

• **GENESIS 1–12** •



New Living
Translation®
SECOND EDITION

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

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NLT STUDY BIBLE

“Why is the Bible so hard to understand?”

*“I’ve tried to read the Bible, but I always get bogged down
in all the laws and genealogies.”*

You hold in your hands your first taste of a unique new study Bible. Come walk through the Holy Land, see what was going on, hear what the disciples of Jesus heard. And for the first time in your life, really understand what God was saying—and is still saying today.

We know, we know—it sounds *like* marketing hype. So here’s the brutal, honest truth: The *NLT Study Bible* is not designed to give you the solutions to all of your problems.

It’s not about you.

It’s not about me.

*It’s about God and his love,
and about being God’s people.*

The *NLT Study Bible* is not “about me.” It’s not about my world, but about God and his world. It’s not about my experiences, but about the experiences of those who lived when God first revealed himself. It’s not about my plans for the future, but about God’s plan for redemption and vision for the future. The *NLT Study Bible* focuses on what the Bible is saying and what that means—for our relationships with God and others, and for understanding the world and God’s plan and purposes for it.

The *NLT Study Bible* helps people understand the meaning and significance of the Bible in order to help them understand how to apply it—to themselves, to their experiences, to their relationships, to their world. This is especially true because the Holy Spirit is at work, bringing to people’s minds and hearts the applications that he has in mind for them. He does this in millions of different ways every day. We just provide a context within which the Holy Spirit can work, in which people will understand Scripture, so that the applications can be accurate to the meaning and message of Scripture. Then we get out of the Holy Spirit’s way.

INTRODUCTION

It is the same with my word.

I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

It will accomplish all I want it to,

and it will prosper everywhere I send it. Isaiah 55:11

We wanted a study Bible that really reflected the heartbeat of the NLT. The New Living Translation was commissioned for one basic purpose: “to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today’s readers as the original texts did to the readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world.”¹ The *NLT Study Bible* is the next logical extension of that goal—all of the features are designed to do the same thing as the NLT: to make the Bible clear so that we can hear the voice of God.

We believe that the NLT is the clearest accurate Bible translation today, and so we created the *NLT Study Bible* in the same manner. The notes, charts, maps, profiles, and every other feature of the *NLT Study Bible* have been designed to cross the bridges of time, space, culture, and literary conventions so that we can, as much as is possible, enter the world of the Bible to hear and read the Scriptures as those who first received them did.

The *NLT Study Bible* is the result of over 7 years’ work by 48 scholars and editors, most of them the very same ones who did the translation work. We think that they did not simply do a good job, but a great one. The result is a study Bible that is unlike any other. We challenge you to try it, and we are confident you’ll think so, too.

Come, walk through God’s word, understand it for yourself, and let it change your life.

Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. Joshua 1:8

I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways.

Psalm 119:15

THE EDITORS

¹ Taken from “A Note To Readers” at the beginning of all NLT Bibles

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Each book introduction helps readers understand that book as its original readers first understood it in their world. The book introduction discusses the book's setting, gives a summary of its literary structure, discusses historical issues such as authorship and date of writing, and explains the meaning and message of the book for its readers.

OVERVIEW

The Overview helps readers to find out quickly what this book of the Bible is about and why it is important. It gives a thumbnail sketch of the book and its contents and purpose.

SETTING

What is the story behind each book of the Bible? What was the need for each book in its setting? Every book of the Bible was written by flesh-and-blood people living in a particular time and place in history. They faced real challenges and difficulties. They wrote to other real flesh-and-blood people living at their own time in history. They wrote to address specific problems in their world, to help their readers understand God's mind regarding the issues and problems that they faced.

The world of the Bible is very different from our world today, but people are the same everywhere. If we understand the setting in which each book of the Bible was written, we will be in a much better position to understand what problems it addressed, what actions it was prompting, and what message it communicates.

THE BOOK OF

GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings—of the universe and of humanity, of sin and its catastrophic effects, and of God's plan to restore blessing to the world through his chosen people. God began his plan when he called Abraham and made a covenant with him. Genesis traces God's promised blessings from generation to generation, to the time of bondage and the need for redemption from Egypt. It lays the foundation for God's subsequent revelation, and most other books of the Bible draw on its contents. Genesis is a source of instruction, comfort, and edification.

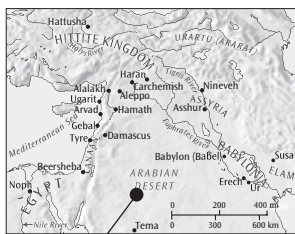
SETTING

When Genesis was written, the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They had recently been released from bondage and guided through the desert to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, where he had established his covenant relationship with them and had given them his law through Moses. Israel was now poised to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that God had promised Abraham.

While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites had adopted many pagan ideas and customs from their Egyptian masters (e.g., Exod 32:1-4). They were influenced by false concepts of God, the world, and human nature (e.g., Exod 32), and were reduced to being slaves rather than owners and managers of the land. Perhaps they had forgotten the great promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps they had concluded that the promises would never be fulfilled.

Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to understand the nature of God, his world, and their place in it more clearly. They needed to embrace their identity as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis provided the needed understanding.



▲ The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC. Humanity spread out from the mountains of Urartu (Ararat) and populated the early centers of civilization. By the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), many of the cities were ancient.

ASSHUR 2:14; 10:22; 25:3; 25:18
ASSYRIA 10:11
BABYLON (BABEL), BABYLONIA 10:9-10; 11:1-9; 14:1, 9
GANNAN 9:18-27; 10:18-19; 12:5-10
DAMASCUS 14:15; 15:2
EGYPT 12:10-13:1; 15:18; 37:28-36; 39:1-50:26
ELAM 10:22; 14:1; 14:9
ERECH 10:10; Ezra 4:9
HARATH 10:18; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33
HARAN 11:26-32; 12:4-5; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4
UR 11:28; 11:31; 15:7; Neh 9:7
URARTU (ARARAT) 8:4

MAP

The book introductions include maps of the setting to show where the events in each book of the Bible took place and how the places mentioned in that book fit into the world. Each map includes a caption that describes the map and how it relates to the book's setting. Along with a caption, most of these maps include a short index of places mentioned in the book.

FEATURES GUIDE

SUMMARY

What is the structure and flow of ideas in each book of the Bible? The Summary provides just that—a brief summary of the contents of the book. If the book is narrative, the Summary tells its story. If the book is a letter, the Summary explains its contents and the flow of its argument. If the book is an anthology, the Summary describes the structure and contents of the collection. If we have in mind the flow of the book, we can better understand each individual passage.

SUMMARY

Genesis traces God's work to overcome with blessing the curse that came on humankind because of sin. The book arranges family traditions, genealogies, historical events, and editorial comments into a single, sustained argument.

Every section but the first has the heading, "This is the account" (or *These are the generations*; Hebrew *toledot*); each of the *toledot* sections explains the

OUTLINE

1:1–2:3

Creation

2:4–4:26

What Happened to the Creation

5:1–6:8

The Account of Adam's Descendants

6:9–9:29

The Account of Noah's Family

10:1–11:9

The Account of Noah's Sons

11:10–26

The Account of Shem's Descendants

11:27–25:11

The Account of Terah's Descendants

25:12–18

The Account of Ishmael's Descendants

25:19–35:29

The Account of Isaac's Descendants

36:1–37:1

The Account of Esau's Descendants

37:2–50:26

The Account of Jacob's Descendants

history of a line of descent. In each case, a deterioration of well-being is followed by an increasing focus on God's plan to bless the world. This plan is the basis for God's covenant with his people; as the blessing develops, the covenant is clarified. By the end of the book, the reader is ready for the fulfillment of the promises in Israel's redemption from bondage (see Exodus).

