appears to Jacob to tell him that he should not be afraid to go down to Egypt (Genesis 46:3). Abram is given no such word from the Lord. Insofar as we are able to determine from the narrative, he is not given permission to go to Egypt and he is not forbidden to go into Egypt.

On the other hand, we will not see Abram building any altars in Egypt and he will not be calling on the name of the Lord while he is in Egypt. Instead of seeing Abram's faith, we are presented with Abram's fear.

ABRAM'S FEAR

And it came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; 12 and it will come about when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and

²² The Hebrew text says that "the famine was heavy in the land" (בְּאֶרְץ). כִּי-כִּבְדַּר דָּרְעָב.

they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you." (Genesis 12:11-13).

The pyramids and the Sphinx had long since been completed by the time Abram came to Egypt. This was the First Intermediate Period of Egypt's history. It was a time of disunity as Egypt had broken up into several small feudal kingdoms, each attempting to gain power over its neighbor. During this period, it was not uncommon for foreigners to be permitted entrance into the country.

As Abram approaches Egypt, he becomes afraid. His fear is that the Egyptians will desire his wife for her great beauty and that they will murder him in order to obtain her for themselves. At least one reason for this fear is understood when we examine an Egyptian narrative found in the Papyrus d'Orbigny known as the *Tale of the Two Brothers*. Dating to the 19th Dynasty of Egypt and therefore considerably later than the days of Abraham, it tells the fictional account of a pharaoh murdering the husband of a beautiful woman so that he could marry her.²³

Sarai would have been 65 years old at this time (Genesis 12:4).

Franklin Roosevelt once said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." That sounds nice, but it really is not true. There are a lot of things in this world that are the legitimate objects of fear. But you do not have to fear when you can trust in One who is in control of all the circumstances of life.

Abram has a choice to make. He can either depend upon the Lord and trust in Him for deliverance or else he can depend upon a plan of his own contrivance. He chooses the latter. His plan will involve at least a partial deception. He will pretend that he and Sarah are brother and sister. We will later learn that there is some truth to this matter and that Sarah is a half-sister to Abram (Genesis 20:12).

There is another term for such a half-truth. It is called a lie. When we tell a half-truth, we are hoping the people will believe the wrong half. The plan

²³ Wolfgang Wetengel. *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern Der Papyrus d'Orbigny und die Konigsideologie der Ramessiden Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*. Academic Press Fribourg, 2003.

is that Abram and Sarai will live out this lie by concealing the truth nature of their relationship. At the root of this lie is a mistrust of the Lord. Abram is trusting in his own plans instead of trusting in the Lord.

*There are six things which the LORD hates,
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:
17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood,
18 A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that run rapidly to evil,
19 A false witness who utters lies,
And one who spreads strife among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19).*

Notice that when the Bible lists the seven sins that are an abomination to the Lord, lying is mentioned twice. God is a truth-teller and He calls His people to be truth-tellers, too.

PHARAOH'S FONDNESS

And it came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 And Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels. (Genesis 12:14-16).

Abram's earlier fears were not without cause. The beauty of Sarai was not merely in the eyes of a loving husband. Even though she was 65 years old, her beauty came to the attention of the officials of Egypt who reported it to the Pharaoh. Accordingly, she was taken to be a part of the Pharaoh's harem and Abram was accorded with a substantial dowry of cattle and human servants.

Note that from a human standpoint, the lie worked. It accomplished that for which it was designed. Abram had been concerned for his life and that "it would go well" with him. The lie resulted in Abram being given all sorts of material possessions.

Lies often work for a time. If that were not the case, people would not lie in the first place. But when you lie, you can be assured that the truth will

eventually come out. There is coming a day when everything shall be known and when nothing will remain hidden.

Furthermore, lies have a way of bearing unwanted children. The initial lie that was meant for Abram's protection did nothing to protect the sanctity of the marriage between Abram and Sarai. The resulting actions would take the form of a tragedy were it not for the actions of the Lord.

EXODUS FROM EGYPT

But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go." 20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him. (Genesis 12:17-20).

Now the Lord enters the story. Up to this point, we have read of Abram and Sarai and the Pharaoh and their parts have all intersected, but none have been presented as the hero of the narrative. That part is given to the Lord. He is the hero who redeems the situation that has been hopelessly muddled. He does this by striking Pharaoh and his house with great plagues.

As we read this, we must remember who were the original recipients of this book. It is written to the Israelites in the wilderness. They are the same Israelites who witnessed the great plagues against Egypt that brought about their deliverance. They were released from Egypt because of the great plagues that the Lord brought against that land. Now they are to learn and understand that God has done the same thing in the past to bring Sarai out of the house of the Pharaoh. There is a sense in which Abram and Sarai experienced their own exodus from Egypt. Allen Ross points out the parallels between Abram's experiences and those of Israel in Egypt (1996:273).

Abram	Israel
Abram travels to Egypt because of a famine in the land (Genesis 12:10).	Israel travels to Egypt because of a famine in the land (Genesis 43:1; 47:4).
Abram is afraid that he will be killed by the Egyptians (Genesis 12:11-13).	Israel faces being killed by the Pharaoh who orders all male babies to be thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:16).
Sarai taken into the house of the Egyptian pharaoh (Genesis 12:14-15).	Israel taken into bondage in Egypt (Exodus 1:11-14).
Pharaoh stricken with great plagues (Genesis 12:17).	Egypt stricken with great plagues (Exodus 7-11).
Pharaoh: “Now then, here is your wife, take her and go” (Genesis 12:19).	Pharaoh: “Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go” (Exodus 12:32).

Abram and Sarai serve as the forerunners for the nation of Israel. What happened to them has also been experienced by Israel. In the same way they were delivered from the hand of the pharaoh of Egypt, so also Israel has been delivered from the hand of the pharaoh.

What is the point of the parallel? It is to show that God is faithful in rescuing His people, even when His people are themselves unfaithful. Abram's unfaithfulness is seen as the pharaoh calls him in to question him.

The Israelites were to see themselves in this parallel and I think it is also appropriate for us to look and see ourselves in this parallel. Abraham is regularly used in the Scriptures as a paradigm for our faith. As is often the case, what is true for Abraham is also true of you.

Have you been facing a famine in your life? Have you found yourself becoming enslaved to your particular situation? Have you found that, no matter what you do, it only gets you in deeper and deeper? There is a message here for you. There is One who died in your place to purchase you out of you enslaving relationships and to make you His own beautiful and beloved bride.

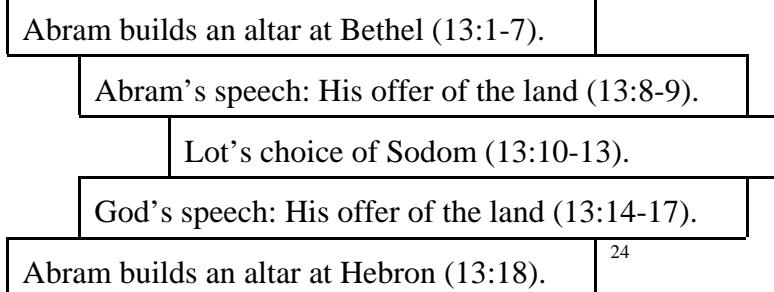
He is the counterpart to Abram. He does not lie or ask us to lie; He is the One in whose lips there was no deceit. Abraham was fearful of his own life when he went down to Egypt, but Jesus willingly and deliberately gave up His life on the cross and went down to the grave on our behalf that He might defeat death.

ABRAM AND LOT

GENESIS 13:1-18

We have already noted that there were two additional characters introduced along with Abram at the beginning of the narrative dealing with that patriarch. The first was Sarai. The second is Lot. In the last chapter, we saw how the problem revolved around Sarai as Abram entered Egypt and was fearful of her being coveted by the pharaoh. Even though Abram acted in unbelief, the Lord was faithful to intervene and to deliver both Abram and Sarai out of that situation.

Now as they return to the land of Canaan, they are beset with a new problem. This new problem will revolve around Lot, the nephew of Abram. He will play a central part in the events of this chapter.



²⁴

Placed as bookends in this chapter are Abram's actions in building an altar to the Lord. This will be a chapter that sees Abram demonstrate a heart of worship and a heart of humility.

RETURN TO CANAAN

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him; and Lot with him.

2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. 3 And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the

²⁴ Adapted from Bruce Waltke & Cathi Fredricks, *Genesis*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2001, Page 218.

beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. (Genesis 13:1-4).

God had already begun to bless Abram with prosperity as had been promised in the initial call to Abram. Did Abram deserve this? No, Abram's actions had been less than desirable. He had departed from the land of promise, he had gone down to Egypt and he had lied about his relationship with his own wife. That Abram had been blessed was a matter of grace.

Grace involves the receiving of that which you do not deserve and which you have not earned. By its very nature, grace is something that you do not merit, otherwise it is no longer grace.

The return from Egypt saw Abram very rich in livestock and in silver and in gold. Abram had prospered materially from his sojourn in Egypt. But he had lost some things in Egypt.

1. He had lost his communion with the Lord.

Abram did not build any altars in Egypt. We are not told that he proclaimed the name of the Lord to Pharaoh. We do not see him in prayer or believing the promises of God.

2. He had lost his testimony before men.

It is often true that the worst testimony to Christianity is Christians. While Abram had been in Egypt, the chosen one of God had been rebuked by an idol-worshiping pagan.

3. He had lost his influence on others.

Lot had gone with his uncle Abram down into Egypt. Lot had seen the lie and its results. He had seen the lack of faith in his uncle. I cannot help but think that he had lost a measure of respect for the one who had been the spiritual leader of the family. This lack of respect will be reflected later in Lot's decision.

Abram's return to Canaan is described in terms of a restoration. He has been in Egypt where he lied and was delivered by the hand of the Lord, but now he returns to Canaan and comes again to the same locale where he had originally sacrificed to the Lord. The same place. The same altar. Abram

does the same thing he did the first time. He calls upon the name of the Lord.

What we see here is the picture of a man restored in his faith. The lies of Egypt have been left behind. He has returned to worship the Lord. As Abram returns to the Promised Land and again builds an altar and calls upon the name of the Lord, we are able to see the way in which we also make our return when we have allowed sinful actions to enter our lives.

- Confess it. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).* Acknowledge that you have sinned and that your sin is hated by God.
- Get away from it. Just as Abram did not build another altar and begin proclaiming the name of the Lord until he had departed from Egypt, so also you cannot effectively serve the Lord unless you separate yourself from your sin. This means putting the sin and, if possible, the reason for the sin away from you. Jesus alluded to such a process in Matthew 5:29-30 when he said that if your right eye is going to cause you to stumble, it is better to go through life without a right eye.
- Move on from there. Paul spoke in Philippians 3:13-14 of *forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead* as you press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. By contrast, Satan wants to burden you with guilt so that you will remain at the point of your failure and never be able to move on from there.

Abram seems to be a changed man. The Abram who comes out of Egypt at the beginning of Genesis 13 is not the same Abram who went down into Egypt in Genesis 12. This Abram had learned the tragic consequences of a life of selfishness. He had been rebuked by a pagan king. He had nearly lost his family. He had been humbled. Now he is ready to be confronted with a new situation.

TROUBLE WITH LOT

Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that

they were not able to remain together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. (Genesis 13:5-7).

Lot was the nephew to Abram. His own father had died back in Mesopotamia (Genesis 11:27-28). Abram had taken his nephew into his own family and Lot had traveled with Abram down into Canaan. Lot had gone to Egypt and had seen the disastrous results of Abram's deception and now Lot is again with his uncle in Canaan. It is not long before trouble arises.

We are specifically told that the ensuing strife was *between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock*. This does not necessitate that Abram and Lot entered into this same strife. On the other hand, the fact that Abram sees it necessary for he and Lot to separate suggests that there was a rift between the two of them and that it went deeper than merely overzealous herdsmen.

The trouble faced in this chapter stands in direct contrast with this situation that had been faced in the previous chapter. In chapter 12, the trouble facing Abram had been a famine in the land. A famine involved a lack of rainfall resulting in a lack of provisions. Now the trouble is of a different nature. It involves too much prosperity. The land will not support the herds of both Abram and Lot.

Genesis 12:10-20	Genesis 13
They faced a famine in the land - - a problem involving a lack of prosperity	They faced an overabundance of flocks -- a problem involving an overabundance of prosperity.
The solution had been to travel down to Egypt.	The solution is that they separate - - Lot travels down to the land that is reminiscent of Egypt.

Verse 7 goes out of the way to make mention of the Canaanite and the Perizzite who were living in the land at this time. Why are they mentioned? Because it was in their midst that Abram has been proclaiming the name of the Lord. Perhaps Abram had shared with them the promise of God for a Deliverer who would come through the seed of the woman.

Now these Canaanites and Perizzites see the servants of two believers in the

Lord as they begin to quarrel and fight among themselves. What will they think? How will the name of the Lord be glorified by these events?

ABRAM'S GRACIOUS SOLUTION

Then Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left." (Genesis 13:8-9).

Abram has a decision to make. He is faced with the problem of continuing conflict between his servants and the servants of Lot and he must decide how to deal with it. The obvious solution will be for them to separate. There is a lesson here. It is that there are times when it is necessary for two believers to admit that they need some distance between the two of them.

This brings us to another question. How does one go about making difficult decisions? There are several factors that we can observe in Abram's case.

1. The Factor of Circumstances.

We have already noted the problem of strife between the servants of Abram and the servants of Lot. Their circumstances were such that called for these two men to go their separate ways. There is a principle here. It is that God regularly uses circumstances to work out His plan and to guide His people. This will be seen again when we come to the life of Joseph. The brothers of Joseph will do some bad things, but Joseph will be able to look back and to see how, in spite of their evil intentions, God had planned it all for good (Genesis 50:20).

This is how God often works in the lives of young people. It is a part of God's plan that the young person's mother and father are in authority over him, even though the parents might be unbelievers (Colossians 3:20). The objection might arise that an unsaved parent is not spiritually equipped to offer guidance, but this objection does not bring the sovereignty of God into the picture. We are not dealing with a closed system in which God cannot or does not intervene. We worship the God of the universe who is able to rule and govern His

creation. He calls us to live accordingly and to trust Him for the results (Proverbs 3:5-6).

2. The Factor of Biblical Principles.

The second factor that we ought to use is that of Biblical principles. We ought to let the principles of the Bible guide our decision making process. Abram was able to do this, too. He had already been told by God that he would be a blessing to the world. In light of this promise, he had come into the land where he could proclaim the name of the Lord before the watching world. That proclamation was now being drowned out by the strife between his shepherds and the shepherds of Lot. A separation between himself and Lot will allow Abram to continue to be a blessing to the part of the world in which he lives.

This brings up another question. Having decided that a separation is necessary, where is Abram to go for this separation to take place? We often come to understand what it is we are to do in the Christian life, but then comes the question of where we are to do it. This brings us to a third factor.

3. The Factor of Self Sacrifice. The way in which Abram approaches Lot indicates to us that he has yielded all of his personal rights to the Lord. Abram owned the land. It was his by divine promise. The Lord had given it to him. Abram had every right to tell Lot where he could go. Instead, Abram yields all of his rights to God. In this way, he allows God free reign to show His personal will and guidance. This is a measure of his faith. That brings us to the fourth factor.
4. The Factor of Faith. Abram had developed a confidence that God would guide him. His confidence is seen in that he leaves the choice to the Lord. He permits God to show him the divine place through the decision of Lot.

Each of these factors can be seen in the decision of Jesus to go to the cross. The circumstances of His life directed that He would go to the cross. Galatians 4:4 tells us that His birth took place *at the fulness of time*. The circumstances of His death were ordered by the Lord and Herod and Pilate did those things that God's hand had purposed and predestined to occur (Acts 4:28).

The decision of Jesus to go to the cross was also directed by the Scriptures. Those same Scriptures foretold the death He would die. Peter tells us in Acts 3:18 how God *announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer.*

The decision of Jesus to go to the cross was rooted in self sacrifice. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, dying the death we deserved so that we could enter into the life He deserved. In going to the cross, Jesus yielded up all of His personal rights, submitting Himself to the will of the Father.

The decision of Jesus to go to the cross was a decision of faith. Hebrews 5:8 says that He *learned obedience from the things which He suffered.* This was an obedience of faith in that He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

LOT'S DECISION

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD. (Genesis 13:10-13).

As Lot looked to the east of the central mountain ridge of Canaan, he would have seen the Jordan River Valley. It was *well watered everywhere.* The one place in Israel where there is a constant flow of water is the Jordan River. Fed by the melting snows of Mount Herman, this river overflows its banks in the spring and it narrows to a small, muddy stream in the fall, but it does not dry up completely.

Why does the author mention Egypt? It is because, to the minds of his readers, Egypt was the most fruitful place they had ever seen. Indeed, every time the Israelites in the wilderness encountered difficulties, they would immediately wish they were back in Egypt. By comparing Lot's choice to Egypt, the writer is identifying this slave mentality with Lot's desire for Sodom and Gomorrah.

If the decision of Abram portrays how a spiritual believer makes a decision, the example of Lot presents how a worldly person makes a decision. This passage lists for us the factors that went into Lot's decision.

1. The Factor of Apparent Delights: *Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (13:10).*

The first factor that went into Lot's decision involved what he saw with his eyes. This was a materialistic mindset and it shows us that Lot was not concerned with spiritual results as much as he was with physical criteria.

2. The Factor of Financial and Social Gain.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were reminiscent of the land of Egypt from which Abram and Lot had recently come. It is likely that Lot had been enamored with Egypt. It was a rich land and culturally advanced beyond anything Lot had previously seen. Lot made his decision based on what would be financially and socially best for himself, without regard to what God's will was for his life.

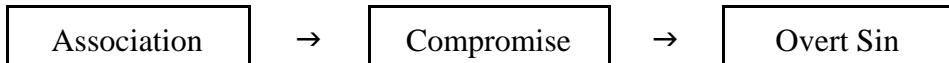
3. The Factor of Independent Desire.

We never read of Lot building an altar or calling upon the name of the Lord. There is no prayer or seeking the Lord for guidance. It does not appear that the Lord was either consulted or considered.

Lot's choice is seen in strong contrast to that which had been made by Abram.

Abram	Lot
God led him by means of his circumstances.	He took advantage of his circumstances.
His choice led to the furtherance of the divine commission.	His choice led to the furtherance of his own wealth and social status.
He yielded up all his personal rights.	He took the rights that were properly that of his uncle.
He left the choice up to the Lord.	He made his own decision.

Out of all the cities of the plain, Lot chose to camp near Sodom. This city would become a symbol for wickedness. Lot's move to this location would begin a downward spiral in which he would eventually fall into great sin. There is a principle here. It is that association often leads to compromise resulting in sin.