The first section (1:1–2:3) does not have the *toledot* heading, and logically so—it is the account of creation "in the beginning" (1:1). The work of creation is wrapped in God's approval and blessing as he fulfills his plan.

The next section (2:4–4:26) focuses on the creation of human life (2:4–25) and traces what became of God's creation because of Adam's and Eve's sin (3:1–13), the curse on their sin (3:14–24), and the extension of sin to their descendants (4:1–24). Humanity no longer enjoyed God's rest; instead, they experienced guilt and fear. So they fled from God and developed a proud civilization.

Independence from God resulted in the downward drift of human life (5:1–6:8). The genealogy of 5:1–32 begins by recalling that human beings were made in God's image and were blessed by him (5:1–2). As the genealogy is traced, the death of each generation reminds the reader of the curse, with Enoch providing a ray of hope that the curse is not final. In 6:1–8, we learn that God regretted having made humans and decided to judge the earth. Noah, however, received God's favor and provided a source of hope (5:29; 6:8).

The next section (6:9–9:29) brings the curse of judgment through the flood followed by blessing in a new beginning. A renewed creation began, purged of the abominable evil that had invaded and ruined the human race.

The world's population expanded into various nations (10:1–11:9) whose people were bent on disobedience. The population of the earth by Shem,

TIMELINE

2166 / 1990 bc*

Abraham is born

2091 / 1915 bc

Abraham moves to Canaan

2080 / 1904 bc

Ishmael is born

2066 / 1890 bc

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Isaac is born

2006 / 1830 bc

Jacob and Esau are born

1898 / 1722 bc

Joseph is sold into slavery

1885 / 1709 bc

Joseph begins governing Egypt

1876 / 1661 bc

Jacob moves to Egypt

1446 / 1270 bc

Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus), moves to Mount Sinai

1406 / 1230 bc

Israel enters Canaan

*The two dates harmonize with the traditional "early" chronology and a more recent "late" chronology of the Exodus. All dates are approximate. Please see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118.

OUTLINE

Each book includes an outline with up to three levels of headings. In the introduction, we provide the first level of the outline to give the reader an overview. The full outline is embedded in the NLT text as running headings. These book outlines follow the literary structure of the book—how the authors themselves thought about the organization and flow of ideas.

TIMELINE

A timeline can be found in the margin of nearly all book introductions. The timelines show when the events in each book of the Bible took place and what was going on at the time. We can refer to the timeline while reading the setting and summary for the book, and again while reading the book, to help clarify and reinforce how the events fit into the flow of history.

Ham, and Japheth seemed fruitful (10:1-32), but the nations were divided by languages and boundaries (10:5, 20, 31). Because of their rebellion, God dispersed them to prevent greater wickedness (11:1-9). After the chaos of the scattered nations, 11:10-26 brings the focus to Abram, through whom God chose to bring blessing to all. The rest of the book (11:27-50:26) tells of God's blessing Abram and his descendants. God first made a covenant with Abram (11:27-25:11), promising him a great nation, land, and name. As time went on, God made the specific terms of the covenant clearer, and Abram's faith grew deeper.

In each generation, Genesis gives a brief account of the families that are not Israel's ancestors before turning to the line of Israel. After briefly reporting what became of Ishmael (25:12-18), Genesis traces in detail what happened to Isaac and his family (25:19-35:29).

True to the pattern of the book, Esau's line (Edom) is dealt with briefly (36:1-37:1) before the chosen line of Jacob the heir. The final section (37:2-50:26) concerns Jacob's family, centering on the life of Joseph. In the land of Canaan, the family became corrupt under Canaanite influence to the point of beginning to merge with them (ch 38). To preserve the line of blessing, God sent the family into Egypt where they could flourish, remain separate (43:32; 46:34), and become a great nation. The book closes with the promise of the Lord's coming to rescue his people from Egypt (50:24-26).

AUTHORSHIP

Both Scripture and tradition attribute the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) to Moses. No one was better qualified than Moses to have written this book. Since he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), he had the literary skills to collect and edit Israel's traditions and records and to compose this theological treatise. His unique communion with God gave him the spiritual illumination, understanding, and inspiration needed to guide him. He had good reason to write this work—to provide Israel with the theological and historical foundation for the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, and to establish the new nation in accord with the promises made to their ancestors.

Most scholars, however, do not accept that Moses wrote Genesis. The prevailing critical view, called the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis was compiled from various sources by different groups of people. In such approaches, there is seldom a word about divine revelation or inspiration. For those who understand the Bible as God's inspired word, such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Genesis can be understood much more straightforwardly as the product of Moses' genius under God's inspiration with later editorial adjustments. (See further "Introduction to the Pentateuch: Authorship," p. 12).

COMPOSITION

Biblical scholars of all stripes have always acknowledged that various sources were used in writing Genesis and other historical texts in the Bible (such as Kings and Luke). Moses used collections of family records, oral traditions, ancient accounts of primal events, and genealogies to write Genesis. Those sources could have been incorporated as received, or the author may have changed their style and wording, stitching them together with additional material for the particular purpose of tracing the foundations of Israelite faith.

AUTHOR, DATE, AND OTHER HISTORICAL ISSUES

What do we know about who wrote this book and when they wrote it? What are the difficulties in determining the historical facts? Even though these issues might not be familiar ground, they are important. Understanding these things can help us appreciate the complexity of the Bible. Far from undermining confidence in Scripture, however, the issues discussed here give us a greater appreciation of how magnificent Scripture truly is. At the same time, we learn to be humble in how we interpret God's word.

"God rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And he blessed the seventh day. . . ." And we ourselves will be a "seventh day" when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his sanctification. . . . Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God.

ST. AUGUSTINE
City of God, sec. 22.30

Genesis is therefore a unique work. Theology, history, and tradition come together to instruct God's people and prepare them for blessing.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Israel's most important questions were answered by the Genesis narratives. Life and death, the possession of the land of Canaan, and how Israel ended up in Egypt are explained as God's providential working in history. Israel was part of God's plan in this world. His plan had

MEANING AND MESSAGE

What is the message of each book of the Bible? What is its significance now? Here's where the rubber meets the road. Everything in a book's introduction—setting, summary, author, date, genre—is intended to prepare us to understand what that book of the Bible has to say, its message and significance. Reading these paragraphs carefully and reflectively will give us the keys to understanding that book of the Bible.

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Genesis also includes passages and expressions that are obviously later editorial glosses. Some sections (such as the list of Edomite kings, 36:31-43) could have been added during the early days of the monarchy. There is no conflict in saying that Genesis was authored by Moses and augmented by subsequent editors whose work was guided by the Holy Spirit. Given these considerations, conservative scholars find it plausible that the biblical material accurately records actual events.

LITERARY CHARACTER

Genesis includes various types of literature. Several suggestions have been made as to the nature of the materials.

Myth. Mythological literature explains the origins of things symbolically through the deeds of gods and supernatural creatures. For ancient peoples, myths were beliefs that explained life and reality. Whole systems of ritual activities were developed to ensure that the forces of fertility, life, and death would continue year by year. Some of these rituals gave rise to cult prostitution (see 38:15, 21-22).

It would be very difficult to classify the material in Genesis as myth. Israel had one God, not a multitude. The nation of Israel had a beginning, a history, and a future hope. They saw God, rather than gods and other supernatural creatures, as the primary actor in the world. Their worship was not cosmic, magical, or superstitious, but a re-enactment of their own rescue from Egypt and a celebration of God's factual intervention in history and their hope in his promises.

If Genesis uses elements of mythological language, it is to display a deliberate contrast with pagan concepts and to show that the Lord God is sovereign over such ideas. For example, the ancients worshipped the sun as a god, but in Genesis the sun serves the Creator's wishes (1:14-18). The book of Genesis is a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods. Genesis is not myth.

Etiology. A number of scholars describe the Genesis narratives as etiologies, stories that explain the causes of factual reality or traditional beliefs. The implication is that such stories were made up for explanatory purposes and do not describe historical events. For example, if one says that the story of Cain and Abel was made up to explain why shepherds and farmers do not get along, the account loses its integrity as factual history.

Etiological elements certainly occur in Genesis, because the book gives the foundation and rationale for almost everything that Israel would later do. For example, the creation account of Gen 2 ends with the explanation, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother. . . ." The event as it happened explains why marriage was conducted the way it was, but to say that a story explains something is quite different from saying that the story was fabricated to explain it. The stories of Genesis are not fictional tales invented to explain later customs and beliefs.

History. Many scholars object to regarding Genesis as history, for two basic reasons: (1) Genesis explains events as caused by God, and the inclusion of the supernatural is regarded as proof that the material is theological reflection and thus not historically reliable; and (2) the events in Genesis cannot be validated from outside sources; no other records have demonstrated that Abraham existed or that any of his family history occurred.

Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality. Therefore, it does not moralize on them. [Genesis] is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God in keeping those promises.

VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, p. 46

EPIGRAPHS

Sometimes other authors say insightful things about a book of the Bible, or they make a poignant observation about something that a given book discusses. The editors have gathered some of the best quotations that they could find about each book and put them in the margins of the book introductions, to stimulate thinking and to stimulate meaningful interaction with each book of the Bible.

FURTHER READING

Where can we learn more about each book of the Bible? The NLT Study Bible has plenty of resources for a lifetime journey of reading, studying, and discovering the riches of Scripture. Some readers, however, will want to go even further. At the end of each book introduction, the editors have recommended some of the resources that have helped them the most in studying and understanding that particular book of the Bible. They've chosen materials that are available in the general market—no seminary required! Nearly all of these books are as close as a visit to a local or online Christian retailer.

FURTHER READING

VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis (1990)
DEREK KIDNER
Genesis (1967)
KENNETH A. MATHEWS
Genesis (1996)
ALLEN P. ROSS
Creation and Blessing (1988)
GORDON WENHAM
Genesis 1-15 (1987)
Genesis 16-50 (1994)

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God's Plan. Genesis begins with the presupposition that God exists and that he has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel's ancestors. It does not argue for the existence of God; it simply begins with God and shows how everything falls into place when the sovereign God works out his plan to establish Israel as the means of restoring blessing to the whole world.

God's Rule. Genesis is the fitting introduction to the founding of theocracy, the rule of God over all creation that was to be established through his chosen people. Genesis lays down the initial revelation of God's sovereignty. He is the Lord of the universe who will move heaven and earth to bring about his plan. He desires to bless people, but he will not tolerate rebellion and unbelief. His promises are great, and he is fully able to bring them to fruition. To participate in his plan has always required faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6).

SECTION INTRODUCTIONS

For each major section of the Bible, the section introduction gives an overview of the books in that section and discusses issues that affect the interpretation of those books. (Not shown.)

CHRONOLOGY ARTICLES

For each major period of biblical history, the chronology article provides a historical overview and discusses key issues regarding historical context. Each article includes a timeline of events during that period of history. (Not shown.)

son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and of Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. ³³May their blood be on Joab and his descendants forever, and may the LORD grant peace forever to David, his descendants, his dynasty, and his throne."

³⁴So Benaiah son of Jehoiada returned to the sacred tent and killed Joab, and he was buried at his home in the wilderness. ³⁵Then the king appointed Benaiah to command the army in place of Joab, and he installed Zadok the priest to take the place of Abthar.

³⁶The king then sent for Shimei and told him, "Build a house here in Jerusalem and live there. But ~~do not~~ step outside the city to go anywhere else. ³⁷On the day you so much as cross the Kidron Valley, you will surely die; and your blood will be on your own head."

³⁸Shimei replied, "Your sentence is fair; I will do whatever my lord the king commands." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for a long time.

would surely die? And you replied, "The sentence is fair; I will do as you say." ⁴⁰Then why haven't you kept your oath to the LORD and obeyed my command?"

⁴¹The king also said to Shimei, "You certainly remember all the wicked things you did to my father, David. May the LORD now bring that evil on your own head. ⁴²But may I, King Solomon, receive the LORD's blessings, and may one of David's descendants always sit on this throne in the presence of the LORD." ⁴³Then, at the king's command, Benaiah son of Jehoiada took Shimei outside and killed him.

So the kingdom was now firmly in Solomon's grip.

Solomon's Great Wisdom (3:1-4:34)

Solomon Asks for Wisdom

1 Kgs 3:1-15 / 2 Chr 1:1-13

3 Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters. He brought her to live in the City of David until he could finish building his palace and the Temple of the LORD and the wall around the city. ²At that

233
2 Sam 3:29
235
1 Chr 29:22
236
2 Sam 16:5
1 Chr 2:8
237
2 Sam 15:23
238
1 Sam 27:2
239
1 Sam 25:39
2 Sam 16:5-13
245
2 Sam 7:13
246
1 Kgs 2:12
2 Chr 11:1
31
1 Kgs 7:8; 9:24
32
Lev 17:3-5
Deut 12:13-14
33
Deut 6:5
1 Kgs 9:4; 11:4, 6, 38
Ps 31:23
34-15
1 Chr 1:2-13
34-19
1 Chr 16:39; 21:29
2 Chr 2:13
3-5
1 Kgs 9:2-3
Matt 1:20

PARALLEL PASSAGES

The NLT text indicates parallels with passages in other books. For example, the Gospel of Matthew has many parallels in Mark, Luke, and John. Similarly, the books of 2 Samuel through 2 Kings have many parallels to the books of 1—2 Chronicles. The parallel references are useful for making comparisons between different versions of the same events and gaining a deeper, fuller understanding of what was happening.

RUNNING OUTLINES

The NLT text of each book includes a running outline to show how the sections of that book fit together. The numbered top level of the outline matches the short outline in the book introduction. The second- and third-level headings describe the book's structure in greater detail, down to the level of individual passages. These outlines follow the literary structure of the book, so they show how the author of the book thought about how the book was put together.

THEME NOTES

How does the NLT Study Bible explain the themes of the Bible?

Theme notes develop the main themes and topics that arise in each book. They are placed alongside particularly relevant passages but go beyond the passage at hand and extend to other books of the Bible. References for further study are included in the margin.

The topics in the theme notes have been chosen based on the major themes that occur in Scripture. They provide the first steps in developing a biblical theology without attempting to formulate a specific doctrinal system (such as reformed, charismatic, or Baptist). Because of this, the theme notes are designed to make us think and will stretch us to consider the teaching of Scripture more fully, whatever our doctrinal background.

GENESIS 1:1

1. CREATION (1:1-2:3) In the Beginning (1:1-2)

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

Six Days of Creation (1:3-31)

Day One: Light, Darkness

²Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ³And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁴God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Day Two: Sky, Waters

⁵Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁶And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁷God called the space "sky." And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

Day Three: Land, Sea, Vegetation

⁸Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. ⁹God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas."