When you go outside on a rainy day wearing white gloves and pick up a ball of mud, spreading it over your hands, the mud hardly ever becomes "glovey." Rather the pollution of the mud makes the gloves muddy. Lot's association with the city of Sodom would soon result in an eroding of his spiritual values. In the same way, when you allow yourself to enter into close fellowship with unbelievers, it is often the case that you are pulled down.

The location of Sodom and Gomorrah has been the source of considerable discussion. All attempts to conclusively identify the ruins of these cities have thus far met with failure. Several theories have been put forth as to their original location.

The traditional location for these cities has been the southern section of the Dead Sea. This southern portion of the Dead Sea has been submerged beneath 15-30 feet of water throughout most of recorded history, but recent diversion of the waters of the Jordan have resulted in a lowering of the level of the Dead Sea so that this entire area today is dry. Ruins of several ancient cities have been uncovered along the east side of this area, but none have been positively identified as corresponding to the names of the cities given in Genesis.

THE LORD'S PROMISE TO ABRAM

And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 17 Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you."

18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD. (Genesis 13:14-18).

It must be recognized that, to the ancient reader of the text, Lot would have appeared at the beginning of this narrative to be the solution to the running problem of the Abrahamic Narrative. Abram had been given a promise by God that from him would come a great nation. How was this to take place in light of the fact that Sarah was barren and could not bear any children? Perhaps the required offspring would come through Lot. He was, after all, the nephew to Abram. Perhaps he would become the adopted son of Abram and thus fulfill the divine promise.

As we come to the end of the chapter, Lot has removed himself from the presence of Abram and has gone off to live in the area of Sodom. By doing so, he has effectively removed himself from Abram and the promises of a great nation.

It is in such a context that the Lord comes to Abram and confirms the earlier promise. Not only is that promise confirmed, we also read additional elements. Not only will Abram be a great nation, but his descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth. If you have seen pictures of Israel, you know there is a lot of dust there.

Abram is told to enter into a discipline of faith. He is to *walk about the land through its length and breadth.* He is to walk in the land that has been promised to him by God. This walk will be a walk of faith as he acts in accordance with the promise of his future possession. We are called to do the same thing. We are given a promise of eternal life and an eternal inheritance. In the meantime, we are called to live as though this inheritance were a present possession. We are called to live as overcomers because of the One who has overcome on our behalf.

This is a chapter of spiritual victory. The victory in this chapter is especially striking when contrasted with the defeat of the previous chapter.

Genesis 12	Genesis 13
Begins with God's promises and ends with Abram going down into Egypt.	Begins with Abram coming back out of Egypt and ends with God's promises.

Abram enters Canaan for the first time.	Abram enters Canaan for the second time.
Abram decides to go into Egypt.	Abram permits Lot to make the decision where he should go.
Abram intent on self protection.	Abram gives up his personal rights to the Lord.
A test of trust -- failed.	A test of values -- passed.

Lot chose for himself. God chose for Abram. The contrast between the two reminds us of One who made the ultimate choice on our behalf. Jesus was tempted by Satan to seek His own rights and His own comforts, but He gave those up to obtain an eternal inheritance for us.

SALVATION AND BLESSING

GENESIS 14:1-24

In the previous chapter, we pondered the decision of Abram to separate himself from his nephew Lot. Abram allowed Lot to have the first choice to which part of the land he would move and Abram consented to take the remainder. Lot chose for himself what appeared to be the most fertile and desirable portion of the land; that land that was reminiscent of the land of Egypt.

And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. (Genesis 13:10).

The reference to Egypt is significant when we remember who is the author of the book of Genesis and who are the original readers of the book. They are the Israelites in the wilderness who have come out of Egypt. Lot chose to enter a land that was reminiscent of the land from which they had been delivered.

As we shall see in this chapter, going down to Egypt will be seen as a costly mistake on the part of Lot. He will need to be rescued in the same way the Israelites who were in Egypt needed to be rescued. This is a call to leave Egypt and to leave the old manner of life that was represented by Egypt.

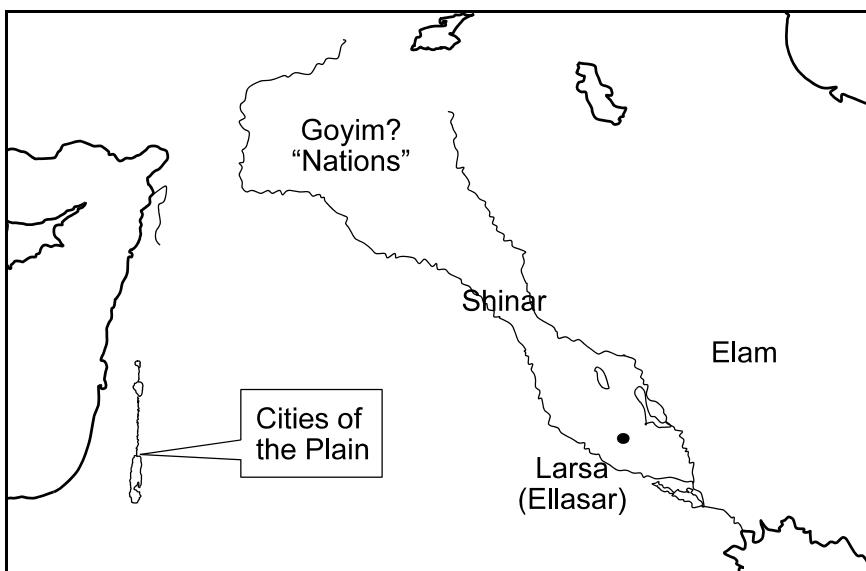
WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1 And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, 2 that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled. (Genesis

14:1-4).

This chapter opens with a reference to a certain set of political and military events that took place in the ancient world of the days of Abram. It involved alliances and treaties made with a variety of nations and city-states. This alliance was made up of four powerful kings from the lands to the east of Canaan.

- Amraphel king of Shinar: We have already seen references to Shinar in Genesis 11. It is the land in which the Tower of Babel was constructed. It is a reference to Mesopotamia.
- Arioch king of Ellasar: Ellasar is commonly thought to be another name for the Sumerian city of Larsa, located in southern Mesopotamia.
- Chedorlaomer king of Elam: The Elamites were one of the superpowers of this era. They lived to the east of Mesopotamia, but also exerted influence over all of Mesopotamia. Chedorlaomer is seen in verse 4 to be the leader of this alliance.
- Tidal king of Goyim: The term “goyim” (גּוֹיִם) is the regular word for “nations.” It seems to be a reference to a collection of city states in northwestern Mesopotamia.



War broke out when several of the tribute nations under the rule of Chedorlaomer formed an alliance of their own and determined to stop payment of the annual tribute.

- Bera king of Sodom.
- Birsha king of Gomorrah.
- Shinab king of Admah.
- Shemeber king of Zeboiim.
- The king of Bela (that is, Zoar)

These five rebellious cities were all located in the *valley of Siddim*. The word “Siddim” is from a root normally rendered “furrow” and describes the process of plowing up the ground. We are not told the significance of the name of “Siddim.” It could be that this section of the Jordanian Valley was filled with crevasses reminiscent of furrows caused, as it were, by a divine plow. In this case, it was these cities that were “plowed up” by the invading coalition.

The passage goes on to explain that this Valley of Siddim is to be identified with the Salt Sea (הַמִּלְחָם). Evidently, by the time Moses penned this narrative, this location was no longer known as the Valley of Siddim and that was a designation lost in history, so a clarification is given to note that this place is now known as the land of the Salt Sea.

CONQUEST AND DEFEAT

5 And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

8 And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar – four kings against five.

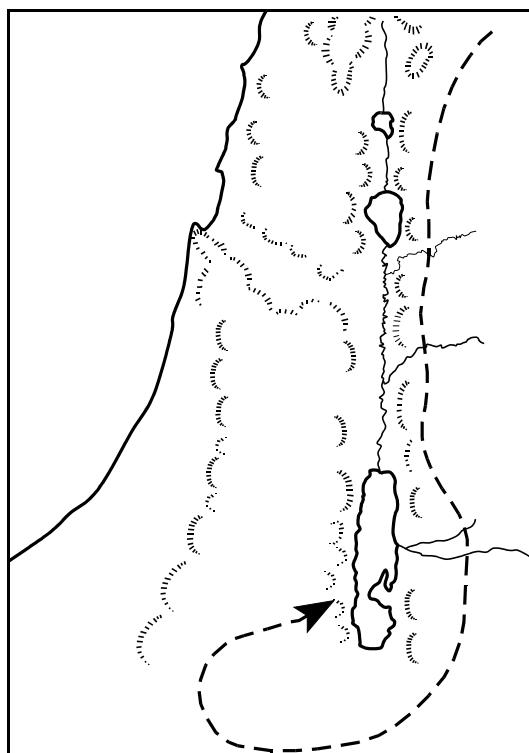
10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country. (Genesis 14:5-10).

The rebellion of the five cities of the Jordanian Plain brought about a quick retribution as Chedorlaomer, this king of Elam, gathered up a coalition of kings and armies as set forth on a campaign designed to sweep down the Jordan River Valley all the way to the land of Edom.

The route followed by Chedorlaomer was known as the King's Highway. It was one of the major trade routes from Mesopotamia to Egypt during this period. It ran from Damascus southward along the eastern side of the Jordan River, passing on the east side of the Dead Sea and continuing southward to the Red Sea. Chedorlaomer took this route and then made a swing to the west, conquering the inhabitants of Kadesh and the Amalekite and Amorite tribes living in southern Canaan. It was here that Chedorlaomer enjoyed victory over a number of peoples.

- The Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim.
- The Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim.
- The Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.
- The country of the Amalekites.
- The Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

Completing a wide circle, Chedorlaomer turned north to come against the Jordan Valley from the south where an alliance of the cities of the Jordan Valley was waiting to meet him. These two armies clashed and the kings of the Jordanian Alliance found themselves overwhelmed and forced to retreat. They were pushed back into an area that



was full of tar pits. This might be the reason this area had become known as the Valley of Siddim — the Valley of Furrows. It is as though they had escaped one foe, only to be swallowed by another.

THE CAPTURE OF LOT

Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. 12 And they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom. (Genesis 14:11-12).

With the defeat of the Jordanian Alliance, the cities of the Jordan Valley were left completely defenseless. Chedorlaomer and his forces took all five of these cities, taking captives and loot as he desired. Among the captives that were taken was Lot, Abram's nephew.

When we last saw Lot in Genesis 13, he had moved down into the Jordan Valley with his tent pitched toward Sodom (13:12). But now, we are told that he was living in Sodom. At some point along the line, he had given up the life of a nomad and a wanderer and had moved into the city.

Perhaps there is a principle illustrated here. It is the principle that proximity often leads to participation. When you allow yourself to remain in the presence of sin, it is not long before you will soon find yourself in its very midst and partaking of it. It is for this reason we are given the warning: *“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean” (2 Corinthians 6:17).*

ABRAM IN THE LAND

Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. (Genesis 14:13).

Now our scene shifts. It moves from Lot who is a prisoner of war and a captive to Abram who is dwelling peacefully among Amorite allies of the land. The oaks of Mamre were located near to the ancient city of Hebron and due west of the Dead Sea (Genesis 13:18).

Lot's actions in choosing the best land for himself and at the expense of his uncle would have been perceived as a slight in those days when respect for one's elders was considered normative. One might imagine a response that said, "Lot got exactly what he deserved for his blatant disrespect for his elder." None of that takes place. Instead, Abram takes immediate steps to rescue his nephew.

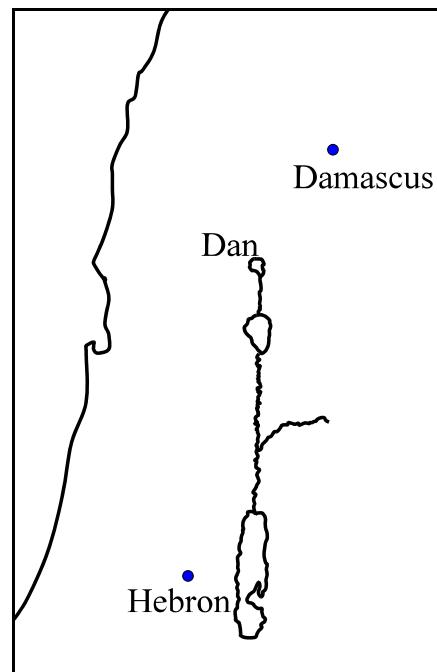
What has taken place? Forgiveness. Abram demonstrates a forgiving spirit toward his nephew. We are called to exhibit the same sort of forgiveness toward those who have wronged us. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

ABRAM'S VICTORY

14 And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. 16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people. (Genesis 14:14-16).

Abram's concern for his nephew was quickly translated into action as he led out his trained men. These were not a new acquisition. They had been born under his tent. They numbered 318 men. We are told in Genesis 14:24 that Abram was also accompanied by his Amorite neighbors. If Abram had been in their midst, building altars and proclaiming the name of the Lord, then these companions had been present to witness that testimony to the Lord.

Abram caught up with the invaders in the vicinity of Dan, near to the slopes of Mount Hermon on the northern border of Canaan. Considering that



Dan initially settled in the south and did not move to northern Palestine until the days of the Judges, this is evidently the modernized addition of a later scribe (like changing “New Amsterdam” to “New York”). Abram’s strategy was twofold.

- He divided his forces. This suggests a two-pronged attack designed to throw the enemy into confusion.
- He attacked by night. Such an attack under the cover of darkness would add to the confusion of the enemy forces.

Not only did Abram win a great victory, but he was able to pursue the defeated forces to a point north of Damascus. As a result, he was able to effect the rescue, not only of Lot, but also of the people and possessions of Sodom and the other cities of the plain.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH TWO KINGS

Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tenth of all. (Genesis 14:17-20).

As Abram returns from his victory against Chedorlaomer, he is met by two kings who come out to meet him. These two kings are seen in striking contrast to one another.

Bera, King of Sodom	Melchizedek
King of Sodom, a city of sinful pleasure.	King of Salem, a city of peace.
Came out to meet Abram.	Came out to meet Abram.

He offered riches to Abram.	He offered a blessing to Abram along with bread and wine.
Abram refused his offer.	Abram accepted his blessings and the gifts.
Abram returned all of his riches and people.	Abram gave to him tithes of all the spoils of war.

These two kings are intentionally presented in juxtaposition to one another. This is seen when verse 17 introduces the coming of the king of Sodom, but we do not see an interaction between him and Abram until verse 21.

- The king of Sodom and his fellow kings come to meet Abram.
- Abram meets with Melchizedek.
- The king of Sodom proposes that Abram keep all of the spoil he has rescued.

We are meant to look at these two kings and we are meant to contrast and compare them. Why? Because they are both representative of more than meets the eye.

The king of Sodom represents the sinful pleasures of the world. Sodom was the place that was reminiscent of Egypt. It represented the old life of the people of Israel when they were in bondage. The world seeks to make an offer: “Take the riches you have won through your own self effort.” It is an offer to make you wealthy. It is an offer to obtain your desires through your own works and on the basis of your own effort.

The contrast is with the king who comes from Salem. The word Salem is the Hebrew word for “peace.” This seems to have been the ancient name of Jerusalem, the small Canaanite city that would one day become the capital of Israel.

*God is known in Judah;
His name is great in Israel.
2 And His tabernacle is in Salem;
His dwelling place also is in Zion. (Psalm 76:1-2).*

“Salem” was evidently one of the ancient names for the city of Jerusalem. Before this city became the capital of Israel, it belonged to a people known as the Jebusites. Their city was alternately known as “Jebus” and “Salem.”

Its name today reflects a composite of these two names: Jeru-salem.

That is an interesting name for Jerusalem, for the history of this city has been a history of war and of conquest. It has been anything but a city of peace — with one notable exception. It was the city where the Prince of Peace came to present Himself. It was the city where the God of Peace located His temple.

Melchizedek was the king of Salem. At the same time, he is said to have been the priest of God Most High (אֱלֹהִים עֶלְיָהוּ — *El Elyon*). The term *El* was a general designation for a divinity among the Canaanites. This is its first use in the Bible. It means “the strong one.”

The name “Melchizedek” is a compound of two Hebrew words which have been joined together.

- *Melech* (מלך) is the Hebrew word for “king.”
- *Zedek* (צדיק) means “righteousness.”

The name means “king of righteousness.” We would not normally attach any special significance to this name, but the New Testament commentary on this passage makes a point of the meaning behind the name (Hebrews 7:2). What’s in a name? When we name children, it is often only because we like the sound of it. But names in the ancient world were full of meaning, especially among the Jews. Names were given to tell something about the character of the person. This is why you occasionally see a person whose name is changed. This was the case of Abraham — his name was changed from Abram (“father of high places”) to Abraham (“father of a multitude”). It was also true in the case of Jacob (“con-artist”) whose name was changed to Israel (“prince of God”).

Melchizedek appears in our passage as he ministers to Abram. He comes bringing bread and wine as Abram returns from the long, tiring march. The parallels with the New Testament coming of Jesus are striking.

Melchizedek	Jesus Christ
His name means “king of righteousness.”	He is the Righteous King.

We are given no genealogy or narrative of his origins.	Though he has a genealogy, His true origins are from all eternity.
He is the king of the city named "Peace."	He is the Prince of Peace.
He was the first priest ever mentioned in the Bible.	He is our Great High Priest who fulfilled every Old Testament priesthood.
He brought bread and wine to Abram.	He offered His own body and blood, symbolized today by bread and wine.

Melchizedek comes with bread and wine and with a blessing. He pronounces a blessing upon Abram in the name of God Most High. This blessing recognizes, not a mere tribal deity, but the *Possessor of heaven and earth*.

Abram's response to this announcement of God as Possessor of heaven and earth is to give to His priest a portion of those possessions. The idea of giving a tenth of one's possessions was not unique to the people of Israel. This concept was established in both Mesopotamia and in Egypt.²⁵

ABRAM AND THE KING OF SODOM

21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself."

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made

²⁵ *As in the instances of circumcision (though infant circumcision does not seem to be documented outside Israel), sacrifice, dietary restrictions, and the like; tithing was not unique with Israel in the ancient near east. Other nations of antiquity practiced tithing. This is true of the Egyptians as well as the Mesopotamians (See, e.g., citations from Akkadian literature respecting tithes paid to gods or temples in CAD, IV-E, 369). -- Allen, Ronald B., Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Editors Harris, Archer & Waltke, Chicago, IL: Moody Press.*

Abram rich.' 24 I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share." (Genesis 14:21-24).

The encounter of Abram with the king of Sodom has already been introduced. We were told in verse 17 that the king of Sodom came out to meet Abram. This was mentioned in order that we might see him in contrast with Melchizedek and it was also mentioned so that we might anticipate the encounter.

It seems almost anticlimactic, for the battle had already taken place and the victory had been won. Why does the author include this dialogue? It is because we are to see this as a conflict of a different sort. Abram is being faced with a temptation as to his motivations. Did he rescue Lot so that Abram could become rich or was it out of love for his nephew?

The king of Sodom offers Abram all of the wealth of the cities of the Jordan Plains. Abram refuses to take anything, stating the he has sworn to the Lord that he would not take anything.

Why such an oath? Because if Abram had taken a reward, then people would have said that the king of Sodom made him rich rather than recognizing that such blessings came from the Lord. Abram was demonstrating to all in the land that his dependency was upon God alone and that the riches were solely due to God's grace in his life.

What is the attitude of a Christian ministry when they are offered a great sum of money? If they think of it at all, there is a tendency to begin coming up with all sorts of reasons why they ought to take it. Abram did not fall prey to this temptation.

At the same time, Abram does not hold his Amorite companions to the same standard of conduct. He does not preclude their acceptance of the portion that is due to them. This is perhaps Abram's greatest victory of all. It is a victory over self-righteousness. This is often the most difficult victory to win. After you have won a great victory, your tendency is to show off your "great spirituality" by putting down a believer younger than yourself and by pointing at how they ought to be following your example. Abram does not fall prey to this temptation. He recognizing it to be acceptable for his companions to be recompensed for their time and energy.

In closing, there is a contrast to be seen between Genesis 13 versus Genesis 14. It is a contrast in action and it is a contrast in promises and blessings.

Genesis 13	Genesis 14
Begins with strife between the servants of Lot and the servants of Abram.	Begins with strife between the Elamite kings and the cities of the Jordan.
Lot moves into Sodom.	Lot is taken from Sodom.
As a result of the strife, Abram separates from Lot.	As a result of the strife, Abram goes to Lot's rescue.
After his separation from Lot, God comes and makes promises to Abram.	After Abram's rescue of Lot, Melchizedek comes and blesses Abram.
God promises to give the land of Canaan to Abram.	Abram gives tithes to Melchizedek.

BELIEVING GOD'S PROMISES

GENESIS 15

Change points. Life is full of them. You go through one stage of your life and, while you are in that stage, it looks as though that is the way your life is going to be. Then something happens to give you a different direction and a different outlook. It might involve a big change or it might only be a slight deviation, but it affects your entire life. This chapter reflects such a change point in the life of Abram.

In Genesis 12-14, we can see Abram and his dealings with others. First we saw him going down to Egypt in Genesis 12:10-20 where he was afraid for his life and had Sarai pretend she was his sister. In Genesis 13 Abram returned to Canaan where there was friction between himself and his nephew Lot. Finally in Genesis 14 Abram went to battle against the kings of the east in order to rescue Lot. Throughout each of these chapters, the focus of the promise from God was largely upon the promise of the land.

Now there is a change. Though the land will still be mentioned as a part of the promise, our focus will be more upon the descendants of Abram and the seed that shall flow from him. This seed motif is a familiar one to Genesis. It was introduced in Genesis 3 where we were given the promise of the seed of the woman. It was traced through the line of Seth to Noah and then through Noah's son, Shem, down to Abram. The ongoing promise has been that there will eventually come a seed of the woman who will destroy the binding work of the serpent and who will reunite man with God.

With the promise to Abram, the promise has not been limited to one seed, but an entire nation that is to be devoted to the Lord. This promise had particular ramifications to the original readers of the book of Genesis. This promise concerned the Israelites in the wilderness for whom Moses was writing this work.

A PROMISE OF PROTECTION

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield

to you; Your reward shall be very great." (Genesis 15:1).

The promise given to Abram is something that was needed on Abram's part. This is understood when we consider what took place in the previous chapter. Genesis 14 tells of a conflict of kingdoms and of kings that saw invaders from the east coming against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Abram entered into the fray when his nephew, Lot, was taken captive and Abram conducted a night assault, putting the invaders to route. As our narrative opens, the battle has already been won, but there are no guarantees that the invaders will not return and seek retribution upon Abram for his part in their demise.

When Abram is told not to fear, that presupposes a problem. The problem was that Abram was afraid.

Furthermore, the actions of Abram in refusing the gift of the king of Sodom could have been taken as an insult. The possibility for reprisal from this direction would have been an added worry.

God comes to Abram in a vision. We have not been told up to this point how God communicated to Abram or the other patriarchs. This is the first specific mention of a vision in Genesis. There will be other dreams and visions to follow.

The significant thing about this vision will be that Abram is not only given verbal promises, but he will see a sign of confirmation so that He can believe the promises. These promises are twofold:

- God will be his Shield: *Abram, I am a shield to you.*

The shields of the second millennia before Christ were very large, often standing as tall as a man. When such a shield covered a man, he was completely covered. The image of the Lord as a shield pictured an all-encompassing work.

The Lord will be Abram's protection and shield, whether it is from Chedorlaomer or from the king of Sodom or from the pharaoh of Egypt or from any other threat.

The promise of protection is one that God also gives to us. He is our shield. Proverbs 30:5 tells us that the Lord *is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.* In the same way, 2 Thessalonians 3:3 promises that *He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*

- God will give him a great reward: *Your reward shall be very great.*

Abram had refused the reward that had been offered to him by the king of Sodom; now he is told that the Lord would greatly reward him.

Jesus made the point in the Sermon on the Mount that you can seek the reward of men or you can seek the reward of God, but you cannot do both. They are mutually exclusive. You can do your good works to be seen of men or you can do them in such a way that you are doing them before the Lord (Matthew 6:1-5; 6:16-18).

A PROMISE OF OFFSPRING

The Lord had promised to Abram at the very outset that he would be the founder of a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Since Abram was without children, he must have wondered whether this promise would be fulfilled through his nephew, Lot. But then there was a separation between himself and Lot and the original promise was subsequently confirmed in Genesis 13:16 when God said that Abram's descendants would be "as the dust of the earth" when it came to their numbers. Abram therefore is in a quandary. How can this promise be fulfilled if Abram has no children?

And Abram said, "O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." (Genesis 15:2-3).

This is the only specific mention of Eliezer of Damascus. We may surmise that he is the chief steward of Abram's household and therefore served as his heir. Excavations at Nuzi in the 1920's revealed adoption customs that shed some light on Abram's reference to Eliezer as his heir.²⁶ Would it be

²⁶ *There were two types of adoption in ancient Nuzi. The first, "sale-adoption" or "fictive adoption," was no more than a formal exchange of property. The second, "read adoption," was a childless couple adopting a servant—or any other young man, for that matter—who would receive their inheritance (John J. Davis, 1975:185).*

through this man that the promise given to Abram would be fulfilled? No sooner is this idea presented then it is dismissed by the promise of God.

Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." (Genesis 15:4-5).

This time the promise is even more specific. Abram's heir will be one who shall come forth from Abram's own body. He will be a physical son of Abram and not merely one who has been legally adopted. The resulting offspring shall be virtually innumerable. The same God who we are told created the heavens and the earth promises Abram that his descendants will be as innumerable as the stars of the heavens and as innumerable as the dust of the earth.

A PROMISE BELIEVED

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6).

This single verse is quoted on three different occasions in the New Testament (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). It serves to demonstrate that Abram received salvation through faith in the same way we believe and receive salvation through faith.

Notice that the result of Abram's belief was that God *reckoned it to him as righteousness*. Was Abram literally righteous in his own cognizance? No. But God counted him as righteous. Abram was considered and accounted as righteous.

This idea of a reckoning of righteousness is at the heart of the doctrine we know as imputation. By this term, we mean that God reckons or imputes or credits to us the very righteousness of Jesus Christ when we believe. In the same way our sins were imputed or reckoned to Jesus when He was upon the cross, so His righteousness is imputed or credited to us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says God *made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

What was it that Abram believed in order to be counted as righteous? The context of the passage makes it clear that he believed the promises of God. He believed that God was going to provide a promised son who would ultimately be a blessing to all the world (Genesis 12:3). The New Testament gives its own commentary on this passage.

And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness. (Romans 4:19-22).

In verse 18 we read that “in hope against hope he believed.” This is a bit of an oxymoron. In other words, Abraham continued to believe even when there was no hope. We can draw the following conclusions about Abraham’s faith:

1. Abraham's faith was grounded upon the promises of God, not upon his own subjective faith. This was not a faith in faith. Nor was it a subjective feeling. It was a faith upon the objective promises of God.
2. Abraham believed in the promises in the face of evidence to the contrary. He and Sarah were far past the age of bearing children. It seemed impossible that the promise of God could indeed come to pass. There is a lesson here. We need to believe the promises of God, even when they go against earthly or human wisdom.
3. Abraham's faith was not inert, but rather was active. It produced a corresponding action in the life of Abraham. Real faith works. It produces a corresponding manner of life in the one who believes.

A PROMISSORY RITUAL

And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." 8 And he said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?"

9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer,

and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. 11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. (Genesis 15:7-11).

The question asked by Abram is the same that would have been asked by the Israelites in the wilderness for whom Moses writes this book: How do they know they will be able to possess the land? The answer will be by way of a ritual of promise.

The instructions to Abram seem rather strange and remote to us. That is because we are not a part of the culture of the second millennia before Christ. Were that not the case, Abram's preparations would ring to us of familiarity.

These were the preparations one typically understood in order to enter into a binding covenant. The making of this sort of covenant involved several animals being sacrificed. The animals would be cut into two parts and then placed in parallel with a pathway between the animals. Then when the parties who were entering into the covenant were ready to go through the covenant ceremony, they would walk between the pieces of the animals as they verbally stated the terms of the covenant. The idea behind the ceremony is that they were binding themselves to the fate of the slain animals as they took an oath that, if they broke their word, they might suffer the same fate. They were saying in effect, "If I break the terms of this covenant, then may I similarly be torn apart and die."

You did not sign a covenant in those days. Instead you "cut" a covenant. This practice was so widespread that in later times, one could speak of entering into a covenant merely by speaking of how he "cut" with someone.

Abraham's special treatment of the birds is outlined in Leviticus 1:17 where they were not to be torn apart.

*Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will **make** (אָכְרַתָּה, Qal Imperfect of בָּרַת) an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David (Isaiah 55:3).*

*There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD **made** a*

covenant (כֹּלֶבֶת) -- the word for “covenant” is not even used here) with the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt. (2 Chronicles 5:10).

Other examples of this same phenomena is seen in the following passages:

- 2 Chronicles 7:18 - the word which NAS translates “covenanted” is the Hebrew *karav*, to cut).
- Haggai 2:5 says literally, “as for the word which I cut with you...”
- Psalm 105:9 (“...that which He cut with Abraham”).
- I Kings 8:9 is literally, “where the Lord cut with the sons of Israel...”

The word translated “covenant” is בְּרִית (Beriyth). The origin of the word is uncertain. It is thought by some to have come from the Akkadian *birit*, which relates to the Hebrew נִבְנָה -- “between.” Another suggestion points to the Akkadian root *baru*, “to bind or fetter.” Both ideas are present in the covenant. It is a binding action and its initiatory rite also mandated an agreement made between the pieces of two animals.

This practice of “covenant-cutting” involved taking one or more sacrificial animals and putting them to death and then cutting the animal into two parts and walking between the pieces of the animals.

And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts -- 19 the officials of Judah, and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers, and the priests, and all the people of the land, who passed between the parts of the calf -- 20 and I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. (Jeremiah 34:18-20).

As the makers of the covenant passed between the divided parts of the dead animal, they would recite the terms of the covenant. By so doing, they were pronouncing a curse upon themselves should they fail to keep the covenant. The implication was that if they broke the terms of the covenant, then may they also be killed and divided asunder as had been these animals.

The act of entering into a covenant involved in itself the symbolic death of

the covenant maker. When the animals were cut, they represented the covenant-maker himself being cut and put to death. Hebrews 9:22 says there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood. Why is this? Because the people have taken part into a covenant of death which demands that all covenant-breakers be put to death.

A PROMISED HISTORY

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

13 And God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” (Genesis 15:12-16).

As Abram completes the covenant cutting in preparation for the actual ceremony, a deep sleep falls upon him. The last time we saw this taking place was when a deep sleep fell upon Adam in the Garden of Eden so that the first woman could be fashioned from his rib. This time, a deep sleep falls upon Abram so that he can be given the ratification of the promise of, not just a woman, but an entire nation that shall come forth from him.

The promise of God was that before being given a land of their own, the descendants of Abram would first live in a land that was not their own. It would not be until many hundreds of years later that the Israelites would return to the land of Canaan. Why? What was the reason for this delay? Many could be suggested, but only one is mentioned by the Lord in this passage. It is because *the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete*. The term “Amorite” was often used as a synonym for Canaanite.

There were Amorites in the days of Abram who had become believers in the Lord. There was Melchizedek, the king of Jerusalem who was a priest of God (Genesis 14:18). There were also Mamre, Eshcol and Aner, Amorite chieftains who had aided Abram in the rescue of Lot (Genesis 14:13).

God promises to withhold His divine judgment against the Canaanite/Amorite until the iniquity of that people has been filled up to the brim. Until that time, God is seen to be patient, *not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

A PROMISSORY SEAL

And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. (Genesis 15:17).

When the time comes for the parties to pass between the pieces of the animals, Abraham is unable to do so. He has fallen asleep with a “deep sleep” and we do not read of him passing between the pieces. Instead, we read of an apparition described as *a smoking oven and a flaming torch*. It is this which passes between the pieces.

This is evidently a manifestation of the presence of the Lord. He is fulfilling the covenant ritual by having his manifested presence pass between the pieces of the animals. He is binding Himself to the terms of the covenant. But why is the description given in such a manner? What is the significance of *a smoking oven and a flaming torch*?

To answer this question, we must remember who is the human author of this account and who are his recipients. It is Moses who writes these words and he writes them to the Israelites who are in the wilderness. They are being led through the wilderness by the presence of God. In the daytime this is a cloud. In the night it is a pillar of fire. The first thing they see each morning when they look out their tent is a cloud over the tabernacle. The last thing they see before they go to bed at night is a pillar of fire. *A smoking oven and a flaming torch* -- God is describing Himself in the very terms with which they are familiar.

The Israelites read this description and their eyes widen and they look out of their tent to see the cloud and the torch and they recognize that this same presence of God was manifested many hundreds of years earlier when God bound Himself to the terms of a covenant promise.

A PROMISED LAND

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite 20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim 21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Gergashite and the Jebusite.” (Genesis 15:18-21).

The “river of Egypt” has been alternately thought to refer to either the Nile or else one of the wadis that serve as a border between the territories of Egypt and the land of Canaan. Waltke supposes that neither of these views is acceptable and proposes instead that it is a reference to “the Nile’s most easterly branch that emptied into Lake Sironbis, not far from Part Said” (2001:245). This means the land of promise is said to extend between the two great centers of civilization—from the border of Mesopotamia to the border of Egypt.

The chapter ends with a listing of the various peoples who occupied the land that was to be given to Abram and to his descendants. This land is identified by the people who were currently living there. This is significant to the original readers of this book because those same people were still living in these lands and they would soon be called to go in and to take it from them. These people constituted a serious obstacle to be overcome, but the Israelites could rest in the assurance that God had not been taken by surprise and that He had been aware of their presence hundreds of years later.

Are there any obstacles in your life? They have not taken God by surprise. He was aware of them long before you were born. They are a part of His divine road map for your life.

THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL

GENESIS 16:1-16

Genesis 15 leaves off with a number of promises given by God to Abram. They are wide ranging and sealed with a dramatic covenant ceremony in which animal sacrifices are set forth and the presence of the Lord moves between the carcasses of the animals to bind Himself to his oath. Abram is given the assurance from heaven that:

- God will protect him from Chedorlaomer and the king of Sodom.
- God will make him rich.
- God will multiply his descendants greatly.
- God will give him the land of Canaan.

Abram believed these promises and rested upon them. As the weeks went by, he waited for God's promises to be answered. The weeks turned into months and the months turned to years and still Abram waited. It is at this point that he is presented with a plan to help bring about the promised son.

Genesis 15	Genesis 16
Begins with God coming to Abram with a message.	Begins with Sarai coming to Abram with advice.
Abram believed the Lord.	Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.
God gave to Abram promises of protection, of a seed, and of the possession of the land.	Sarai gave to Abram her handmaiden Hagar to fulfill the promise of the seed.
God spoke to Abram and gave him instruction and promises.	God spoke to Hagar and gave her instructions and promises.
Abram is promised a son who will be his heir.	Hagar is promised a son who will be a wild man.

While Genesis 15 is a chapter of Abram's belief and victory, chapter 16 will be a chapter suggesting unbelief and failure. The failure will involve

both a lack of faith on the part of Abram as well as a lack of leadership within his own family.

This tells me something about the characters of the Bible. They are not stained glass saints. They are real people with real failings and real struggles. Abram was not chosen by God because he was so strong and faithful; he was chosen by God as a gift of grace in spite of the fact that he was undeserving. The grace of God in using Abram means that God can use you and He can use me.

The chapter will be seen in two parts and two encounters. The first is an encounter between Hagar and Sarai, the second will be an encounter between Hagar and God.

16:1-3	16:4-5	16:6	16:7	16:8-9	16:10-16
Hagar Encounters Sarai			Hagar Encounters God		
Sarai's Plan	Domestic Strife	Abram's Solution	Hagar's flight	God's Instructions to Hagar	God's Promises to Hagar

Up to this point, the story line of Genesis has been largely masculine in focus. Only at the temptation in the Garden of Eden have we been treated to the perspective of a woman. That changes in this chapter. The perspective shifts from Abram to his wife, Sarai, and to her handmaiden, Hagar. When Abram is mentioned at all in this chapter, it is in a relatively minor role.

THE PLAN OF SARAI

Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. (Genesis 16:1-3).

This chapter begins with a problem. It is the ongoing problem that underlies everything in the Abram narrative up to this point. It was first

introduced at the end of Genesis 11 when we were first told of Abram and his wife. The wives of Abram and Nahor were named and then we were immediately told: *And Sarai was barren; she had no child* (Genesis 11:30).

Just in case we had forgotten this was the case, it is repeated here at the beginning of this chapter. Ten more years have passed and Sarai still has not borne children to Abram. It is at this point that she comes up with a plan to provide a son. She is barren, but there are local customs that will allow her to provide a son through her Egyptian handmaiden.

1. Hagar the Egyptian: *She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar* (16:1).

The handmaiden chosen for this duty is named Hagar. We are told that she was an Egyptian. It may be that she was acquired by Abram when he traveled to Egypt in Genesis 12:10. Abram had gone down to Egypt and now he has a little bit of Egypt living in his household.

Why is this detail mentioned in the text of Genesis? It is mentioned because the Israelites for whom this book is written have recently come out of Egypt. It is mentioned to remind them how past associations can lead to continuing problems. They have come out of Egypt, but it is also important that Egypt come out of them.