1-1
Ps 89:1; 102:25
Isa 42:5; 48:13
John 1:1-2
Gen 1:2
Isaiah (806:4)
* Gen 1:27
* Gen 1:6, 9
* Gen 1:11
1-2
Isa 45:7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7
1-6
John 1:10
Ps 136:5-6
1-9
Isa 45:7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7
* Gen 1:5-7

The Creation (1:1-2:3)

The creation account in Genesis is foundational to the message of the entire Bible, not just of Genesis or the Pentateuch. Understanding the early chapters of Genesis is thus crucial to forming a biblical worldview.

This part of Genesis deals with fundamental questions: Who created the world, and for what purpose? Why is the world in its present condition? Genesis answers these questions, dispelling the idolatry that Israel had acquired from their pagan masters in Egypt. In the Promised Land, they would also be surrounded by people who believed in many false gods and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. Genesis taught Israel that the one true God created and has absolute authority over all things; he alone is worthy of worship.

Every worldview attempts to explain where the world came from, what is wrong with the world, and how it can be set right again. The creation account in Genesis teaches that as God made the world, it was "very good" (1:31). Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life. In this environment, humans enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their Creator until their rebellion severed that fellowship and implanted evil in human hearts (ch 3; see chs 4-6). The world's evil does not come from some defect in creation; God put the world under a curse because of human rebellion.

Since that first rebellion, humans have been alienated from the Creator and no longer recognize his presence and authority. This alienation results in shame, fractured relationships with God and other humans, estrangement from the rest of creation, and death (3:7-19). Since that time, God has been working purposefully in history to restore humans to fellowship with him, which he is doing through Jesus Christ. Restored humans are a new creation (Gal 6:15); through Jesus, eternal life is open to all and God will one day renew all things (see Isa 65:17-25; Rom 8:19-22). The whole cosmos will be made new (Rev 21:1).

1:1-2:3 These verses introduce the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and teach Israel that the world was created, ordered, and populated by the one true God and not by the gods of surrounding nations. • God blessed three specific things: animal life (1:22-25), human life (1:27), and the Sabbath day (2:3). This trilogy of blessings highlights the Creator's plan: Humankind was made in God's image to enjoy sovereign dominion over the creatures of the earth and to participate in God's Sabbath rest.

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . or When God began to cre-

ate the heavens and the earth, . . .). This statement summarizes the entire creation account (1:3-2:3). Already a key question—Who created the world?—is answered (see also Prov 8:22-31; John 1:1-3). Although the modern naturalistic mindset rejects this question and that of creation's purpose, Genesis affirms God's role and purpose in creation.

• The common name for God (Hebrew *elohim*) emphasizes his grand supremacy. The word *elohim* is plural, but the verb used with it are usually singular, reflecting the consistent scriptural proclamation of a single, all-powerful God • created (Hebrew *bara'*). In the OT, God is always the agent of creation

expressed by this verb. It describes the making of something fresh and new—namely the cosmos (1:1, 21; 2:3), humankind (1:27), the Israelite nation (Isa 43:1), and the future new creation (Isa 65:17). • The heavens and the earth are the entire ordered cosmos.

1:2 This verse gives the background for the summary in 1:1 and the detailed description in 1:3-2:3. God's creative utterances bring order to the chaotic state of the universe. • *formless . . . empty* (Hebrew *tohu . . . bohu*): This terse idiom means something like "wild and waste." It sets a stark contrast to the final ordered state of the heavens and the earth (1:1). • *deep waters*

¹The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ²So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ³And the LORD said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes,

⁴this is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ⁵Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ⁶Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.

6:8 Flood 33:17
6:9 Job 4:11
Ezek 14:14
Tammim 15:49
Gen 7:1
6:11
Deut 31:29
Judg 2:19
Ezek 8:17

NOAH (6:8-22)

Gen 5:28-10:1
1 Chr 1:4
Isa 54:9
Ezek 14:13-20
Matt 24:37-38
Luke 3:36; 17:26-27
Heb 11:7
1 Pet 3:20-21
2 Pet 2:5

Noah was the son of Lamech, a descendant of Seth (5:3-29). Lamech might have hoped that Noah (whose name means "rest" or "relief") would ease the curse of hardship in working the ground (see note on 5:29). God used Noah to help relieve the world of evil.

God intended to destroy creation because of pervasive human wickedness (6:1-7; see Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27), but he decided to preserve Noah (6:8). God gave Noah, a righteous and blameless man (6:9), precise instructions for building the ark in which only the eight people of his family would be saved, along with every kind of creature (6:14-8:19). When Noah and his family finally emerged from the ark after the flood, Noah pleased God by building an altar and sacrificing burnt offerings. God promised that he would never again flood the whole earth or disrupt the sequence of the seasons, despite human sin (8:20-9:17).

Noah's sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. All the nations of the earth descended from them (9:18-19). When Noah became drunk on wine from his vineyard, his sons and their descendants were cursed or blessed in accord with how they responded to him (9:22-27). Noah lived for 950 years, including 350 years after the flood (9:28-29); he is an example of righteousness, obedience, courage, and faith (see Ezek 14:12-20; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5).

society and allow human wickedness to run its full course. Others think it means that God would withdraw his life-giving breath from humans at an earlier age (*ruakh*, the Hebrew term for "spirit," can also mean "breath"; see 17:7, 22; see also Ps 104:29-30). • **normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years** (literally *his days will be 120 years*): It is possible that this was a new restriction on the number of years individuals would generally be allowed to live (so the NLT). However, for generations after the flood, humans lived well beyond 120 years (see, e.g., 11:10-26). An alternative interpretation sees this as a 120-year grace period before the arrival of the flood (see Jon 3:4; Matt 24:37-38; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5).

6:4 giant Nephilites (Hebrew *nephilim*): The term may mean "fallen ones." The context implies that they were the offspring of the "sons of God" and would be destroyed in the flood. Num 13:31-33 uses the same term to describe other giants who were hostile toward God's

people and would also be destroyed (see also Deut 2:11, which connects the Anakite *nephilim* with another group called the *rephaim*).

6:5 everything they thought or imagined (literally *every intention of the thoughts of their hearts*): In the OT, the heart is the core of volition, thought, and morality (see Prov 4:23). Wicked actions stem from a corrupt inner life. • **consistently and totally evil**: Strong language captures the pervasiveness, depth, and persistence of human wickedness. Human nature continued to be corrupt even after the flood (see 8:21).

6:6 the LORD was sorry: The extent of human wickedness made the Lord regret having created them (see also 6:7; cp. 1 Sam 15:11, 35). • **It broke his heart**: The evil in humanity's heart (6:5) pained God greatly. Sending the flood was a heart-wrenching act on God's part.

6:7 wipe . . . from the . . . earth: As Adam and Eve were banished from the garden sanctuary (3:23), all of

humankind would be expelled from God's good creation. • **every living thing**: Human sin had so corrupted the earth that judgment fell on the animals and birds over which they had dominion (see 1:28 and note). The special role of humans in the created order (1:28-30) means that nature is affected by human moral choices (see 8:1; Job 38:41; Hos 4:3; Rom 8:19-22).

6:8 Noah and his godly life stand in stark contrast to the sinfulness of the rest of the people.

6:9 the account: See note on 2:4 • **a righteous man, the only blameless person**: The text does not claim that Noah was without sin (see Rom 5:12-14). Noah's righteousness and blamelessness came about because he walked in close fellowship with God. See also 7:1; 17:1; Heb 11:7.

6:11-13 See 6:5-7. • **violence** (Hebrew *khamas*): Murder had especially corrupted the line of Cain (4:8, 23-24).