2. Sarai's Desire for a Child: *So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her."* (16:2).

Sarai makes no mention of the promises of God. She may not have been sure that those promises had any application to her. God had promised that Abram would have offspring, but no mention had been made that this promised offspring would come through Sarai.

Notice the phrasing employed by Sarai: "The LORD has prevented me from bearing children." Is she blaming the Lord or is she merely recognizing God's evident sovereignty in the matter of her ability to bear children?

We are not told what was Sarai's motivation in this offer. She makes no mention of the promise of God, though it is entirely possible that she is acting according to the customs and legal codes of her day to bring about that promised offspring. On the other hand, it is equally possible that she merely wished to give to Abram that for

which the both of them had longed.

3. Sarai's Precedent.

From the Nuzi tablets, we know that Sarai's proposal was considered to be both legally and socially acceptable. It was to the ancient world what fertility drugs and in vitro fertilization are to the modern world. In the event a woman could not bear children, she had the option of giving to her husband a servant who would become a secondary wife to him.

Gilimminu has been given to Shennima as wife. If Gilimminu bears children, Shennima shall not take another wife, But if Gilimminu does not bear, she shall take a slave-girl from the Lullu-region as wife for Shennima. As for the concubine's offspring, Gilimminu shall not send them away.
—A Personal Archive from the Nuzi Tablets.

Abram's response to Sarai's suggestion is one of acquiescence. That he agrees to her plan does not necessarily denote a lack of leadership on his part. He may also have considered this to be the means by which God was going to give to him a child.

God is never impressed with our own religious innovations. We can read the rest of the Bible and we never see that He received Hagar or Ishmael as the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. What we will see is a story of strife and separation and heartache.

DOMESTIC STRIFE

4 And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms; but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me."
(Genesis 16:4-5).

Hagar becomes pregnant with child from Abram and it is not long before Hagar begins to look down on Sarai, her former mistress. The situation recalls the words of the Proverbs:

*Under three things the earth quakes,
And under four, it cannot bear up:*

*22 Under a slave when he becomes king,
And a fool when he is satisfied with food,
23 Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress. (Proverbs 30:21-23).*

The slight against Sarai was not imagined, for the text tells us that *her mistress was despised in her sight*. Sarai caught the vibes very quickly. I have learned that when one woman wants another woman to know what she is thinking, she does not have to say a word. Sarai got the message in short order.

Sarai goes to her husband with the problem and dumps it in his lap. She calls for the Lord as a witness and a judge between them.

ABRAM'S SOLUTION

But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence. (Genesis 16:6).

Abram's solution looks harsh to our western sensitivities, but in reality, he handles the situation in what was considered to be a fair and appropriate manner. Sarai was his chief wife by reason of her original marital status and this gave her authority in the family.

On the other hand, Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar is more reminiscent of the Pharaoh's harsh treatment of the Israelites when they were in bondage in Egypt. Just as Israel longed for deliverance from her cruel taskmasters, so Hagar longed for such deliverance and engaged in her own private "Exodus Event" as she fled out into the wilderness.

The irony of this similarity to the Exodus of the Israelites would not have been lost to the original readers of this text. They would have found themselves identifying, not with Sarai, but with Hagar. This is especially seen when we read of the route taken by Hagar.

HAGAR'S HEAVENLY ENCOUNTER

Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8

And he said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." 9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority." (Genesis 16:7-9).

When we next see Hagar, she is in the wilderness *by the spring on the way to Shur*. This would have been a familiar place to the Israelites for whom Moses wrote the book of Genesis, for Shur was the first place to which they came after their crossing of the Red Sea. They came out of Egypt and entered the Wilderness of Shur (Exodus 15:22) and now we read of Hagar leaving the presence of Sarai and going on the way to Shur.

She is met by the angel of the Lord. This is the first time in the Bible we have seen this designation. It is the first use of the Hebrew *malach* (מלאך) — angel, though such a designation would not have been unfamiliar to the Israelites. This is a messenger from Yahweh. Waltke points out that “in the ancient Near East the royal messenger was treated as a surrogate of the king” (2001:253-4). By the same token, the angel of the Lord is treated as though he is God Himself.

The angel comes to her and questions her: “*Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?*” The fact that he knows her name and her designation indicates that he also knows the answer to the question he has asked. It is a rhetorical question. It is not asked for the angel’s benefit, but for the benefit of Hagar. She is instructed to look at her actions and her plans and to see the foolishness of what she is doing.

He instructs her to return and to place herself back under the authority of Sarai. This will be an act of faith and of submission to authority. Such a concept is difficult for us to comprehend in today’s western culture where we tend to idealize the ideas of rebellion and freedom. Christianity is a religion of submission. It took the apostle Paul many long years of imprisonment to learn this same lesson. It was in one of his Prison Epistles that he was able to write these words:

...I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am (Philippians 4:11b).

We need to learn the same lesson. When we do, we will be able to trust in the Lord, even when we find ourselves under the authority of a harsh master or mistress.

Hagar is told to return and to place herself under the authority of Sarai. A person operating under a naturalistic viewpoint would disagree with this command. The reason we struggle with this is because our tendency is

to leave God out of the picture.

The Lord tells us to be submissive to those in authority and that He will take care of the rest. This is vividly illustrated in Romans 13:1 which tells us to be submissive to the higher powers. The highest power in the land at that time was the Roman Emperor Nero. This man was to become an enemy of Christianity as he greatly persecuted the church. Yet Paul told believers to obey him. This can only be done when you are resting in the promises of God.

Hagar is given such a promise to sustain her. She is to go back and to place herself again under the authority of Sarai, not because slavery is a good thing and not because Sarai will have a change of heart, but because God is bigger than all of that and He is in control.

THE PROMISE TO HAGAR

Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count.” 11 The angel of the LORD said to her further, “Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. 12 “And he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers.” (Genesis 16:10-12).

The promise given to Hagar is a mixed bag. It contains both that which would sustain and encourage her and it also contains that which might be considered distressing.

1. The Promise of a Multitude: *“I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count” (16:10).*

This is virtually the same promise that had been given to Abram concerning his own descendants. He had been told that his descendants would be like the stars — impossible to count. Now Hagar is told that her own descendants will also be too many to count.

2. The Name of her Son.

*And you shall bear a son;
And you shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction*

This is a play on words. Hagar's son is to be named Ishmael (ישָׁמְעָל) because she has been heard (שָׁמַע) by God in the midst of her affliction. His name will be a reminder that Yahweh is the God who hears our troubles.

3. The Character of his Future.

*"And he will be a wild donkey of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone's hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers."
(Genesis 16:12).*

The son of Hagar is characterized as a פָּרָא אֲדָמָה — a donkey of a man. But the picture is not of the domesticated donkey to which we are accustomed. This term describes the wild donkey that roamed the wilderness of that area. The image is of a man who is unruly and unkempt, wild and untamed.

A MEMORIAL NAME

Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “Thou art a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?” 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. (Genesis 16:13-14).

Hagar names the well at that place *Beer-lahai-roi*, “the well of seeing.” The seeing had been twofold. God had seen her and had heard her cry and she had also seen the angel of the Lord and lived to tell about it.

Notice the title that is given here for God. He is called El Ra’iy (רַאֵי), “the God who sees.” It is a reminder that God sees us in the midst of our afflictions and in the midst of our wilderness.

THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL

So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. (Genesis 16:15-16).

Hagar believed the promises of God. The name she gives to Him is a recognition of His omnipresence and His omniscience. He sees all things and He knows all things. Hagar's faith was put into action as she returned to Sarai and Abram where she gave birth to her son.

This chapter ends as it started—with a contrast. Both Hagar and Abram were given the promise of a seed from whom would come a great multitude. Both Abram and Hagar were told to reside in the land of Canaan.

Hagar's son would be at enmity with the world. Every man's hand would be against him and he would be against every man. By contrast, the promise given to Abram was that he and his seed would be a blessing to the world.

Hagar's Son	Abram's Heir
His descendants would be innumerable.	His descendants will be innumerable.
He will be at enmity with the world.	He will be a blessing to the world.
Every man's hand will be against him.	Whoever blesses him will be blessed and whoever curses him will be cursed.

At this point in the story, it might have looked to Abram that there was a contradiction in these prophecies. This is because it had not yet been revealed that Abram would have another son who would be the promised heir. That will not be clarified until Genesis 17. In the interim, Abram had to trust the Lord without knowing all the facts.

That is often true for us, too. We have promises from God and it is not always clear how they shall be fulfilled. It is not important for us to know all of the details; it is only important that we trust Him to oversee them.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

GENESIS 17:1-27

As we come to this chapter, it will describe the Lord coming to Abraham and establishing His covenant with him. It will seem at first to be merely a repetition of the covenant that was given in chapters 12 and 15. The term “covenant” was not actually used in chapter 12, but it was found in chapter 15 to summarize the covenant cutting ceremony presented in that chapter.

Now as we come to chapter 17, the covenant idea seems almost anticlimactic. We have already seen the covenant cutting ceremony in which the presence of God moved through the pieces of the animals. We have already heard the promises of God. We have already been told that God entered into a covenant with Abram. But a closer examination will note some striking differences between these chapters.

Genesis 12	Genesis 15	Genesis 17
From Abram would come a great nation through which all the families of the earth would be blessed.	Confirms a great nation will come from Abram, then emphasizes Abram’s seed to be given the land of Canaan.	Reconfirms Abram to be the father of a great nation and given the land of Canaan. This great nation will come through Sarai.
Emphasis: Great nation.	Emphasis: Land of Canaan.	Emphasis: Multitude to come through Sarai.

With each progressive chapter and each giving of the covenant, there are additions and enlargements as God continues His program of progressive revelation. This process of progressive revelation will continue, not just in the case of the Abrahamic Covenant, but throughout the entire Old Testament. God is doing something through His people that is progressively revealed.

It is a bit like going to a theatrical play. You sit in the theater and there is a stage before you, but the curtain hides the backdrop so that it is hidden from your view. Then the curtain raises a foot from the ground and you are given a tantalizing view of just a small portion of what lies beyond. Most of the

backdrop is still hidden from your view, but now you can see just a little. The curtain raises another foot and now you can see more than what was previously revealed. You still cannot see the entire scope of the backdrop, but you can see more than you did before.

Throughout the entire Old Testament, the curtain is gradually being raised. Bit by bit and line by line, we see a little more of what God is doing in the world. As the curtain becomes high enough, it becomes evident that the primary theme of the backdrop is a picture of Jesus. The covenant of promise is ultimately a promise of the coming of the One who will be a blessing to the world.

This chapter is centrally located in the Abraham narrative. It serves as something of a pivotal point for the entire story of Abraham.

Promises given

- Abram called to leave his family
- Promise of Seed (12:1-3)

Travels in the land

- Abram journeys (12:4-9)
- Sojourn in Egypt, "She is my sister" (12.10-20)

Lot and Abram

- Lot and Abram negotiate over land (13).
- Abram rescues Lot and people of Sodom (14)

Abram prepares a sacrifice: God promises descendants and the Land (15)

Hagar and Ishmael (16)

Abrahamic Covenant (17:1-22).

Abraham and Ishmael circumcised (17:23-27).

Abram prepares a meal: God promises that Sarah will give birth to Isaac (18:1-15).

Lot and Abraham

- Abraham negotiates with God over Lot and Sodom (18:16-33).
- Angels rescue Lot as Sodom is destroyed (19)

Travels in the land

- Abraham journeys southward (20:1)
- Sojourn in Gerar, "She is my sister" (20.1-18)

Promises fulfilled

- Isaac born; Hagar and Ishmael sent out from covenant family (21)
- Abraham's Test: Blessing of Seed (22:1-19)

Everything in the Abraham narrative has been building up to this point and everything contained in the remainder of the Abraham narrative will look back to this chapter. Not only is the entire Abraham narrative given in this parallel format, but also this chapter is presented in a chiastic format. This means the central point of this chapter and of the entire Genesis narrative will be the ordination of the initiatory rite of circumcision.

Abraham is 99 years old (17:1)

The Lord appeared to Abram (17:1-2).

God will make a covenant with Abram to multiply him (17:2).

Abram fell on his face (17:3).

Abram's name changed to Abraham (17:4-8).

- I will make nations of you.
- Kings shall come forth from you

Circumcision commanded (17:9-14).

Sarai's name changed to Sarah (17:15-16).

- She shall be a mother of nations
- Kings of peoples shall come from her.

Abram fell on his face and laughed (17:17).

God promises multiplication through Isaac and Ishmael (17:18-21).

God went up from Abraham (17:22).

Abraham is 99, Ishmael is 13 years old (17:24-25).

This will be a chapter of name changes as the names of Abram and Sarai are changed to reflect their new status under the covenant. It will also be a chapter of promises in which both Abraham and Sarah receives promises as to their descendants. The central theme of this chapter will be upon the initiatory rite of circumcision.

GOD'S COMMAND TO ABRAM

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. 2 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." (Genesis 17:1-2).

As the chapter opens, we find that thirteen years have passed since we last saw Abram at the close of Genesis 16. He is now 99 years old and he has not yet had a son by his wife Sarai. Nor is he expecting such a son, for he has Ishmael, his son by Hagar. He has come to the conclusion that Ishmael is the son of promise and the one in whom all of the promises of God will eventually be fulfilled.

It is at such a time that the Lord appears to Abram. The scene is set with three statements from the Lord.

1. A Call from the Almighty: *I am God Almighty.*

The title used here is *El Shaddai* (אֵל שָׁדָי). By the use of this title, God is calling attention to His omnipotence. If God is all powerful, then He is able to keep all of His promises and He is able to supply Abram's every need.

2. A Call to Walk: *Walk before Me.*

This calls to mind what the writer of Genesis has already said of Enoch who walked with God (Genesis 5:24). Abram is to live his life in the presence of God, trusting Him and obeying Him. We are called to do the same thing. In Colossians 1:10, Paul calls you to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects."

3. A Call to be Blameless: *And be blameless.*

The call to be blameless—the KJV renders it as "perfect"—is a call to moral wholeness and integrity. It is the same quality that characterized Noah (Genesis 6:9). This sort of spiritual wholeness is to be characteristic of the Christian. There are too many who seek to be spiritual without a corresponding emotional wellness. The Bible knows nothing of such a spiritual schizophrenia. Emotional health

and spiritual health are inseparable. A Christian cannot be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.

A NEW NAME FOR ABRAHAM

And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:3-8).

It had been more than thirteen years since the Lord had last spoken to Abram, but God had not forgotten His promises. He once again confirms that He is going to establish His covenant with Abram. Yet there is more to this promise in this newer revelation. In the past, God has promised that Abram's descendants will be greatly multiplied and that they will be innumerable. Now we read that he will be the father of a multitude of nations. It is not only a single nation that shall come from him, but many nations that shall be his descendants.

This new revelation will be commemorated by a new name. His name will be changed from Abram to Abraham.

Abram	אַבְרָם	“Father of heights”, “Father of high places.”
Abraham	אַבְרָהָם	“Father of a multitude.” ²⁷

²⁷ *You shall be the father of a multitude (לְאֵבֶן מִזְמָן) of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you a father of a multitude (אָבֶן מִזְמָן) of nations.*

The name Abram looked back to Mesopotamia where the people of that land worshiped the gods in high places, often building ziggurats to the sky. Abram's old name may have reflected that old pagan worship out of which he had been called.

The name Abraham is a play on words. Verse 5 says that he shall be called **אַבְרָהָם** because God will make him the *father* (**בָּבָשׂ** - *Ab*) of a *multitude* (**הָמָן** - *hamon*). Abraham's new name is to serve as a reminder of his new God-given heritage.

1. Nations and Kings are to come from Abraham.

This has been literally fulfilled in nations and kings of Israel and Edom as well as from the various Arabian kingdoms. In the broader sense, there have been countless kings and kingdoms that have looked to Abraham as their spiritual father.

2. This is to be an Everlasting Covenant: *And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant* (17:7).

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the later giving of the Law does not nullify the eternal aspects of this everlasting covenant (Galatians 3:17-18). God has made a promise and He will not break it.

How does this eternal promise impact our understanding of the promise of a land? That promise had been initially very specific. In Genesis 15, we were told that it comprised the land extending from the Euphrates River in the north to the River of Egypt in the South. Here it is called more generally, *the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan* (17:8).

That promise saw partial fulfillments in the reigns of David and

The accent in Hebrew normally falls on final syllable. In this case, the maqqef between **בָּבָשׂ** ("father of") and **הָמָן** ("a multitude") in the name changing clause joins them together so there is only one accent between them (on the final syllable). If you speak it out loud to yourself quickly and without any undue emphasis (av-ra-HAM / av-ha-MON), you hear the play on words.

Solomon. The Scriptures are specific in 2 Chronicles 9:26 to say that Solomon was the ruler over all the kings from the Euphrates River even to the land of the Philistines, and as far as the border of Egypt. Yet this was hardly an everlasting covenant. Following the death of Solomon, the kingdom broke apart and never again regained the fulness of its former glory.

On the one hand, we can say that there were conditional aspects to this covenant. It was not a promise that unbelieving and apostate descendants of Abraham would inherit the kingdom. The kingdom was torn from Solomon's descendants because of his sin in worshiping other gods.

The good news is that there is One who came to fulfill the covenant requirements as well as the covenant promises. Jesus is the Son of Abraham who was completely blameless in all His ways. He is the One who is a blessing to all the nations so that all who believe in Him the way Abraham believed find that they have been blessed with Abraham.

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Galatians 3:7-9).

This means the land promises are not fulfilled only in reference to a parcel of land between the Euphrates River and the border of Egypt, but that they are extended to include an entirely new heaven and earth.

CIRCUMCISION: THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT

God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you

throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

13 "A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." (Genesis 17:9-14).

The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is appropriate to the nature of that covenant. This is seen when we contrast it to the sign of the Noahic Covenant. The sign of the Noahic Covenant was the rainbow. This was appropriate to a covenant that was made universally with mankind, with animals and with the earth itself. This universal covenant had a corresponding universal sign.

By contrast, the Abrahamic Covenant is a personal covenant. It deals with certain individuals. It is therefore appropriate that the sign is found in the body of those individuals with whom it deals.

The Noahic Covenant	The Abrahamic Covenant
Involves men, animals and the entire world.	Involves Abraham and his descendants.
The sign is the rainbow and relates to the entire creation.	The sign is circumcision and relates to Abraham's descendants.
A universal sign.	A personal sign.

The sign of circumcision was only known to the individual, his parents, and his wife. It was not a sign that would be shown to people in general. This indicates the personal nature of both the covenant and the sign of that covenant.

The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is also appropriate when we remember that the covenant was centered around the promise of the seed. It was a promise that involved the reproductive organs and the sign of the covenant was consistent with this theme.

The sign of circumcision involved the surgical “cutting” of the foreskin of the male organ. This was later to become an illustration of Israel’s complete separation from the sins of the flesh in the world in which they lived, especially when such sins frequently involved the misuse of sexual relationships in adultery and fornication. Thus, circumcision eventually became a symbol to the Jews that they were an elect nation, holy before God. Not only were they circumcised physically, they were also to be circumcised in their hearts.

Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more (Deuteronomy 10:16).

Furthermore, the Lord promises that He Himself will accomplish this spiritual cutting in the hearts of His people.

Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Circumcision was a sign of faith. This is taught by Paul as he described the experience of Abraham in receiving circumcision — *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them (Romans 4:11).* This means circumcision was to the Abrahamic Covenant what baptism is to the New Covenant.

Abrahamic Covenant	New Covenant
The sign of the covenant is circumcision.	The sign of the covenant is baptism.
Circumcision was a sign of faith.	Baptism is a sign of faith.

Physical circumcision represented the spiritual process of cutting away sin.	Water baptism represents the identification with Christ and the spiritual cleansing that comes through the new birth.
Circumcision was limited to males.	There is no distinction in Baptism between male or female.

This brings us to a question. If circumcision was a sign of justification by faith, then why were infants circumcised? It was because the promise was to God's people **and their children** (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Acts 2:38-39). Parents were expected to raise their children in the worship of the Lord. It is for this reason that the Christian Church has traditionally baptized the infant children of believing parents. Whether this is an appropriate correlation is the topic for another venue, but it should be noted that the correlation between circumcision and baptism is referenced in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul as he speaks of our identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

11 ...and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions (Colossians 2:11-13).

It could be argued that baptism is not exact in its correlation to circumcision. After all, only male children were circumcised. In this regard, circumcision was less inclusive than is baptism. Baptism is more inclusive because it includes women as well as men. The New Covenant is always wider in its scope than the old covenant. In the New Covenant *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28).

Both the outward physical rite of circumcision and the outward physical rite of baptism are symbols of the salvation that we have in Christ. Those outward rituals are meant to reflect an inward spiritual reality into which we have entered through faith.

Notice that the one who refused the rite of circumcision was to be cut off from the people of God—*an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant* (17:14). In the same way, the Bible knows virtually nothing of an unbaptized Christian. The only example one might be able to find in the Scriptures is the extreme case of the repentant thief upon the cross.

This does not mean we are to regard any special saving benefit in the act of water baptism. The Scriptures do not support the idea of baptismal regeneration. The baptism which saves is *not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience* (1 Peter 3:21).

A NEW NAME FOR SARAH

15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." (Genesis 17:15-16).

Sari's name is changed to Sarah. If there is any specific meaning behind this changed name, it has been lost to us. Both renditions of her name seem to come from the Hebrew *sar* (שָׁרֵךְ), meaning “prince.” The feminine version could be alternately *Sarai* or *Sarah* which would refer to a princess.

She is given a new name because of the accompanying promise that she will bear a son. This had not been previously revealed. This was a new truth. In the same way that Abraham would be a father of nations and of kings, so also Sarah would be a mother to those nations and kings. She who had previously been barren and unable to conceive would give birth to a son from who would come a multitude.

ABRAHAM'S UNBELIEVING REACTION

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a

child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!" (Genesis 17:17-18).

Up to this time, Abraham had thought God was going to fulfill the promises of His covenant through Ishmael. The Lord's words regarding Sarah bearing a son came as a shock. Abraham must have experienced a barrage of emotions running from shock to humor. He begins to laugh. The very idea of old Sarah becoming pregnant!

Abraham says two things. The first he says to himself—we read that he *said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"* He knew better than to say such things to God, but he could not help but to say them to himself. However, God knows our hearts.

What Abraham says to God is quite different. It is given in the form of a prayer: *"Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!"* After all, Ishmael was Abraham's son. He was his only son. He had watched the boy grow up into a young man and he had high expectations for his son.

ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." (Genesis 17:19-21).

Abraham had laughed at hearing the prophecy of another son, but it will be God who gets the last laugh. He instructed Abraham that this new son is to be named Isaac. It is a name that means “laughter.”

Ishmael will not be without blessings. He will also be fruitful and will multiply and become the father of twelve princes. Notice the pattern.

- Ishmael will become the father of 12 princes.

- Jacob, the son of Isaac, will become the father of 12 tribes.

Ishmael will be blessed, but it will be Isaac who will enjoy the benefit of a covenant with the Lord. That special covenant relationship is reserved for Isaac and for his descendants.

This will be an ongoing theme throughout the rest of the book of Genesis. It is a theme in which the older son is bypassed in favor of the younger son. This was completely contrary to the normal way things were done in the ancient world. The firstborn had all of the rights; the second born had only the hand-me-downs.

ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

And when He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. 23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him.

24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him. (Genesis 17:22-27).

Abraham's response to the Lord's promises and the Lord's covenant was obedience. He had both himself and his son and all of his servants and relatives and hired hands circumcised. This was the covenantal idea. It was a covenant community. All who were related to Abraham would benefit from their relationship to him.

That is not to say that you can be saved by having a Christian mother or a Christian father. But you do enjoy certain benefits from having Christian parents. You are set apart for certain special blessings by being in a covenant community. Paul makes reference to this when he speaks of the importance of remaining in a marriage.

13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (1 Corinthians 7:13-14).

The spouse and children of a believer are said to be sanctified by their relationship to that believer. This reference to being sanctified means only that they are set apart for certain blessings. They have the blessing of being able to experience the life of a Christian and to see the Holy Spirit at work in a life.

The same way that Abraham's extended family enjoyed the benefits of the covenant blessing through their relationship to him, so your extended family can enjoy the benefits of your relationship to Christ. You are called to share your blessing, to speak words of blessing, and to be a blessing to others.

ABRAHAM'S ANGELIC VISITORS

GENESIS 18:1-33

God spoke and men listened. That is a summation given to us of the entire Old Testament in the book of Hebrews. It starts by telling us that God *spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways* (*Hebrews 1:1*). There were many such encounters between the divine and mankind. This chapter tells of such an encounter.

In the last chapter (Genesis 17), God came to Abram and changed his name to Abraham. This was reflective of a covenant promise. He was to be given a new name that bore witness to the promise of God that he would be the father of a multitude. That promise comes just a little closer to its fulfillment in this chapter.

18:1-8	18:9-15	18:16-22	18:23-33
Abraham's Three Visitors		Abraham's Intercession	
Abraham's hospitality for strangers	God's prophecy	God's prophecy	Abraham's prayer for Lot
Blessings for Abraham and Sarah.		Judgment on Sodom and Lot.	
Seed to come through a miracle.		Sin to bring forth judgment.	

As the chapter opens, God comes to Abraham. This is significant. Abraham is not out looking for God. He is sitting in the door of his tent in the heat of the day. God comes to Abraham at a time when he is not looking for God and when he is not expecting God.

The Lord often comes to us in the same way. He often comes at a time when we are not looking for Him and in a way in which we are not expecting. Jesus came that way. He came in a way people were not expecting. There were those who missed Him. We are often in danger of doing the same thing.

ABRAHAM'S HOSPITALITY

Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 And when he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. 4 Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said." (Genesis 18:1-5).

Abraham was not expecting the Lord and he did not immediately recognize the Lord, but that did not diminish the level of hospitality he demonstrated. We have already seen that Abraham believed in the Lord and it had been accounted to Him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Now we see the outworking of Abraham's faith. It is manifested in a very practical way. He does not say, "You men look tired and hungry; I'm going to pray that God gives you some food and a place to rest." Instead we see him taking action to show hospitality. The New Testament takes this example and tells us we are to show the same sort of hospitality.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2).

Abraham did not know it, but two of these "men" were really angels and the third is described to us in terms of a physical manifestation of the Lord Himself.

We are called to show hospitality to strangers. That does not mean you cannot also show hospitality to friends, but our tendency is to do nice things for people who have done nice things for us and we are to show our hospitality when it is not earned or deserved.

Abraham was not looking for a reward. His actions came out of his faith. His was a faith that worked. He believed in the Lord and, as a result of that faith, he acted in a gracious manner toward others. There is a lesson here. How you treat others is a sign of your relationship with the Lord.

Abraham's offer of hospitality went beyond the general to the specific. He offered to meet some very specific needs.

- To have their feet washed.
- To rest under the tree.
- Food.
- Refreshment (literally, comfort for your hearts).

This last need suggests the possibility that Abraham's offer is not only to meet the physical needs of these strangers, but their spiritual needs as well.

ABRAHAM'S PERSONAL ATTENTION

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes.” 7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf, and gave it to the servant; and he hurried to prepare it. 8 And he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. (Genesis 18:6-8).

Notice the energy Abraham expended in showing hospitality. He became personally involved in showing this hospitality to his visitors.

- He hurried into the tent.
- He says, “*Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour.*”
- He ran to the herd.
- He hurried to prepare it.

There is an eagerness evident in Abraham's service toward these strangers. He puts his heart into his hospitality. He treats them as though they are the most important people on earth. His actions are an echo of the picture Jesus painted of the righteous who stand before the Lord at the final judgment and are told, “I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.” He goes on to picture the righteous asking, “Lord, when did we do any of that? I don't remember seeing you hungry or thirsty or naked or sick.”

And the King will answer and say to them, “Truly I

say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."
(Matthew 25:40).

Jesus says in effect, "When you see people in need, you treat them as though it were Me, because it is." That is what hospitality is all about. It is treating people as though they were Jesus. We do that because that is what He did for us.

GOD'S PROMISE OF A SON

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold, in the tent." 10 And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12 And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Genesis 18:9-12).

Abraham and Sarah were long past the age when people could normally have children. She had been barren her entire life. Even in her prime, she had been unable to become pregnant. Now she was an old woman. She was in her eighties. The situation has gone from doubtful to hopeless. It was now physically impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have children.

This is the way God loves to work. He waits until the situation is absolutely hopeless and when nothing short of a miracle could possibly change the situation. Then He brings that miracle so that it is clear to all that He is the One working through the situation.

Notice that one of these three "men" says that he will return the vitality to Abraham so that he will have a son. This is a promise of the miraculous. Only God is able to do this work. The One who created the universe and who made all life with its seed bearing fruit is also able to restore vigor to Abraham.

SARAH'S LAUGHTER

And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' 14 Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh." (Genesis 18:13-15).

It is not surprising that Sarah overheard this conversation between Abraham and the Lord. I imagine she had her ear pressed to the tent flap. Her response to what she heard was to laugh.

The very idea of little old Sarah becoming pregnant and giving birth had brought more than just a chuckle. Sarah had laughed. Indeed, the use of the imperfect tense pictures a continuing laugh. She thought to keep it to herself. She laughed within herself. She laughed within the tent where she thought no one could see. But she laughed.

The Lord questions her about her laughter and she denies it. Why? Because it reflects her unbelief and perhaps she is a little afraid. She did not know it, but God would get the last laugh. Her son would be named Isaac. His name means “laughter.” Sarah had “Isaac” at God’s promise, so God is going to give her Isaac.

In repeating this promise, there is a rhetorical question asked in verse 14: *Is anything too difficult for the LORD?* This is the same God who created the world and all things in it. This is the same God who brought about the flood and who confused the languages. This is the same God that brought Abraham out of Mesopotamia, that kept his safe in Canaan, and who gave him the victory over Chedorlaomer. Is there anything too difficult for Him?

What are you going through? Problems? Difficulties? Doubts? Questions? You need to know that there is nothing that is too difficult for the Lord.

ABRAHAM'S NEW STATUS

Then the men rose up from there, and looked down

toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19 For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Genesis 18:16-19).

Now that the meal is finished, Abraham goes off with his visitors to see them on their way. As they go, the Lord is seen deliberating the new status of Abraham. The interesting thing about this new status is that, from the outside, nothing has changed. Abraham is still the same old man he was prior to the visit. He is a nomad living in a strange land. But God speaks of Him as if all of the promises that had been given to him were already fulfilled.

God asks, in light of this exalted status, shall He hide from Abraham what He is about to do? This is the language of friendship. You don't tell a slave what you are going to do, but you do tell a friend. This is why Abraham is described in the Bible as a "friend of God" (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23).

A PLANNED JUDGMENT

And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. 21 I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. (Genesis 18:20-22).

The Lord reveals His plan for Sodom and Gomorrah. These two cities of the plain are to be examined and perhaps destroyed. This brings up the problem. Lot lives in Sodom. He has not been mentioned in the Genesis narrative since chapter 14. Lot had selfishly taken the best of the Promised Land many years ago. He had subsequently been captured by Chedorlaomer and would have been sold as a slave had not Abraham rescued him. Lot had been a lot

of trouble. But Abraham did not hold any grudges. Instead, we are going to see Abraham pleading for the life of Lot.

Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).

Abraham will be doing for Lot what Jesus does for us. Jesus is our intercessor. He speaks on our behalf. He did so at the cross, but He did not end it there. He has a continuing ministry of intercession.

ABRAHAM'S PRAYER

And Abraham came near and said, "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:23-25).

Abraham has just learned that Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the Jordan Valley are in danger of total destruction at the hands of the Lord. Lot lives in Sodom and Abraham takes action to rescue his nephew. There is an interesting contrast to be seen in Abraham's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14 with his ministry of intercession on behalf of Lot in this chapter.

Genesis 14	Genesis 18
Chedorlaomer captured the city of Sodom.	God is going to judge Sodom.
One that had escaped came and told Abram of Lot's capture.	God comes and tells Abraham that He is going to judge Sodom.
Abram rescued Lot by force.	Abraham will rescue Lot through prayer.

Lot is saved by force of arms.	Lot is saved by divine intercession.
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Abraham is again taking the role of savior for his nephew. This time, he accomplishes that role by interceding on Lot's behalf. He does initially by an appeal to the justice of God. He asks the question: "Will a righteous God bring bad things upon good people?"

That is an issue with which people wrestle today. If God is good, then why do bad things happen to good people? It is a question that is given no glib or easy answers in the Bible. On the one hand, it could be argued that there are no ultimately good people so that God is good and just when bad things happen because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). On the other hand, there are instances in both the Bible as well as in today's observable world in which bad things happen to relatively good people.

This question of the existence of evil versus the righteousness and goodness of an all-powerful God who has permitted that evil to exist is known as *theodicy*. The word itself refers to "God's righteousness."²⁸

The Old Testament books of Job and Habakkuk both present elements of this question as to how God can permit evil things to take place in the world. In neither case is the question answered in full, though we do get to see limited glimpses of a small portion of the answer. In the case of Job, we learn something of which Job himself was unaware—that our actions on earth are the stage for a larger conflict in the heavens. Job was unaware of the challenge Satan brought before the presence of God. He was unaware that he was a key player in that conflict. Like Frodo in the Lord of the Rings, he finds himself in the midst of an ongoing cosmic conflict that is bigger than he ever imagined.

Habakkuk also poses the question of God's righteousness, but it does so in a different context. In that case, the question is how God can punish unrighteous Judah with the more unrighteous Babylon. Though we are not given an answer to the question, we are assured that the Lord will eventually balance His books and that all sin will be judged.

²⁸ The word Theodicy is taken from the Greek words Θεος (God) and δικη (righteous).

Here in Genesis, Abraham appeals to the righteousness of God. He asks the rhetorical question: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?* The very fact of the question is significant, for not all cultures of that day would have agreed with the underlying premise. The deities of the ancient world often did not act in a just manner. But even at this early stage of revelation, Abraham understood it was expected that the Lord would deal justly.

ABRAHAM'S BARGAINED INTERCESSION

26 So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.”

27 And Abraham answered and said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. 28 Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, wilt Thou destroy the whole city because of five?” And He said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose forty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it on account of the forty.”

30 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

31 And he said, “Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.”

32 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.”
(Genesis 18:26-32).

This account reads like something you would expect to hear at a negotiating table. Abraham begins by asking the Lord to spare Sodom as long as there are fifty righteous people in the city. When the Lord readily agrees to the proposal, Abraham lowers the amount to forty, then thirty, twenty and ten. There are several lessons we can take away from this encounter.

When the Lord says in verse 26, “I will spare,” the Hebrew text literally reads, “I will lift up.”

1. Prayer changes things.

We can understand that God, in His divine foreknowledge and wisdom, knew ahead of time that Abraham would intercede on behalf of his nephew. The Lord's actions seem to presuppose and invite Abraham's intercession. But that does not mean Abraham's intercessory ministry was unimportant. To the contrary, the Lord goes out of His way to establish the format whereby this intercession will take place.

Our prayers matter. They effect real change in the way things turn out. To say this is not a denial of either God's sovereignty or His foreknowledge or His eternal decrees. We can agree with Buswell when he says that "God has anticipated our prayers before the foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our prayers into the very structure of the universe" (1961:61).

2. The Lord is concerned about people.

God enters into a dialogue with Abraham with the express purpose that Abraham might intercede for the lives of those in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He graciously allows them the opportunity to repent. He gives evidence to the statement that God *is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

3. Faithful People are instrumental in bringing blessings to those with whom they live.

We do not know the size of the cities of Sodom or Gomorrah, but we are told that the faithfulness of a relatively small percentage of the population would have been sufficient to remove the coming judgment from these cities.

People sometimes wonder why the Lord has not judged this nation or that nation today. Why does He permit sin to go unpunished? We do not know all of the answers to this question, but one of them might be that there is a small remnant of faithful believers, the presence of whom are acting as a deterrent to such a judgment.

Jesus likened His followers to salt. He said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). Salt makes things taste better and we ought to have that effect upon people; they ought to look at us as we live the Christian life and say, "That looks yummy!" But that is not all; salt was also used as a preservative. This is also a role we play in our

world today. We are a preservative. Our presence serves as a blessing and a deterrent to God's judgment.

THE CONCLUSION

And as soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed; and Abraham returned to his place. (Genesis 18:33).

When Abram finished this bargaining episode, he departed from the presence of the Lord. In his mind, he had taken the necessary action to preserve the life of Lot. He must have assumed there would have been at least ten righteous people in the entire city.

What he really wanted to know and what we really want to know is whether the Lord will withhold His judgment if there is at least one righteous person, not merely in a city in the Middle East, but in all of history and in all of time. There has been only one. His name is Jesus. He is the ancient of days, the One in whom was no sin. *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*

SODOM AND LOT

GENESIS 19:1-38

There are in the Old Testament three common pictures of the worldly system that is under the dominion of Satan and which is populated by those who are in a state of rebellion against God.

Egypt	A material view	Pictures the world independent of God and trusting in the Nile River as the provider of wealth.
Babylon	A religious view	Shows man as having turned away from the One True God to follow after the worship of sun, moon, stars, and idols of man's own making.
Sodom	A moral view	Presents man as abandoning God to chase after his own lustful urgings.