PERSON PROFILES

The *NLT Study Bible* includes person profiles that describe the lives of the individuals who inhabit the pages of Scripture. Each of these people contributes significantly to the story and message of the Bible. Their lives instruct us with examples and counter-examples, and their stories help us better understand the Bible, its world, and its message. Their relationship with God, or lack of it, helps us to understand how we can have a relationship with God.

STUDY NOTES

Sometimes, readers look at a note in a study Bible to understand the meaning of a verse and find themselves asking, "So what?" about a seemingly unrelated fact. The notes in the *NLT Study Bible* have been developed with the "So what?" test in mind—the editors' goal is that the study notes will clearly help us as readers to understand the verse or passage better.

The notes focus on the meaning and message of Scripture, not just facts. This means that there are notes on words, phrases, sentences, verses, paragraphs, and whole sections. The editors have included historical and literary notes to help draw us into the world of the Bible and the context in which it was originally read and heard.

Also included in the study notes is the full NLT textual footnote apparatus, which identifies variations in the Hebrew and Greek text as well as providing alternate translation possibilities.

Every excerpt from the NLT text is easily identified in bold italic type.

CROSS-REFERENCE SYSTEM

Some cross-reference systems are based on connections between individual words, without regard to whether there is any connection in meaning between the two verses or passages. With the *NLT Study Bible*, the cross-references relate to the meaning of the whole verse or passage, so the cross-references are always directly applicable.

To compare specific ideas within a verse, the study notes at the bottom of the page often include cross-references for individual words and phrases, along with a brief explanation of the nature of the connection.

In the cross-reference system, parallel lines (//) show that a particular cross-reference is a parallel passage that describes the same events or says much the same thing.

An asterisk (*) is used to indicate where the NT quotes the OT.

WORD STUDY SYSTEM

The *NLT Study Bible* includes a word study system in the cross-reference column. Because the NLT is a dynamic translation, a particular word in Greek or Hebrew is not always translated the same way, but is translated in a manner that is appropriate for the context. This makes word studies richer and more productive, because the range of meaning for a particular Greek or Hebrew word becomes very clear, and it is easier to avoid common misunderstandings about what the words mean.

There are word studies for 100 Hebrew words and 100 Greek words. For each word, the editors have included enough occurrences to understand the range of meanings for that word. Each occurrence is indicated in the NLT text with a superscript letter (a, b, c, etc.). The same superscript letter occurs in the cross-reference column under that verse. After the superscript letter the Hebrew or Greek word is given, followed by a reference number that matches the glossary at the back and many widely-available study tools, such as Strong's Concordance. On the next line is a chain-reference link to the next highlighted occurrence of the word. The word study system thus opens up a whole world of Greek and Hebrew word study.

VISUAL AIDS

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the *NLT Study Bible* has tens of thousands of words' worth of visual information. These visual aids include maps, timelines, charts, and diagrams.

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19-13 Gen 18:20
1 Chr 21:15
Judg 1:7
19-14 Exod 9:21
Jer 5:12; 43:1-2
19-17 Luke 17:29
Jude 1:7
19-25 Deut 29:23
Isa 13:19
Lam 4:6
2 Pet 2:6
19-26 Gen 19:17
Luke 17:32
19-27 Gen 18:22
19-28 Rom 9:2
19-29 Deut 7:8; 9:5
2 Pet 2:7,8
19-30 Gen 13:10

the city?" they asked. "Get them out of place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughter anyone else. ¹³For we are about to do this city completely. The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great it has reached the ears of heaven, and he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters, "Quick, get out of the city before the LORD is about to destroy it." But the men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of this city!"

¹⁶When Lot still hesitated, they seized his hand and the hands of his two daughters and rushed the safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. ¹⁷When they were safely in the city, one of the angels ordered, "For your lives! And don't look back or anywhere in the valley! Escape to the tains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸"Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. "I have been so gracious to me and my wife, and you have shown such grace to me. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰See, there is a small valley nearby. Please let me go there instead; I

1:10 Ps 33:7; 95:5
1:11 Gen 2:9
Ps 104:14
Matt 6:30
1:14 Ps 74:16; 104:19
1:15 Gen 1:5
1:16 Ps 136:1; 191:4; 136:8-9
1 Cor 15:41
1:18 Jer 33:20, 25
1:20 Gen 2:19
Ps 146:6 (53:15)
Hebrew 2:7
1:22 Ps 104:25-28

And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened.

¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Day Four: Sun, Moon, Stars

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons,

days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

Day Five: Birds, Fish

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and

Formless	CHAOS	Empty
DAY 1 (1:3-5) Light, Dark	HEAVENS	DAY 4 (1:14-19) Sun, Moon, Stars
DAY 2 (1:6-8) Water, Sky	WATER & SKY	DAY 5 (1:20-23) Birds, Fish
DAY 3 (1:9-13) Sea, Land	EARTH	DAY 6 (1:24-31) Animals, Humans
Formed	COSMOS	Filled
	DAY 7 (2:2-3) Rest	

4 The Structure of the Creation Account (1:1-2:3). God transformed chaos into the present cosmos. In the first three days, he transformed the formless void into the structured universe—the HEAVENS (outer space), the WATER and SKY, and the EARTH (cp. Exod 20:11; Ps 135:6). In the second three days, he populated each empty realm. The seventh day (2:1-3) stands apart. As God's day of rest, it provides the weekly pattern for human activity (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) and speaks of the rest that God promised to those who live by faith in him (see Heb 3:7-4:11).

(Hebrew *tehom*): Some scholars say this alludes to the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (representing chaos), but Genesis views *tehom* as inhospitable chaos, not as a deity or goddess that God engaged in cosmic battle. • *The Spirit of God* directly superintended the creation process.

1:3-13 In the first three days, God formed the chaos into a habitable world.

1:3 Then God said: Nothing in Gen 1 is created apart from God's powerful word (cp. Ps 33:6, 9). • *Let there be . . .* and there was: God's command enacted his will to create the world. God is not a part of creation or limited by it; he is the supreme ruler over everything (cp. Neh 9:6).

1:4 Light is antithetical to chaotic darkness (1:2); the light is declared good but the darkness is not (cp. Job 1:5). God is the source of this light (cp. 1:14-19). God separated the light, as he did water

(cp. 1:6-8), by his creative word. Light is associated with life and blessing (Job 33:19-20; Ps 19:1-6; 97:11; 104:19-20; Isa 60:19-20) and sets a boundary on the darkness that would destroy cosmic order. Darkness often typifies terror, death, and evil (see 15:12; Job 18:6, 18; Ps 88:2; Eph 5:11-12; 1 Jn 1:5).

1:5 God called (or named). To name something is to exercise authority over it (see also 2:19-20). • *Day*: The Hebrew year can refer to daylight (1:5a), to a 24-hour period (1:5b), or to an unspecified time period (2:4b, "when," literally *in the day*; cp. Exod 20:8-11). • *evening morning*: The Hebrew day began at sundown, just as the first day began with darkness and brought the first morning light.

1:6-8 The creation account describes the appearance of things from a human perspective. The sky is viewed as a shiny dome that is a buffer between

two collections of water (cp. Job 37:18; Ezek 1:22). In the ancient Near East, the cosmos was understood as a three-tier system, with an originating layer, the outermost tier (see 7:11-12 and note).

1:9-10 Let the waters . . . flow together: Other ancient cultures viewed the sea as a hostile force. Genesis shows God as further restraining chaos (see note on 1:2) by prescribing specific boundaries for the sea. The flood—an act of God's judgment (6:7)—undid these boundaries and returned the earth to chaos (7:1-24).