Sodom is described as having been a major city of the Jordan Valley in the days of Abraham. It was a beautiful, well-watered area. This was the reason Lot had chosen this place to live. But in spite of any outward beauty, Sodom was morally corrupt. Ezekiel makes mention of the sins of Sodom.

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. 50 Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it. (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Notice the sins that are listed here. The first is the sin of a proud arrogance. This involved the sin of self glorification; of taking that which belongs properly to God and taking it for self. The second is an abundance of food. This is a reference to material prosperity. Sodom was a wealthy city located on the major highway between Mesopotamia and Egypt. With their prosperity came an abundance of available time that we indulged in a “careless ease.” Yet with all of this prosperity, there was no thought to help the poor or the needy. Instead the people of the city were characterized by selfishness and social injustice.

It is striking that the United States is known for at least some of these qualities. One can peruse the list given by Ezekiel and find an uncomfortable similarity with the characteristics described.

- Haughty and proud.
- Blessed with material abundance.
- Opportunities for careless ease and a focus upon amusements.
- A lack of aid to the poor and the needy.
- A defiance against God that leads to abomination.

As this chapter opens, the scene has shifted. The previous chapter saw an encounter between Abraham and three heavenly visitors. Now we are presented with another encounter. The juxtaposition of these two meetings calls for a contrast to be seen between them.

Genesis 18	Genesis 19
Two angels and the Lord meet Abraham as he sits in the door of his tent.	Two angels meet Lot as he sits at the gate of the city of Sodom.
The narrative begins in the heat of the afternoon.	The narrative takes up with the events of that same evening.
Abraham ran to meet them and bowed down before them.	Lot rises to meet them and then bows down before them.
Abraham invites them to eat and rest from their travels.	Lot invites them to eat and spend the night in his house.
They immediately accept Abraham's invitation.	They initially refuse Lot's invitation but, as he insists, they reluctantly accept.
Abraham intercedes for Lot.	Lot intercedes on behalf of the angels.
Abraham is told of the impending judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.	Lot is told of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
Abraham's wife expresses disbelief at the promise of God concerning the birth of a son.	Lot's wife expresses disbelief at God's warning not to look back at the doomed city of Sodom.

Culminates in the birth of a son.	Culminates in the death of a city.
Abraham believed the promises of God.	Lot became fearful due to his unbelief.
God gave Abraham a son through his wife, Sarah.	Lot had two sons born through incest with his own daughters.
Abraham's offspring were blessed.	Lot's offspring were cursed.

There is a point to this contrast. We are supposed to read the narratives of Abraham and Lot and to see them in contrast. The contrast that we see here is similar to other such contrasts we see throughout the book of Genesis. Cain and Abel. Isaac and Ishmael. Jacob and Esau. In each case, we see one who has entered into a covenant relationship with God versus one who has gone out to approach life independently of God.

The reason for such a contrast is because we all face the same decision. Will we enter into the same covenant relationship that Abraham enjoyed or will we go the way of Lot and find ourselves making a shipwreck of life?

LOT'S HOSPITALITY

1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 2 And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." 3 Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. (Genesis 19:1-3).

These were the same two angels that had accompanied the Lord in His visit to Abraham in Genesis 18. They had been instrumental in bringing to Abraham the promise of the birth of a son. Now they would bring to Lot the promise of destruction of Sodom.

As the narrative opens, it is evening and Lot is seated at the gate of Sodom. Ancient gates were made up of large protruding battlements with alcoves set

for the placement of defenders. When not being used for the defense of the city, the gate was considered to be a public meeting place. This was the place for business and legal transactions. It was also the place where you could come to meet with the leaders of the city. While we are not told that Lot held such a position of leadership, he is seen here in the place where such leaders were to be found. He had made Sodom his home and would soon see the consequences of such a choice.

We must point out that Lot was not ignorant of the sinful state of the city in which he had made his home. 2 Peter 2:8 tells us that Lot, *while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds.* He was aware of the sinfulness of the city and longed for it to be set aright. In all likelihood, he realized that the streets of Sodom were not safe for visitors, so he insisted that these men spend the night in his home.

THE EVIL DESIRES OF THE MEN OF SODOM

Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."
(Genesis 19:4-5).

The evil nature of the men of Sodom was specifically mentioned in Genesis 13:13 where they were described as exceedingly wicked and sinners against the Lord. It is only now that we are treated to the nature of their wickedness. It manifested itself in their sexual passions. Rather than display the hospitality that had been demonstrated both by Abraham and Lot, they sought to engage in a forcible homosexual attack.

Neither was this attitude restricted to a small segment of the population of the city. The passage tells us that this group was made up of *both young and old* and that they came *from every quarter.* Both the various age groups as well as the various social strata were represented.

There have been some who have seen the sin of the men of Sodom to be only that of a lack of hospitality. This reflects an attempt to justify homosexual practices as long as they are carried out in a hospitable manner between consenting adults. However, the Scriptures do not permit such a justification.

Homosexual practices are regularly condemned throughout both the Old and New Testaments and there is not a single instance in the Bible where such practices are condoned.

1. Homosexual Practices are Contrary to the Creation Ordinance.

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that mankind was created male and female. The pattern of one man and one woman was seen in the persons of Adam and Eve. God did not create Adam, Eve and Bruce.

2. Homosexual Practices are Contrary to the Mosaic Law: *You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination* (Leviticus 18:22). *If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them* (Leviticus 20:13).

3. Homosexual Practices are Contrary to Natural Function and Decency: *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error* (Romans 1:26-27).

4. Homosexual Practices are Contrary to the Kingdom of God: *Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

There have been a number of interpreters of the Bible who have tried to teach that the Greek αρσενοκοιτης (*arsenokoites*) is descriptive only of casual relationships between the same gender as opposed to more permanent commitments. But the Greek word does not allow for such an interpretation. Αρσενοκοιτης is a compound word coming from the joining of two Greek words:

- Αρσεν (*arsen*) is a “male.”
- Κοιτης (*koites*) is the Greek word for “bed.”

The resulting compound merely describes one who takes a male to bed. It is a euphemism for homosexuality.

5. Homosexual Practices are Contrary to Healthy Teaching: *But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.* (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Paul lists both immoral men and homosexuals together as describing two alternate forms of immorality that are contrary to sound teaching.

Homosexual orientation is the result of sin, but it is not necessarily the sin of the individual homosexual. It has been argued that some people are born with a tendency toward homosexual desires in the same way that some are born blind or deaf. If this is true, then the words of Jesus with regard to conditions at one's birth are relevant.

And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. (John 9:1-3).

Jesus was asked by his disciples what was the specific cause of this man's blindness. It is pointed out that it is not because of any specific sin on the part of either the blind man or his parents.

There have been recent studies that suggest that some people are born with a genetic predisposition towards alcoholism. If this is true, that does not excuse drunkenness, for the Bible still forbids this whether or not one particular person tends to have more of a weakness in this area than another. The point is not that of genetic predisposition, but accountability toward God for our behavior.

In the same way, it has been argued that homosexuality is derived from a genetic predisposition. This may or may not be true, but it does not change

the fact that the homosexual lifestyle is directly forbidden in the Scriptures in the same way that extramarital heterosexual relationships are forbidden in the Scriptures.

LOT'S ATTEMPTED INTERCESSION

But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, 7 and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. 8 Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof."

9 But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door. (Genesis 19:4-9).

Lot attempts to intercede on behalf of his guests. The offer he makes sounds both outrageous and bizarre to our modern sensibilities. He offers his two virgin daughters to this crowd of sex-crazed men in an effort to placate their demands. We must remember that the context of this offer is a society in which women were not as highly valued as men. Thus the offer of Lot would not strike the readers of that day in the same manner it does to us today.

The Bible makes no comment on Lot's offer. There are no words of approval given to suggest this was an appropriate offer. It may be that his motives of protecting his guests were commendable even if his attempted method of accomplishing this goal was less than desirable.

There is an interesting contrast to be seen in Lot's attempted intercession versus the intercession that we have in Jesus Christ.

Lot	Jesus Christ
Offered his two virgin daughters as a substitute.	Offered Himself as a substitute in our place.
His daughters were virgins and had not known a man.	He was pure and without sin.

Lot's intercession reflects the attitudes and values of his own day. Those standards were higher than the values of the Sodomites, but we cannot but conclude that they were less than adequate when compared to the standards of a Holy and Compassionate God.

Christians today must be careful against lowering their values and standards merely because the world has lowered theirs. Being higher than the world is not enough. The world's standards are mobile and change regularly. We need to focus upon a higher value.

This is especially relevant as we are called to live in a Sodom. We are to live in the world and yet not to be of the world. How can we accomplish this without becoming polluted by the corruption of the world? The answer is illustrated by a small spider that is native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It is known by scientists as the *argyroneta aquatica*, but that is merely a fancy name for the "water spider." This small spider spends most of its life underwater. He does this by taking a small bubble of air from the surface and carrying it with him beneath the water's surface and releasing it into a net that acts like a miniature diving bell. Without this tiny air bubble the spider would drown.

We have such a bubble. It is our place of refuge and nourishment. It is the Holy Spirit. It is through His power within us that we are able to exist in this world without being absorbed by the world's system.

AN ANGELIC RESCUE

But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. 11 And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway. (Genesis 19:10-11).

Lot had tried to intercede on behalf of his angelic visitors, but it was the angels who came to the rescue of Lot when his fellow citizens sought to lay hands upon him, threatening him with even harsher treatment than the had planned for the angels. Just as Lot was about to be torn apart by this mob, the angels pulled him into the house and then they struck the crowd with blindness. Those who had manifested their spiritual blindness by their lustful demands were now made physically blind. The description of them still attempting to find the doorway in their blindness is a picture of how set they

were upon their sinful course.

WARNINGS OF IMPENDING DESTRUCTION

Then the men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; 13 for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

14 And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting. (Genesis 19:12-14).

These two angels had a twofold charge. They would serve both as rescuers as well as destroyers. They would save Lot and his family and then they would destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot responded to this message in faith. He believed the warning and he acted upon it.

Accordingly, Lot went to his sons-in-law and shared the warning of coming judgment. Their response was one of unbelief. In his move to the city, Lot had lost his influence with his own family. We can assume that Lot's daughters had married unbelievers, for they express their unbelief in this time of crisis.

THE RESCUE OF LOT AND HIS FAMILY

And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." 16 But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. (Genesis 19:15-16).

Lot had been warned of the coming destruction of Sodom, yet as morning comes, he is still lingering in the city as though he does not really want to go. The ties of the city had such a hold on Lot and his family that they did not

wish to leave, even though they knew of the impending destruction. Finally the angels physically intervene and drag him and his wife and his two daughters from the city.

There is a little of Lot in many of us. In some of us, there might be a lot of Lot—those who believe the gospel and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior, yet who find themselves lingering in the world.

What is the remedy for lingering? It is to linger no longer. It is to go to the cross and repent of your sins and commit your ways to the Lord and to remove yourself from the presence of that continuing sin.

LOT'S COMPROMISING REQUEST

And it came about when they had brought them outside, that one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, lest you be swept away."

18 But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords! 19 Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die; 20 now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved."

21 And he said to him, "Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar. (Genesis 19:17-22).

Having been pulled out of the city, Lot asks permission to go into another of the cities of the plain instead of obeying the Lord and fleeing to the mountains. He gives several reasons for his request.

1. A Fear of Disaster and Death: *I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die (19:19).*

Lot has exhibited faith, but it is a weak faith. He has consented to leave the city of Sodom, but he is afraid to go into the mountains. The angels of the Lord have demonstrated their ability to protect Lot

against the crazed mobs of Sodom and against the judgment of God upon the cities, but he is not so certain that he will be thus protected in the mountains.

2. An Available City: *This town is near enough to flee to (19:20).*

Lot points to a city that was located nearby. It is convenient and he asks permission to go there instead of into the mountains. In his question, Lot asks that he might do that which is convenient instead of that which is obedient. How often are we tempted to do the same thing?

3. A Little City: *This town is near enough to flee to, and it is small (19:20).*

By the inclusion of this reference to the size of the city, Lot indicates a proposed justification for this alteration in the directive of God. He has been told to flee to the mountains, but there is a city nearby and it is small. He even repeats this distinctive at the end of verse 20—*is it not small?* Since it is only a little city, Lot reasons that it will not be so wrong to go there since it will not be big enough to warrant the judgment of God. We may not say it, but we do the same thing when we justify our wrongdoings by thinking, “It is only a little sin.”

The Lord gives Lot permission to go to his “little city.” This is a measure of God’s grace. Lot did not deserve such an allowance, but the Lord grants it nevertheless. There is a play on words with the name of the city. It is called Zoar (צֹעַר) because it was a “little” (מִצְעָר) city.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. 24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:23-25).

As the sun rises in the morning, the great judgment of God comes down upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding areas. Genesis 14:10 describes

tar pits in the area. Petroleum and asphalt deposits still exist in the area around the Dead Sea today. This is a barren, desolate region. The Dead Sea today in the lowest spot on the face of the earth. The north part of the Sea is 1300 feet deep. The southern part has completely dried up in recent years so that it no longer is underwater. Some scholars have thought to place the location of Sodom and Gomorrah in this southern section, others place it in the Jordan Valley just north of the Dead Sea. Though remains of cities have been uncovered in both these areas, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah have not yet been positively identified.

1. This Narrative shows us the Consequences of Sin.

The picture that we have of Lot throughout this account is of one who has compromised with his values, who has lost control of his family, and who continues to display a lack of faith in God.

2. This Narrative teaches us the Grace of God in Delivering Lot.

If God will deliver and protect a backslidden, spineless believer like Lot, then you can trust in Him to deliver and to protect you. This is a picture of the undeserved and unmerited salvation of the believer.

3. This Narrative is a Warning of the Judgment of God.

The rest of the Bible uses the image of Sodom and Gomorrah as a picture of God's future judgments against sin (Isaiah 1:9-10; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7). Sodom and Gomorrah would become a byword of cities of sin and cities of destruction.

LOT'S WIFE

But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt. (Genesis 19:26).

In verse 17, the angels had warned Lot's family not to look back at Sodom lest they die. Lot's wife disobeys this command and dies. She had been warned. She knew the way of escape, but she did not believe it. There is a lesson here. One can know the way of salvation and still not be saved. Faith is a necessary ingredient.

Lot's wife is the classic case of a double minded person. She wanted to be rescued, but she also wanted to hold to that from which she needed rescuing. How often do we do the same thing? We know that it is our sin that has separated us from God and we know that Jesus died to redeem us from our sin, but we still return to it like a dog to vomit (Proverbs 26:11).

ABRAHAM'S LIMITED PERCEPTION

Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; 28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. 29 Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. (Genesis 19:27-29).

Our scene briefly shifts to Abram. The last time we saw Abraham, he was bargaining with the Lord over the future of the city of Sodom. He had asked that Sodom be spared if there were at least fifty righteous. The Lord agreed. Then Abraham lowered the number to forty, then thirty and then twenty and then ten. The Lord agreed to each of these.

Abraham woke up early the next morning and walked up the hill to a nearby vantage point. He would have expected to see the city of Sodom in the valley below. Instead, he saw what appeared to be a huge furnace of smoke and flame. We are not told in this passage what went through his mind, but we can easily guess.

Abraham had no way of knowing that Lot had been delivered from Sodom before its destruction. The temptation would have been to become disillusioned with God or to blame himself for not having conducted the previous day's bargaining to a better result. The intent of his bargaining had been to deliver Lot and it seemed that he had failed.

There is an important lesson here. It is that the Lord often answers the intent of our prayer rather than the literal words of our prayers. This is described in the Bible as one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our

weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27).

When you go to the Lord, you do not have to worry that you may not say the right things or that you might pray incorrectly. If your heart is right, then your words will not be wrong. You have a divine translator. You have one who intercedes on your behalf.

Another thing we see from the example of Abraham is that it is possible to have your prayers answered in the affirmative and yet to be unaware of it. Abraham was not immediately notified of Lot's rescue. It may have been many days or even months before such notification came his way. Merely because we do not see an immediate answer to our prayers does not mean such an answer has not been forthcoming.

LOT'S SHAMEFUL CONCLUSION

And Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

31 Then the first-born said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father." 33 So they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

34 And it came about on the morrow, that the first-born said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

37 And the first-born bore a son, and called his name

Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 And as for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day. (Genesis 19:30-38).

Lot had been preserved from the destruction of Sodom and even allowed to remain in the small town of Zoar, but Lot did not remain content for long. He grew fearful in this small town and he found himself doing exactly that which the Lord had called him to do in the first place. He moved to the mountains and took up residence with his daughters in a cave.

What follows is a morbid take of Lot being seduced by his own daughters who, through this incestuous relationship, gave birth to children who would eventually become the forefathers of the countries of Moab and Ammon.

Whereas Noah had become drunk in the confines of his tent, so now Lot is made drunk by his own daughters so that they can seduce him and bear children by him. As the actions of Ham toward his drunken father resulted in a curse upon his son, Canaan, so the actions of these daughters result in producing two nations that ultimately have a curse brought upon them. At the same time, such cursing is able to be turned into blessing because it was from one of those nations—Moab—that would come forth Ruth the Moabitess whose name is found in the Messianic line.

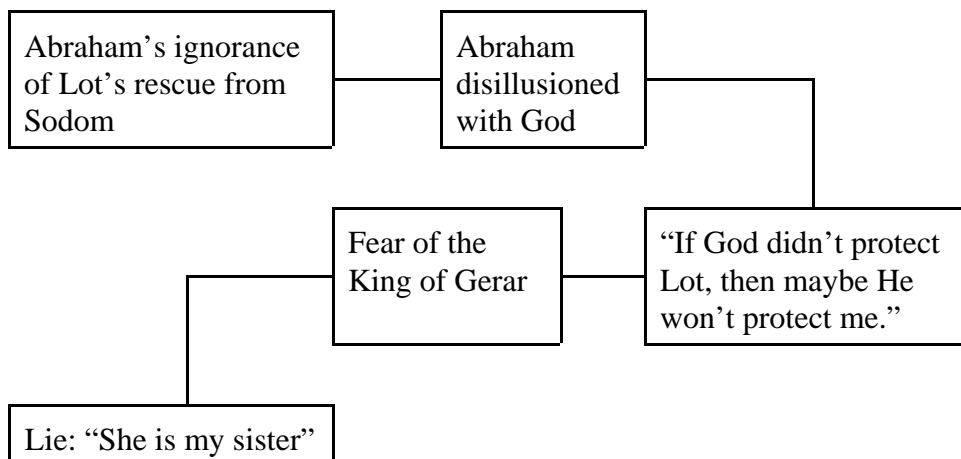
ABRAHAM & ABIMELECH

WIFE OR SISTER

GENESIS 20:1-18

We last saw Abraham on the morning of the destruction of Sodom. He had bargained at length with the Lord in an effort to save the city. We can safely assume that his ultimate aim was the salvation of Lot who lived within the city. Then he awoke the next morning and went to the same place where this bargaining had taken place and he saw only a great burning crater where Sodom had stood. We do not read of him being told about Lot's deliverance. He had no way of knowing that Lot had been removed from Sodom before its destruction.

As this chapter opens, Abraham is journeying southward to the Negev, the desert regions to the south of Canaan. Was he seeking to move to a place where he would no longer be reminded of his nephew and the destruction of Sodom? We do not know. It may be that Abraham had become disillusioned and that this led to his failure in Gerar.



We can compare this chapter with the previous chapter. Chapter 19 had its focus upon Lot and his escape from Sodom; this chapter has its focus on Abraham and his sojourn in the land of the Philistines.

Genesis 19	Genesis 20
Lot was in Sodom.	Abraham was in the land of the Philistines.
Lot was ready to give his two virgin daughters to a crazed mob.	Abraham gave his wife to Abimelech.
Lot's wife became a pillar of salt.	Abraham's wife was returned to him.
Lot fled the city of Sodom.	Abraham was invited to remain in the area.

Both of these accounts reflect a lack of belief and a spiritual failure. Yet in both cases, God is faithful to deliver.

JOURNEY SOUTHWARD

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. (Genesis 20:1).

Kadesh and Shur were located in the direction to which Hagar had fled in Genesis 16. Likewise, this is the place to which Israel would come when they sought to enter the Promised Land. It constituted the southern border of that land and on the edge of the Sinai desert.

The last time we saw Abraham leaving the Promised Land was when he went to Egypt. It was a trip clouded by failure as Abraham had Sarah pretend that she was his sister instead of his wife. Now history is repeating itself.

Genesis 12	Genesis 20
Abram travels to Egypt because of a famine.	Abraham travels to Gerar on the southern tip of Canaan.
The pharaoh of Egypt was an unbelieving idol worshiper.	It seems that the king of Gerar feared the Lord.
Abram instructs Sarai to pretend she is his sister.	Abraham says of Sarah, "She is my sister."

The pharaoh of Egypt takes Sarai into his harem.	Abimelech king of Gerar sends and takes Sarah.
The motive of the king of Egypt in taking Sarai into his palace was because of her great beauty.	No mention is made of Sarah's beauty. It seems that Abimelech sought to make an alliance with Abraham by marriage.
The king of Egypt discovered for himself that Sarai was Abram's wife.	God comes to Abimelech in a dream and tells him that Sarah is Abraham's wife.
The Lord strikes the house of pharaoh with great plagues.	The Lord closes up the wombs of the household of Abimelech.
Pharaoh calls Abram: "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"	Abimelech calls Abraham: "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?"
Abram was silent when he was rebuked by the pharaoh of Egypt.	Abraham offers a full explanation when he is rebuked by Abimelech.
Pharaoh escorts Abram from the land of Egypt.	Abimelech gives Abraham permission to settle wherever he pleases.

The fact that the two incidents of Abraham lying about his wife are so similar has caused some to think that these are two descriptions of the same event. Such a conclusion is not necessary, for the simple fact is that certain sins and weaknesses are often repeated.

At the same time, we can take note that this relapse into a former sin carried with it new dangers that were not evident in the first such sin. The Lord had already made it clear that the promised son of Abraham would be born through Sarah. Abraham was therefore putting the plan of God into jeopardy through his deception.

ABRAHAM'S DECEPTION

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married."

4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless? 5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this."

6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

8 So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened. (Genesis 20:1-8).

Abraham had failed to tell the whole truth and, as a result of his failure, Abimelech found himself in danger of dishonoring Abraham's wife. But there is more to it than that. God has already promised that the Messianic seed will come through Abraham and Sarah and if Sarah is no longer the wife of Abraham, then there will be no Messiah and you and I will remain in our sin. Not only is this a potential tragedy for Abraham and Sarah, but it is also the potential damnation of the entire human race.

It was at this point that God intervenes. This is the same pattern we have seen throughout the book of Genesis. Man falls into sin and failure and God intervenes to rescue and redeem the situation. This is the story of grace.

1. God's Initial Message.

This message comes to Abimelech in a dream: *You are a dead man.* That is not a pleasant message. It portrays the tragic consequences of sin. The penalty is death. This is the message God gives to all who are apart from Christ. If you have not come to Him, then you are a dead man.

Notice the impact of Abraham's sin. It left resounding marks on both himself as well as upon others.

- Abraham's sin affected the way people looked at him. His witness of the Lord was tarnished.
- Abraham's sin affected Sarah. She was put into a compromising position.
- Abraham's sin affected Abimelech. He found himself unwittingly in danger of taking another man's wife.
- Abraham's sin affected the people of Abimelech's domain. The women of his kingdom were temporarily rendered barren because of Abraham's sin.

There is a lesson in these circumstances. It is the lesson that sin affects others. No one lives to himself and no one sins to himself. Sin is messy. It invariably has a tendency to affect others.

2. Abimelech's Answer.

Abimelech was an innocent party to this situation. He was in danger of falling into adultery without realizing the full situation. He asks the question: *"Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless?"* The king of Sodom would not have been able to ask this question. There had not even been ten blameless people in Sodom.

At the heart of Abraham's problem was a lack of faith. He had believed the promises of God in the past, but he was not believing God in the fact of what he perceived to be a threat to his personal safety. This tells me something about the nature of faith. Faith is not merely a one-time action. Faith is a continuum. Faith is a journey. Faith involves a continuity.

ABRAHAM'S EXCUSES

Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done."
10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?"

11 And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place; and they will kill me because

of my wife. 12 Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; 13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'" (Genesis 20:9-13).

Abraham gives several reasons for his deception.

1. He was afraid.

The reason for Abraham's fear was because of his perception that *surely there is no fear of God in this place* (20:11). If there were no fear of God, then there would be no respect for the rights of the individual.

Fear in itself is not a wrong thing. There are times when you should be afraid. But it is only right to be afraid of the right thing. Abraham had God's promise of protection and therefore he had no right to be afraid of the king of Gerar.

Furthermore, Abraham's fear of the king of Gerar contained what may have been an unwarranted judgment of the motives and mood of that king. Abraham assumed the worst in the king. He assumed that the king would want to murder him to take his wife. The Scriptures do not tell us that this was necessarily the case. Abraham's fear may have been unwarranted in that it is entirely possible that the king would act in a noble manner toward Abraham and his wife.

We do people a disservice when we assume that their motives and intentions are the worst. That is not the way in which we have been called. We have been called to love as we have been loved. The Scriptures remind us that love *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things* (1 Corinthians 13:7).

2. He told a half truth.

Abraham tells us something about himself in verse 12 that we did not previously know. It is presented to us by the author as a literary device that invites us to rethink what we have read throughout the story of Abraham. Gary Rendsburg likens this to the movie *The Sixth Sense* in which we watch the actions of the main characters, but only

at the end of the movie do we learn of something which was known to one of the characters all throughout the movie (2006a:190). The purpose of this device is to force us to go back and to re-evaluate the previous sections of the story in light of this new information.

Sarah was indeed Abraham's half-sister. Therefore he told a half truth. But the intent of this half truth was to deliberately obscure the whole truth. Abraham told enough of the truth so that those who heard would be misled. He practiced a deliberate deception hidden behind a technicality.

3. He followed a past practice.

Abraham explains that this deception had become a modus operandi. It had become the standard method of dealing with other people. The deception had become a way of life. We can fall into the same trap of seeing our actions as being "business as usual."

4. He blames God for the uncertain life in which he has been called to be a wanderer in a strange land: *God caused me to wander from my father's house (20:13).*

Each of these excuses resounds with an empty echo of insufficiency, for each is an inadequate vindication for Abraham's actions.

ABRAHAM'S RESTORATION

Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please." 16 And to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared." (Genesis 20:14-16).

Even though Abraham's reasons were faulty, Abimelech restores to him his wife and then gives to him gifts of cattle and servants, enriching him with material prosperity. He also gives Abraham permission to settle in whatever part of the land he chooses. It is perhaps with a touch of irony that he also addresses Sarah and tells her, "*I have given your BROTHER a thousand pieces of silver.*"

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION FOR ABIMELECH

And Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. 18 For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. (Genesis 20:14-18).

In Genesis 18 we were presented with the story of Abraham interceding on behalf of Lot. Now he intercedes on behalf of Abimelech. In both cases, the resulting intercession serves to deliver the one in need. We can see in this, not only a contrast between these two intercessory events, but also between Abraham and the ultimate intercessor.

Abraham	Jesus Christ
He lied about the true relationship with his wife.	He told the truth in all things and was without sin.
He interceded on behalf of Abimelech.	He interceded on behalf of all men.
Sarah was returned to Abraham.	Christ purchased His bride, the church.

Abraham reveals in this chapter that Sarah was both his sister as well as his wife. We can say the same thing about Jesus; He is both our bridegroom as well as our elder brother. But the similarity ends there, for instead of being ashamed of this mystery or lying to hide the fact in order to protect Himself, He put Himself in the place of danger, going to the cross in our stead that we might be protected from harm.

ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

GENESIS 21:1-21

In the previous chapter, we saw Abraham and Sarah and their interactions with the King of Gerar where Abraham hid the fact that Sarah was his wife. At the conclusion of that narrative, we learned that the Lord had closed all of the wombs of the house of Abimelech and that He only opened them upon Abraham's intercession on Abimelech's behalf. Now we see Sarah's womb also being opened by the hand of the Lord.

While the previous chapters have largely presented Abraham's perspective, in this chapter the scene shifts to the perspective of Sarah and Hagar. We shall follow the action as seen through their eyes.

ISAAC'S BIRTH

Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. (Genesis 21:1-3).

The birth of Isaac was in accordance with the promise of God. This is pointed out in a number of ways in these first three verses.

- The Birth of Isaac was “as He (God) had said.” (21:1).
- The Lord did for Sarah “as He had promised (21:1).
- This birth took place “at the appointed time of which God had spoken” (21:2).

The author clearly intends to underscore through this continuing repetition that the Lord can be trusted to keep His promises. He kept His promises to Abraham and He will keep His promises to you.

That does not mean that things will always take place when you wish. I am sure there were times when Abraham and Sarah wondered at the timing of

God. Why did the Lord wait for so many years before giving the promised son? It was to cultivate and to strengthen the faith of Abraham and Sarah.

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised (Hebrews 11:11).

God waited until the situation was absolutely hopeless before stepping in and giving the promised son. He often does the same for us, having us wait for an extended period of time for the answer to a prayer. The result is that our faith is strengthened.

ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. (Genesis 21:4-5).

The circumcision of Isaac is a sign of Abraham's observance of the covenant that had been made between himself and the Lord. He circumcised Isaac as a sign of that covenant. Isaac was too young to know anything about the Lord or about the promises, but he would be brought up as a child of that covenant.

Abraham was a hundred years old at the birth of Isaac. That is a very old age to be having children, but Abraham would be blessed by a number of children before his death. We are reminded of the adage that God is never late, even when He does not operate in accordance with our own timetable.

SARAH'S LAUGHTER

And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." (Genesis 21:6-7).

This is a play on words from the name of the son of Abraham and Sarah. He

was named Isaac. The Hebrew word means “laughter.” Sarah literally says, “God has made ISAAC for me; everyone who hears will ISAAC with me.” This promise of universal rejoicing is echoed in the words of Jesus:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56).

Jesus says that Abraham “Isaaced” to see the day of Christ. There is something wonderful about the laughter of the redeemed. We can look back at little old Sarah and see her playing the nurse to a newborn child and we can laugh. We can also look at ourselves and remember when we were spiritually barren and without life and we can see how God has brought new life into us and made new creatures of us and we can laugh. Ultimately, we look at the coming and the person and the ministry of Jesus and our response ought to be a laughter of joy and rejoicing.

As we look at the life of Isaac, we are going to see certain parallels with his eventual descendant, Jesus Christ.

- God prophesied their birth.
- God named them before they were even conceived.
- Both had a supernatural conception.
- They were both born at the “appointed time.”
- They would both eventually be offered as a sacrifice.

ISHMAEL’S MOCKERY

And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.” 11 And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. (Genesis 21:8-11).

With this section, our story moves from laughter to a stressful and sorrowful situation. It began with a celebration of Isaac’s weaning. Several years have passed following the birth of Isaac. Ishmael is growing into a young teenager. Isaac is of an age to be weaned from his mother’s breast. Everyone is invited to the festivities. The obvious center or attention is little

Isaac. In the midst of the party, Ishmael begins to mock his half brother. The older is mocking the younger.

Sarah sees this and she is incensed. She is fully aware that the protocols of the day view the elder son to be the future leader of the household. She realizes that Ishmael is the older son. Abraham had been eighty six years old at the birth of Ishmael (Genesis 16:16) and he had been a hundred years old at the birth of Isaac. Now he is even older and Ishmael is a teenager.

According to the customs of the day, Ishmael would have the rights of the firstborn son. Would he willingly give up those rights? He is showing by his mockery his true colors. Sarah sees this and she is incensed. She goes to her husband and demands that Ishmael and Hagar be driven out of the tribe.

At first glance, it seems as though Sarah is motivated solely by her own petty jealousy for Isaac and her animosity against Hagar and her son. Sarah seems to be acting out of selfishness and she is acting on behalf of her son to the hurt of Hagar and Ishmael. But as we examine the passage in greater detail, we must admit the possibility that she also speaks from spiritual discernment.

Ishmael's mockery of Isaac demonstrates a lack of respect for the one whom God has chosen to be the recipient of God's covenant blessings. Since Isaac is the heir of Abraham, he will also someday be the leader of the tribe. A lack of respect of the tribal leader will undermine the authority and the unity of the tribe and must be dealt with at the outset.

We should note that this story is used by the Apostle Paul as an allegory; a picture of the reality that exists between the way of grace versus the way of legalism.

Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. (Galatians 4:21-23).

The use of the allegory does not deny the historical reality of the events of Genesis. There is a true allegory here, but it is in addition to this historicity of the narrative, not in place of it.

Judaizers and their Legalism	Paul and his Message of Grace
Abraham had a son by the bondwoman	Abraham had a son by the free woman
Hagar gave birth to Ishmael	Sarah gave birth to Isaac
Born according to the flesh	Born according to the promise.
A natural birth	A supernatural birth

The birth of Ishmael is the story of the natural versus the supernatural. There was nothing supernatural about the birth of Ishmael. But the birth of Isaac was a manifestation of the power of God. The point is that it is possible for one to be in a church and to say Christian sayings and to do Christian works and to do it all in the flesh and apart from the supernatural. The result of such hypocrisy is that it will be ultimately cast out.

Does that describe you? Is there something in your life that can only be explained in the terms of the supernatural? If there is not, then you run the risk of living as a practicing atheist. You may have God in your creed, but He has no place in your life. Paul continues with this analogy.

This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (Galatians 4:24-25).

Now we have a further development of the allegory. We have already seen how one woman represents the flesh while the other represents a birth that is by promise.

Hagar	Sarah
The Mosaic Covenant	The New Covenant
Proceeds from Mount Sinai	Proceeds from Mount Calvary
Bears children who are to be slaves	Bears children who are to be free

Corresponds to the present Jerusalem	Corresponds to the New Jerusalem
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There is within the spiritual realm a place of slavery and a place of freedom. The only place of freedom is that place which is known as being “in Christ.”

But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; for more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband.” 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. (Galatians 4:26-28).

In contrast to the earthly city of Jerusalem is *the Jerusalem above*. To what does this refer? The book of Revelation had not yet been written and John had not yet seen his vision of a city coming down from heaven. Notice that the picture is not of a city that is coming in the future, but of one that exists today. The question is not *when*, but *where*. It is *the Jerusalem above* as opposed to the Jerusalem below, the one that is in the heavenlies as opposed to the one that is on earth.

Hagar	Sarah
The Jerusalem below	The Jerusalem above
A picture of earthly Jerusalem and its sacrificial system	A picture of heavenly Jerusalem where Christ is bringing many sons to glory

But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. (Galatians 4:29).

The natural inclination of religion is to persecute that with which it does not agree. This corresponds to a persecution that took place by Ishmael against Isaac as displayed in Ishmael’s mocking of his younger half brother. His treatment of Isaac is paralleled by the treatment of God’s people by religion. Just as the flesh wars with the Spirit (5:17), so Ishmael, a child of the flesh, was at odds with Isaac, a child of the promise, born according to the Spirit (4:29).

Ishmael	Isaac
Role of the persecutor	Role of the persecuted
Religion was the persecutor of Christ	The church is persecuted by Religion

But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.”

So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. (Galatians 4:30-31).

Paul draws his argument to a conclusion by pointing to what end Hagar and Ishmael were brought. They were cast out of the family. We normally look at the historical account and are inclined to feel that Sarah over-reacted in her jealousy and that Abraham made a poor decision because he was afraid to stand up to his wife. We read the narrative and our heart goes out to Hagar and her son who came close to death in their resulting banishment.

But the issue was the inheritance. If Ishmael was allowed to remain, he might have become a contestant for the inheritance of Abraham. God had promised a supernatural inheritance through a supernatural seed. If that promise were not allowed to be fulfilled, there would be no salvation and the human race would find itself without hope in its sin. At stake was nothing less than the salvation of mankind.

The tragedy is in those who seek to follow in the way of Ishmael. These are the people who insist on trying to approach the Lord on the basis of their own works.

1. The Ishmael Church is a product of the flesh.

It is the plan of self-effort. That is how Ishmael came about in the first place. Abraham and Sarah had a promise. But they tried to produce the promise through their own efforts. There are a lot of churches today that are only there because of self-effort. If the Holy Spirit got up and left, it would be business as usual.

2. The Ishmael Church is man's substitute for the real thing. It is the Isaac church that is genuine.

This goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. You recall what happened when Adam and Eve first fell into sin. They instituted “Operation Figleaf.” They attempted to hide their nakedness with a bunch of fig leaves. Fig leaves may work very well on fig trees, but they don’t do the job when it comes to hiding human nakedness. Man’s substitutes will always fall short.

It is possible for a church to grow physically and to have all sorts of programs and to merely be a counterfeit substitute. The way of legalism lacks a quality of genuine spiritual life.

3. The Ishmael Church is permitted a measure of blessing.

Ishmael was permitted to be born. God promised to bring 12 princess from Ishmael and He did so. The Arab nation continues to exist as an influence in the world today. But the covenant was given to Isaac.

4. The Ishmael Church mocks the things of the Spirit.

The older they get, the sharper the division that will exist between the two. If you want to find the true church, then look to see who is persecuting whom.

The religion of promise and the religion of works cannot co-exist. God will not divide His blessing between them.
(Pinnock, quoted by Fung (1988:214)).