1:14-31 On days 4-6, God filled the domains that had been formed during days 1-3 (1:3-13).

1:14 Let them . . . mark the seasons, days, and years: The movement of the heavenly bodies defined Israel's liturgical calendar, whose roots in creation gave a sacred timing to Israel's festivals and celebrations (see Exod 23:15; Lev 23:4).

1:16 In the surrounding pagan cultures, the two great lights were worshipped as deities, but in Genesis they serve God and humanity (see Ps 136:7-9; Jer 31:35). The sun and moon are not named; they are simply called the larger one and the smaller one. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. • *govern*: Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:8. • *The stars*: The starry heavens testify to God's creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel's neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

1:21 Contrary to the pagan idea that the great sea creatures were co-eternal with God, Genesis states that God created them and is sovereign over them. The Hebrew word *tanninim* ("creatures") elsewhere refers to crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), powerful monsters (Jer 51:34), or the sea creature, Leviathan (Isa 27:1; cp. Job 41:1-34).



19-14 The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16-19:38). The two angels apparently traveled, as shown, from Abraham's camp at the OAKS OF MAMRE to destroy SODOM and GOMORRAH. Lot and his daughters took refuge at Zoar, then moved eastward into the mountains of Moab. Lot fathered two sons by his daughters; the two sons became the nations of Moab (see Num 21:10-20; 22:1-25). Deut 2:3; 6; Judg 3:12-30; Ruth 1:1-6) and AMMON (see Num 21:24; Deut 2:19-37; 23:3; Judg 10:6-12; 3; 1 Sam 10:27-11:11).

mercifully spared Lot for Abraham's sake (18:23; 19:29). Lot deserved judgment for his way of life, but he was a believer at heart and the Lord rescued him (2 Pet 2:7-8). • Lot is not alone in his conflicted lifestyle. Countless believers fall in with a corrupt world rather than flee a doomed society. God's people, living in a pagan world, must remain separate (1 Jn 2:15-17). The corrupt world system awards God's coming judgment, which will be far greater than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 11:23-24).

19-18:22 Lot demanded a concession from the angels even after he was

delivered. He wanted to live in the small town of Zoar (little place).

19-23:25 Cp. Luke 17:29. The eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii in 79 AD, as well as recent natural disasters, show how quickly a thorough catastrophe like this could happen.

19:26 looked back: The verb indicates prolonged, intense gazing toward the world she loved, not a curious glance (15:5; Exod 33:8; Num 21:9; 1 Sam 2:32; cp. Exod 3:6). Lot's wife was too attached to SODOM and GOMORRAH. God's call to leave was included in the judgment as she lingered on the valley slopes. Christ's return to judge the world will be as sudden and devastating as the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:32-37). Those who crave the life of this wicked world will lose this world and the next.

19:29 God honored Abraham's intercession (18:23-32), but Lot's entire world was gone because he lived by instinct and desire, not by faith in God. He could no longer live in the good land he selfishly chose for himself (13:10-13; cp. Matt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:7).

19:30-38 The poverty of the cave contrasts with the wealth Lot shared with Abram and the good life he lived

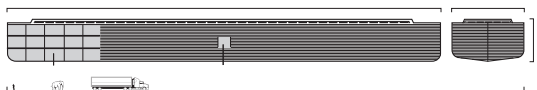
CHARTS

Charts organize textual information into a form that is easy to understand quickly.

MAPS

Maps throughout the study materials visualize the events and places mentioned in the text of Scripture.

...a pair of animals, male and female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ²²He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife



► **Noah's Ark (6:14-16).** An ark built to the dimensions specified in Genesis would have been immense. Its ratio of length to width (6 to 1) is the most stable known and is used for the design of modern tankers and freight-hauling ships. The ark was able to carry 20,000 tons of cargo, the required number of young adult land animals would have occupied less than half of the available space. The design given was perfect for the ark's function.

6:14 a large boat: Traditionally rendered as a long rectangular barge designed for survival, not for navigation. The Hebrew word *tebah* is used again only of the basket in which the baby Moses was floated on the Nile (Exod 2:3, 5). * cypress wood: Or sopher wood. It is not clear what kind of wood this was. It was possibly from a conifer, such as cypress.

6:15 The ark's dimensions: Hebrew 300 cubits [23 m [13.8 met] displaced

with no sail or rudder. God also brought the animals to Noah (6:20).

6:17 cover the earth with a flood: Some propose that the flood might only have covered the ancient Near East as it was known to Noah or Moses. However, the flood's stated purpose—to *destroy every living thing that breathes* (see also 6:7, 11-13; 7:1, 4, 18-23; 8:21)—and its effect of undoing creation (see notes on 1:9-10; 7:11-12) suggest that the flood

These animals would procreate and repopulate the earth after the flood.

7:2 of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice (literally of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8): In addition to the animals that were to repopulate the earth, these "clean" animals were for food and for Noah's sacrifice after the flood (8:20-21). This passage does not use the precise technical language that is found in the regulations

ILLUSTRATIONS
Illustrations help visualize objects that might be difficult to imagine without a picture. For example, the illustration of Noah's Ark on p. 35 shows just how big that floating storage box was and how much it was able to hold.

6:16 An opening of low the rain light a door and was the ca

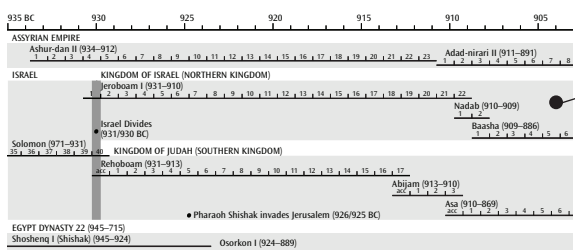
599 . . . 1 KINGS 12:3

11:38 2 Sam 11:1, 27
11:40 1 Kgs 14:25
2 Chr 2:2
11:41-43 // 2 Chr 9:29-31
12:1-24 // 2 Chr 10:1-11:4
12:1 Judg 9:1, 6
2 Chr 18:1

the throne of Israel, and you will rule over all that your heart desires. ³⁸If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey my decrees and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. I will establish an enduring dynasty for you as I did for David, and I will give Israel to you. ³⁹Because of Solomon's sin I will punish the descendants of David—though not forever.
⁴⁰Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.
Summary of Solomon's Reign
1 Kgs 11:41-43 // 2 Chr 9:29-31
⁴¹The rest of the events in Solomon's reign, including all his deeds and his wisdom, are

recorded in *The Book of the Acts of Solomon*. ⁴²Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. ⁴³When he died, he was buried in the City of David, named for his father. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

2. THE EARLY DIVIDED KINGDOM (12:1-16:14)
The Division of the Nation (12:1-24)
The Northern Tribes Revolt
1 Kgs 12:1-20 // 2 Chr 10:1-19
12 Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. ²When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of this, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. ³The leaders of Israel summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel



► **Israel and Judah, 935-903 BC (11:41-15:34).** Each king's regnal years are numbered according to his own system of accounting (see "OT Chronology: Israel's Monarchy," p. 0000). Each king's line on the chart runs from the beginning of the year in which his accession occurred to the end of the year in which he died. * **Solomon's fourth and final regnal year began in the fall (the month of Tishri) of 931 BC; his death and the division of the kingdom occurred sometime prior to the spring (the month of Nisan) of 930 BC.** * **The reign of Jeroboam I started after that of Rehoboam, but Jeroboam's first regnal was counted from the previous spring.** * **Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt invaded JERUSALEM during Rehoboam's fifth regnal year (see 14:25-28).**

11:38 an enduring dynasty: Jeroboam had a great opportunity. God promised that if he was faithful and obedient to the Lord, his kingdom would be strong and long-lasting. However, he departed pending difficulty, *tried to kill Jeroboam*, tribes, had been a strategic site and religious center since the pre-Israelite occupation of Canaan (Gen 12:6-7; 33:18-20), and it became important in Israel as a Levitical city and a city of refuge (see 12:1-20).