5. The Ishmael Church remains in the same house for a while.

It is interesting to note that within God’s plan there is always a Cain to every Abel, an Esau to every Jacob, a Korah to every Moses and a Judas to every Peter. The same is true for the church. God has allowed the tares to grow up with the wheat.

Why? Because they will each expose the other. Ishmael had no problems until Isaac came along. But the existence of the two of them brought about contention. In the same way, the Pharisees looked great until Jesus came along.

The good news is that if we are in Christ then *we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman*. We have partaken of a supernatural birth. It has linked us to the promises of Abraham. That has brought us true freedom.

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. 13 And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.” (Genesis 21:12-13).

Abraham was told by the Lord to listen to Sarah and to take her advice. This would be hard for Abraham to accept because he had a great love for Ishmael, his firstborn son. It is for this reason that God adds that He would also make a great nation from Ishmael.

ISHMAEL'S EXPULSION

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. (Genesis 21:14).

Hagar and Ishmael leave the camp of Abraham and move southward into the wilderness. This is the first reference that Genesis has made to Beersheba. Later in this chapter, we will be told how it came to be given this name, but for now, the focus is not on the name, but the general area as representative of the wilderness. Beersheba marks the southernmost boundary of the land of Canaan. The point is that Hagar was leaving the Promised Land.

HAGAR'S PRAYER

And the water in the skin was used up, and she left the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. (Genesis 21:15-16).

It is a terrible thing to die of thirst. Hagar and her son found themselves without water and without hope. Unwilling to further observe the anguish of her son, she moved away from him and wept, calling out to the Lord. Her

call was not a call of faith, but a resignation to the fate she believed had befallen her.

GOD'S ANSWER

And God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand; for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. (Genesis 21:17-19).

It is interesting that we read, not that God heard Hagar, but that He heard Ishmael. After all, his very name means “heard by God.” Her prayer had been that she not see the boy die. We are not told what his prayer might have been, but we are told that God heard him crying. This is a picture of the compassion of God. He comes in the time of great need and he answers the cry of the helpless.

ISHMAEL'S CONCLUSION

And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 And he lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. (Genesis 21:20-21).

It would seem that Ishmael had been taught to follow the Lord by his father, Abraham. Therefore as he grew to manhood, he continued to walk with the Lord. Under the influence of his Egyptian mother, he obtained a wife from the land of Egypt.

Garrett points out the similarity of structure in the two Hagar narratives (1991:144). I would submit that these are not accidental. They are given to us purposefully that we might see and appreciate the contrast.

Genesis 16	Genesis 21
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Sarai's infertility (16:1).	Sarah's fertility (21:1-5).
Sarai's response: "Sleep with my maidservant" (16:2-3).	Sarah's response: Praise and laughter (21:6-8).
Hagar is pregnant and despises Sarai (16:4).	Ishmael is older; he mocks Isaac (21:9).
Sarai complains and Hagar flees (16:5-6).	Sarah complains: "Drive out Hagar" (21:10).
Angel of the Lord speaks to Hagar and tells her to return to Sarah (16:7-9).	God speaks to Abraham and tells him to listen to Sarah (21:11-12).
God's promise: "I will increase your descendants" (16:10).	God's promise: "I will make of the son of the maid a nation" (21:13).
Hagar names the well Beer-lahai-roi after the "God who sees" (16:13-14).	Hagar encounters God by the well of Beersheba (21:14-18).
Hagar gives birth to Ishmael (16:15-16).	Hagar and Ishmael saved; Ishmael gets a wife (21:19-21).

ABRAHAM & ABIMELECH

OATH OF FRIENDSHIP

GENESIS 21:22-34

As our passage opens, we again see Abimelech, the king of Gerar in the land that would eventually come to be known as the land of the Philistines. He was first introduced in Genesis 20 when Abraham came into that area and claimed that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife. Abimelech had taken Sarah, but was prevented by God from entering into a physical relationship with her. At the end of the account, Sarah was restored to Abraham and he was given permission by Abimelech to settle wherever he pleased.

AN OATH OF FRIENDSHIP

Now it came about at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “God is with you in all that you do; 23 now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity; but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me, and to the land in which you have sojourned.” 24 And Abraham said, “I swear it.” (Genesis 21:22-24).

Abimelech gives his reasons for wanting to form an alliance with Abraham. It is because he has recognized that God is with Abraham in all that he does. Abimelech had come to recognize a principle at work. The principle is that a believer is a blessing to all those around him. By application, we can see the importance of forming alliances and cultivating friendships with those who share our faith and love for our Lord.

There are two parts to this covenant.

1. An Honest Relationship: *You will not deal falsely with me (21:23).*

The relationship between Abraham and Abimelech was to be based on honesty. Perhaps this was to be a reminder of how Abraham had

dealt falsely with Abimelech in the past when he hid the truth about his true relationship with Sarah.

2. A Reciprocal Relationship: *According to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me, and to the land in which you have sojourned* (21:23).

Abimelech is asking for the same treatment that he had given to Abraham. It was a treatment characterized as kindness. We are called to be kind. The reason we are called to be kind is because we have been shown kindness. God has been kind to us and we are to reflect that same kindness to others.

ABRAHAM'S REPROOF OF ABIMELECH

But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized. 26 And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; neither did you tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.” (Genesis 21:25-26).

As we have noted previously in the case of Lot and Abraham in Genesis 13, the issue of water rights and wells was very important to the shepherds of that region. This was even more true as you moved south into the wilderness regions around the lands of the Philistines. Thus, as Abimelech speaks of the kindness he has shown to Abraham, Abraham points out a wrong that is taking place. It is a wrong to which Abimelech confesses ignorance.

Abimelech	Abraham
His name means “father of a king”	His name means “father of a multitude”
He was the king of the land of Philistia	He will be the father of many nations
He had rebuked Abraham for deceiving him	He now rebukes Abimelech because his servants have taken a well from him

He returned Abraham's wife to him	Abraham had interceded for Abimelech
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In response to Abraham's charge, Abimelech says that he had not previously been told that there was a conflict.

THE CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT

And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them made a covenant. 28 Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?" 30 And he said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand in order that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well." 31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba; because there the two of them took an oath. 32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines. (Genesis 21:27-32).

We should not be surprised at Abimelech's ignorance of the sacrifice of the seven ewe lambs. This is a treaty format that is unknown to the rest of the Old Testament and was apparently unknown to Abimelech as well.

There is a play on words here. It is understood when we realize that the term for "swear" in verses 23-24 (**שָׁבַע** - shava) and the term for "seven" in verse 28 (**שְׁבַע** - sheva) is a homonym — a single word with two different meanings. The only difference between these words is the vowel pointing and the pronunciation.

Accordingly, the place is given the name "Beersheba" which carries the double meaning, "the well of the oath" and "the well of the seven." Remember that it was in the wilderness of Beersheba that God had appeared to Hagar earlier in this chapter (Genesis 21:14). This would be a place of great promises.

- It was the place where God would reconfirm His covenant with Isaac (Genesis 26:23-25).

- It will be here that Abimelech will reconfirm his covenant with Isaac (Genesis 26:26-33).
- It will be here that God will speak to Jacob, telling him to go down into Egypt and promising to make him a great nation (Genesis 46:1-5).

Later in Israel's history, Beersheba would be the southernmost portion of the Promised Land. When the Bible speaks of the unity of the land, it speaks of the people from Dan to Beersheba (Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 3:20; 2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:2; 1 Kings 4:25; 2 Chronicles 30:5).

A MEMORIAL TREE

And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days. (Genesis 21:33-34).

Abraham has already made his covenant with Abimelech, but now he also turns to the Lord and plants a tree that shall serve as a reminder of a greater covenant, one with the Lord. It pictures the promise that Abraham was to be planted in this land. It is a reminder to us that we also are partakers of a covenant and that it is one that is connected to a tree that was planted on our behalf. Our hope is rooted in the One who died upon a tree that we might live for all eternity as we call upon the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

WHEN GOD PROVIDES

GENESIS 22:1-14

The fact that Abraham was to be a blessing to the nations takes the narrative of Abraham out of the realm of historical trivia and makes it relevant to where you and I live and breathe. The promise to Abraham is that he would be a blessing to you and a blessing to me. It began with a promise that was provided by God.

*Now the LORD said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*
(Genesis 12:1-3).

The promise to Abraham was the promise that from him would come a great nation. His descendants would be innumerable. You could go down to the beach and you could look at all of the grains of sand and that would be how many descendants Abraham would have. You could look through the Hubble telescope and see the uncounted number of stars in the sky and that would be how many descendants Abraham would have.

There was only one problem. Sarah, Abraham’s wife, was barren. They had tried and they had tried and she could not get pregnant. How were they to fulfill God’s promise? Perhaps He needed some help. That was Sarah’s idea and she decided that Abraham could have children by an alternate woman. Operation Hagar. It worked. Sort of. The problems you read about in the Middle East can be traced back to this mistake of trying to “help God.”

Furthermore, God didn’t need their help. God came once again and promised, not only that Abraham would have a son, but that it would be with

Sarah. When Sarah heard the promise, she laughed: “Yeah, right!!!” But it was God who had the last laugh and sure enough, when Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, she conceived and had a son. They named him Isaac – “Laughter.”

GOD PROVIDES A TEST

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

2 And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." (Genesis 22:1-2).

We are told at the very outset of this chapter that what follows was to constitute a test of Abraham. Why does the author do this? It is so that, as we read the narrative, our sympathies will lie with Abraham. If we did not have this introduction, we might be tempted to look at this narrative from the point of view of Isaac. We might be thinking in terms of his bewilderment or his submission. But that is not the point of the narrative. We are to look at it from Abraham's perspective.

As we first come to this command, we are struck by the obvious question: Why is God doing this? What kind of God would command a man to engage in the human sacrifice of his own son?

To be fair, we must admit that the rest of the story is going to assure us that God does not permit Abraham to go through with this sacrifice. He will let him go right up to the point of being about to kill his son and then he will stop him. But why does God put Abraham through the agony and the ordeal of such a preparation in the first place? Doesn't the New Testament assure us that God does not tempt people?

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (James 1:13).

I believe there is a subtle difference between being tested versus being tempted. The difference is one of intention.

Tempted	Tested
The intention is to make the person being tempted fail.	The intention is to exercise the faith of the person being tested so that it will be strengthened.

When Satan tempts us, it is in order to make us fall. He does not have our best interests at heart. He has our worst interests at heart. It is a bit like having the Ford Corporation do a testing of Toyotas. There testing would likely be designed so that the Toyotas would fail. On the other hand, a test that they carried out of their own vehicles would likely be designed so that they might learn about their cars and improve their product.

God is going to test Abraham and the test comes in a form that was appropriate to that age and culture. You see, the idea of the sacrifice of a firstborn was not unique. There were other ancient religions that carried this same idea, especially in the case where a covenant had been broken.

It is for this reason that Abraham doesn't respond to this command with a complaint that such an expectation is immoral or wrong. Abraham realizes something that we today have generally lost sight of -- that God is the One who gives life and all life is His.

And so, God provides a test of Abraham. It is a test of his faith. The good news is that God has already provided amply to Abraham through his faith. The entire life of Abraham has been a story of faith.

- It was a test for him to leave his family and travel to Canaan.
- He was tested in Egypt and again in Gerar.
- He was tested when he and Lot had difficulties in the land and He was tested when Lot had his own difficulties.

We have now come full circle to the final testing of Abraham's faith. That for which he has waited all his life and which has finally been given to him in his old age is to be taken and given over to the Lord.

GOD PROVIDES THROUGH FAITH

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his

son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. (Genesis 22:3).

Back in Genesis 15:6 we were told that Abraham believed the Lord and it was counted to Him as righteousness. Now we see that faith resulted in a corresponding action on Abraham's part. Real faith always results in a corresponding action.

One of the things that I have done as a fire fighter is to rappel down the side of a 25-story building. Now it is one thing to say that I have faith in that static kernmantel rope that spans that height. It is quite another to gear up and step off the edge of that building. Do you know what is the hardest part of that exercise? It is taking the first step over the edge. After that, everything else is easy.

Notice the action that takes place here. We do not read that Abraham procrastinated. Instead, he rose up early in the morning to prepare and to begin his journey to the place where God had commanded.

Where was that place? It is described back in verse 2 as the land of Moriah. Where is the land of Moriah? The Bible gives the answer.



Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (2 Chronicles 3:1).

The place where Abraham was sent to sacrifice his son was the same place where the Temple would one day be constructed. It was on the site of today's Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." (Genesis 22:4-5).

It took three days for Abraham and his party to arrive. As they finally get to the site where, from a distance, they can see the mountain, Abraham tells the servants who have accompanied him that they are to remain here. Notice what he says: *"I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you."* (Genesis 22:5).

What is happening here? After all, Abraham has not read the rest of Genesis 22. He does not have the hindsight that we have. What Abraham DID have was faith. He believed the promise of God.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." 19 He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Do you see it? Abraham's faith was such that he believed that, if he sacrificed his son Isaac as commanded, then God was able to raise him up from the dead. His instructions to his servants indicated that he had that kind of resurrection faith.

Upon what was this faith based? It was based upon the promise of God that the Messianic line would come through Isaac.

And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. (Genesis 22:7-8).

As Abraham and Isaac continue up the mountain, Isaac notices that there is something missing from their supplies. They have come to make a burnt offering. Accordingly, they have a source of fire and they have wood to burn. There is only one thing missing. It is the sacrifice. And so, Isaac asks the obvious question. Where is the sacrifice? It will be provided by God

Himself.

There is a strange yet prophetic quality to the words of Abraham, for it was in this same area that, two thousand years later, God provided the ultimate sacrifice for sins.

Isaac	Jesus
To be offered as a sacrifice to God	Offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world
Taken to Mount Moriah, outside of the ancient city of Jerusalem	Taken to Golgotha outside the city of Jerusalem
Carried the wood for the sacrifice up the mountain	Carried the cross for his crucifixion out to Golgotha
Isaac was bound and laid on the altar	Jesus was nailed to the cross
It took three days for the party to travel to Moriah, the place of death	Three days after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead

GOD PROVIDES A SACRIFICE

Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (Genesis 22:9-10).

Abraham and Isaac finally arrive on the scene and go about the work of preparing for the sacrifice. The altar is built. The wood is arranged. The passage is strangely quiet about Isaac's response as he is taken and bound and placed upon the altar.

- Did Isaac protest?
- Did Abraham offer any explanation?
- Were there tears?

We are not told. And the reason that we are not told is because that is not the

“big idea” of the narrative. We are not meant to come here and look at Abraham’s noble sacrifice or Isaac’s submissiveness to his father. Those points are valid, but if you come here and see only those things, then you have missed the bigger idea of the passage. You are meant to come here and see God’s substitute.

GOD PROVIDES A REPRIEVE

Imagine the scene. Isaac lies bound upon the altar. The wood is ready. The knife is sharp. The intended sacrifice is ready to be put to death. Abraham raises the instrument of death. Suddenly there is an interruption.

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Genesis 22:11-12).

Abraham has passed the test of faithfulness. Notice what is said -- *you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.* This is not a denial of the existence of Ishmael, but it is to say that Isaac was the special son; the son of promise.

Because Abraham has not withheld the sacrifice of his son, his only son, God knows that Abraham fears Him and honors Him and loves Him.

The good news is that what God has called us to do, He has also done Himself. God has not withheld His Son -- His only Son -- from us. And because God has passed the faithfulness test, we can trust in Him and we can trust in His love.

GOD PROVIDES A SUBSTITUTE

Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is

said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." (Genesis 22:13-14).

Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket -- a substitute. He understands that this substitute is to take the place of his son and so Isaac is released and the ram is sacrificed in his place. It almost seems anti-climactic until you notice what is said in verse 14.

Abraham names the place. He calls the name of the place: *The LORD Will Provide*. Only that is not what the Hebrew text says. The word translated “provide” is from the Hebrew root Ra’ah.” It is a very common word and is used throughout the Old Testament. The vast majority of times it is used, it carries the basic meaning, “to see.”

- Genesis 1:4. *And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.*
- Genesis 3:6. *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes...*
- Genesis 12:1. *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you* (Literally, “which I will cause you to see”).
- 1 Samuel 16:7. *God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

That brings us the obvious question: If Abraham named the place, “The Lord has seen,” then what is it that the Lord saw? To see the answer to this riddle, we need to look carefully at the passage to see what Abraham saw.

Verse 13 says that *Abraham raised his eyes and looked...* The word translated “looked” is our old friend Ra’ah. It is the same word that is translated “provided” in the next verse. The fact that Abraham names this place, “The Lord will look” suggests that we need to look at what the Lord will look at and what Abraham looked at.

Do you see it? It was the ram. He lifted up his eyes and he looked at the ram. It was a ram that had been provided by God. It was a ram that was to serve as a substitute for Isaac. It was a ram that symbolized the once and future Messiah.

Abraham looked and saw the ram. But he did not name the place, “Abraham looked.” He instead named it, “The Lord will look.”

Do you see the significance? Abraham looks at the picture of the ram and Abraham understands a truth about the future. It is a truth that God is one day going to provide a substitute who will die in our place and that God will look at that substitutionary sacrifice and He will be satisfied.

Why is that so significant? It is significant because rams and lambs and animal sacrifices do not do anything to satisfy sin. The blood of an animal cannot turn a wrong into a right. But the death of God's promised Savior was able to do what no animal could ever do.

GOD PROVIDES HIMSELF

God came to do what no sacrifice could ever do. When the blood of goats and bulls and rams and sheep was insufficient, God provided Himself as a sacrifice. The cross was the ultimate act of love. It is given so that we might see. But it was also given so that God Himself could see. Isaiah makes mention of this in his famous 53rd chapter.

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11).

This is the same Hebrew word that we have noted before. It points to the fact that the cross was the place where the Father looked upon the Son, the Righteous One, and was satisfied that the penalty for sin had been paid in full. Justice was satisfied when God the Judge became God the Judged.

C.S. Lewis used to say that unbelievers tend to think they can put God "in the dock." That is old English for placing someone on trial. In the English court, the accused would stand on a raised platform to be judged and that platform was known as the "dock." Lewis pointed out that we, as the handiwork of the Creator of all things, have no right or ability to put God in the dock. It is we who are in danger of being judged.

Yet God put Himself in the place of judgment in the person of Jesus Christ, the righteous One. Not only that, He was judged to be guilty, not because of any sins He had committed, but He was identified with our sins and judged in our place. God looked upon Jesus and was satisfied. What is to be our response? Much the same. We are called to look to Jesus.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Look to Jesus -- fix your eyes upon Him. Are you tired? Look to Jesus and He will give you strength. Are you depressed? Look to Jesus. Are you lonely? Look to the One who loves you and gave Himself for you. Are you overcome with guilt, knowing that you have not measured up before God and despairing that you can ever return? Look! Look! Look! Know that God Himself has looked and has been satisfied.

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