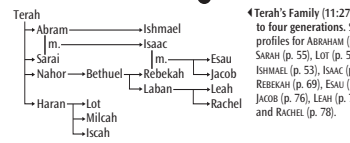
TIMELINES
Timelines show when in history various events took place and how they relate to other events in the Bible and in the surrounding world. The Bible is a record of history, and it is fascinating and stimulating to see just how the events of the Bible fit into recorded history as known from the surrounding cultures.

45 . . . GENESIS 12:5

12:1 Gen 15:7
Acts 7:3
Heb 11:8
Gen 11:32
Gen 13:17
12:2 Gen 13:16; 15:5, 17-4; 18:18; 22:17
Zech 8:13
Neh 9:7 (1288A)
Gen 49:28
12:3 Gen 22:18; 26:4
Exod 23:22
Acts 3:25
Gal 3:8
12:4 Gen 11:26, 31

still living. ²⁹Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.) ³⁰But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.
³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³²Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram (12:1-9)
12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."
⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot,



Terah's Family (11:27-30)
to four generations. See profiles for ABRAHAM (p. 46), SARAH (p. 55), LOT (p. 58), ISHMAEL (p. 53), ISAAC (p. 63), REBEKAH (p. 69), ESAU (p. 71), JACOB (p. 76), LEAH (p. 79), and RACHEL (p. 78).
and be a blessing (see note on 12:2). Each directive is followed by three promises conditioned upon obedience.
12:1 Abram knew that he should leave, but he did not know where he was going. Obedience required faith.
12:2 and you will be a blessing (or so that you will be a blessing): This clause is a command in Hebrew, but it is also a promise conditioned upon Abram's obedience to God's command (12:1): "Go . . . so that you will be a blessing. Be a blessing, so that I can bless and curse others." * **make you famous** (literally *make your name great*): Abram received the fame sought by the builders of Babel (see 11:4 and note).

DIAGRAMS
Diagrams organize information visually in order to show relationships. For example, the genealogy of Terah, Abraham's father, on p. 45 helps sort out the relationships among many of the people who play a role in the book of Genesis.

main city of Sumer in Mesopotamia near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The family had moved there perhaps generations before the call. Their ancestral home ("native country," 12:1) was apparently near Haran, in the region

sovereignty of God, who miraculously gives children to barren women (see also 1 Sam 1:2-2; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).
11:31 Terah took: The text is clear that Abram's departure from Ur was prompted by God's calling (see note on

loom over the allies, nal 2:25). 113 cc. Greek 2 Chr of.

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THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings—of the universe and of humanity, of sin and its catastrophic effects, and of God’s plan to restore blessing to the world through his chosen people. God began his plan when he called Abraham and made a covenant with him. Genesis traces God’s promised blessings from generation to generation, to the time of bondage and the need for redemption from Egypt. It lays the foundation for God’s subsequent revelation, and most other books of the Bible draw on its contents. Genesis is a source of instruction, comfort, and edification.

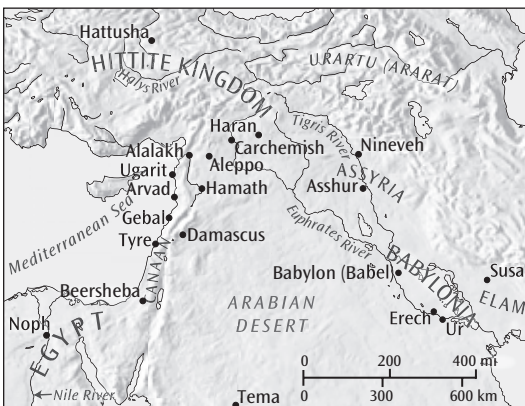
SETTING

When Genesis was written, the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They had recently been released from bondage and guided through the desert to meet the Lord at Mount Sinai, where he had established his covenant relationship with them and had given them his law through Moses. Israel was now poised to enter the Promised Land and receive the inheritance that God had promised Abraham.

While enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites had adopted many pagan ideas and customs from their Egyptian masters (e.g., Exod 32:1-4). They were influenced by false concepts of God, the world, and human nature (e.g., Exod 32), and were reduced to being slaves rather than owners and managers of the land. Perhaps they had forgotten the great promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or perhaps they had concluded that the promises would never be fulfilled.

Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to understand the nature of God, his world, and their place in it more clearly. They needed to embrace their identity as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis provided the needed understanding.



◀ The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC. Humanity spread out from the mountains of URARTU (ARARAT) and populated the early centers of civilization. By the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), many of the cities were ancient.

ASSHUR 2:14; 10:22; 25:3; 25:18

ASSYRIA 10:11

BABYLON (ABEL), BABYLONIA 10:9-10; 11:1-9; 14:1, 9

CANAAN 9:18-27; 10:18-19; 12:5-10

DAMASCUS 14:15; 15:2

EGYPT 12:10-13:1; 15:18; 37:28-36; 39:1-50:26

ELAM 10:22; 14:1; 14:9

ERECH 10:10; Ezra 4:9

HAMATH 10:18; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33

HARAN 11:26-32; 12:4-5; 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4

SUSA Ezra 4:9; Neh 1:1; Esth 1:2; Dan 8:2

UR 11:28; 11:31; 15:7; Neh 9:7

URARTU (ARARAT) 8:4

SUMMARY

Genesis traces God's work to overcome with blessing the curse that came on humankind because of sin. The book arranges family traditions, genealogies, historical events, and editorial comments into a single, sustained argument.

Every section but the first has the heading, "This is the account" (or *These are the generations*; Hebrew *toledot*); each of the *toledot* sections explains the

OUTLINE

1:1–2:3

Creation

2:4–4:26

What Happened to the Creation

5:1–6:8

The Account of Adam's Descendants

6:9–9:29

The Account of Noah's Family

10:1–11:9

The Account of Noah's Sons

11:10–26

The Account of Shem's Descendants

11:27–25:11

The Account of Terah's Descendants

25:12–18

The Account of Ishmael's Descendants

25:19–35:29

The Account of Isaac's Descendants

36:1–37:1

The Account of Esau's Descendants

37:2–50:26

The Account of Jacob's Descendants

history of a line of descent. In each case, a deterioration of well-being is followed by an increasing focus on God's plan to bless the world. This plan is the basis for God's covenant with his people; as the blessing develops, the covenant is clarified. By the end of the book, the reader is ready for the fulfillment of the promises in Israel's redemption from bondage (see Exodus).

The first section (1:1–2:3) does not have the *toledot* heading, and logically so—it is the account of creation "in the beginning" (1:1). The work of creation is wrapped in God's approval and blessing as he fulfills his plan.

The next section (2:4–4:26) focuses on the creation of human life (2:4–25) and traces what became of God's creation because of Adam's and Eve's sin (3:1–13), the curse on their sin (3:14–24), and the extension of sin to their descendants (4:1–24). Humanity no longer enjoyed God's rest; instead, they experienced guilt and fear. So they fled from God and developed a proud civilization.

Independence from God resulted in the downward drift of human life (5:1–6:8). The genealogy of 5:1–32 begins by recalling that human beings were made in God's image and were blessed by him (5:1–2). As the genealogy is traced, the death of each generation reminds the reader of the curse, with Enoch providing a ray of hope that the curse is not final. In 6:1–8, we learn that God regretted having made humans and decided to judge the earth. Noah, however, received God's favor and provided a source of hope (5:29; 6:8).

The next section (6:9–9:29) brings the curse of judgment through the flood followed by

blessing in a new beginning. A renewed creation began, purged of the abominable evil that had invaded and ruined the human race.

The world's population expanded into various nations (10:1–11:9) whose people were bent on disobedience. The population of the earth by Shem,

TIMELINE

2166 / 1990 BC*

Abraham is born

2091 / 1915 BC

Abraham moves to Canaan

2080 / 1904 BC

Ishmael is born

2066 / 1890 BC

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Isaac is born

2006 / 1830 BC

Jacob and Esau are born

1898 / 1722 BC

Joseph is sold into slavery

1885 / 1709 BC

Joseph begins governing Egypt

1876 / 1661 BC

Jacob moves to Egypt

1446 / 1270 BC

Israel leaves Egypt (the Exodus), moves to Mount Sinai

1406 / 1230 BC

Israel enters Canaan

* *The two dates harmonize with the traditional "early" chronology and a more recent "late" chronology of the Exodus. All dates are approximate. Please see "Chronology: Abraham to Joshua," p. 118.*

Ham, and Japheth seemed fruitful (10:1-32), but the nations were divided by languages and boundaries (10:5, 20, 31). Because of their rebellion, God dispersed them to prevent greater wickedness (11:1-9).

After the chaos of the scattered nations, 11:10-26 brings the focus to Abram, through whom God chose to bring blessing to all. The rest of the book (11:27–50:26) tells of God’s blessing Abram and his descendants. God first made a covenant with Abram (11:27–25:11), promising him a great nation, land, and name. As time went on, God made the specific terms of the covenant clearer, and Abram’s faith grew deeper.

In each generation, Genesis gives a brief account of the families that are not Israel’s ancestors before turning to the line of Israel. After briefly reporting what became of Ishmael (25:12-18), Genesis traces in detail what happened to Isaac and his family (25:19–35:29).

True to the pattern of the book, Esau’s line (Edom) is dealt with briefly (36:1–37:1) before the chosen line of Jacob the heir. The final section (37:2–50:26) concerns Jacob’s family, centering on the life of Joseph. In the land of Canaan, the family became corrupt under Canaanite influence to the point of beginning to merge with them (ch 38). To preserve the line of blessing, God sent the family into Egypt where they could flourish, remain separate (43:32; 46:34), and become a great nation. The book closes with the promise of the Lord’s coming to rescue his people from Egypt (50:24-26).

“God rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. And he blessed the seventh day. . . .” And we ourselves will be a “seventh day” when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his sanctification. . . . Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God.

ST. AUGUSTINE
City of God, sec. 22.30

AUTHORSHIP

Both Scripture and tradition attribute the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) to Moses. No one was better qualified than Moses to have written this book. Since he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), he had the literary skills to collect and edit Israel’s traditions and records and to compose this theological treatise. His unique communion with God gave him the spiritual illumination, understanding, and inspiration needed to guide him. He had good reason to write this work—to provide Israel with the theological and historical foundation for the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai, and to establish the new nation in accord with the promises made to their ancestors.

Most scholars, however, do not accept that Moses wrote Genesis. The prevailing critical view, called the *Documentary Hypothesis*, is that Genesis was compiled from various sources by different groups of people. In such approaches, there is seldom a word about divine revelation or inspiration. For those who understand the Bible as God’s inspired word, such theories often seem unnecessarily complicated and conjectural. Genesis can be understood much more straightforwardly as the product of Moses’ genius under God’s inspiration with later editorial adjustments. (See further “Introduction to the Pentateuch: Authorship,” p. 12).

COMPOSITION

Biblical scholars of all stripes have always acknowledged that various sources were used in writing Genesis and other historical texts in the Bible (such as Kings and Luke). Moses used collections of family records, oral traditions, ancient accounts of primeval events, and genealogies to write Genesis. Those sources could have been incorporated as received, or the author may have changed their style and wording, stitching them together with additional material for the particular purpose of tracing the foundations of Israelite faith.

Genesis also includes passages and expressions that are obviously later editorial glosses. Some sections (such as the list of Edomite kings, 36:31-43) could have been added during the early days of the monarchy. There is no conflict in saying that Genesis was authored by Moses and augmented by subsequent editors whose work was guided by the Holy Spirit. Given these considerations, conservative scholars find it plausible that the biblical material accurately records actual events.

LITERARY CHARACTER

Genesis includes various types of literature. Several suggestions have been made as to the nature of the materials.

Myth. Mythological literature explains the origins of things symbolically through the deeds of gods and supernatural creatures. For ancient peoples, myths were beliefs that explained life and reality. Whole systems of ritual activities were developed to ensure that the forces of fertility, life, and death would continue year by year. Some of these rituals gave rise to cult prostitution (see 38:15, 21-22).

It would be very difficult to classify the material in Genesis as myth. Israel had one God, not a multitude. The nation of Israel had a beginning, a history, and a future hope. They saw God, rather than gods and other supernatural creatures, as the primary actor in the world. Their worship was not cosmic, magical, or superstitious, but a re-enactment of their own rescue from Egypt and a celebration of God's factual intervention in history and their hope in his promises.

If Genesis uses elements of mythological language, it is to display a deliberate contrast with pagan concepts and to show that the Lord God is sovereign over such ideas. For example, the ancients worshiped the sun as a god, but in Genesis the sun serves the Creator's wishes (1:14-18). The book of Genesis is a cemetery for lifeless myths and dead gods. Genesis is not myth.

Etiology. A number of scholars describe the Genesis narratives as *etiologies*, stories that explain the causes of factual reality or traditional beliefs. The implication is that such stories were made up for explanatory purposes and do not describe historical events. For example, if one says that the story of Cain and Abel was made up to explain why shepherds and farmers do not get along, the account loses its integrity as factual history.

Etiological elements certainly occur in Genesis, because the book gives the foundation and rationale for almost everything that Israel would later do. For example, the creation account of Gen 2 ends with the explanation, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother. . . ." The event as it happened explains why marriage was conducted the way it was, but to say that a story explains something is quite different from saying that the story was fabricated to explain it. The stories of Genesis are not fictional tales invented to explain later customs and beliefs.

History. Many scholars object to regarding Genesis as history, for two basic reasons: (1) Genesis explains events as caused by God, and the inclusion of the supernatural is regarded as proof that the material is theological reflection and thus not historically reliable; and (2) the events in Genesis cannot be validated from outside sources; no other records have demonstrated that Abraham existed or that any of his family history occurred.

Genesis is not interested in parading Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples of morality. Therefore, it does not moralize on them. [Genesis] is bringing together the promises of God to the patriarchs and the faithfulness of God in keeping those promises.

VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis Chapters
1-17, p. 46

Modern philosophies of history exclude the supernatural as an explanation of historical events, but there is no reason to do so arbitrarily. If God exists and is able to act, then he might very well be the ultimate cause of all historical events and the immediate cause of specific historical events. The Israelites were not as distrustful of supernatural events as are modern critics; they experienced such events frequently as God acted among them to fulfill the promises recorded in Genesis.

It is true that no direct evidence of the patriarchs or the events in Genesis has been found, but archaeology confirms the plausibility of Genesis by showing that the historical situation in that era (Middle Bronze I, 2000–1800 BC) corresponds closely to what Genesis portrays. It is unlikely that this would be so if Genesis were not an accurate record of the facts. When all the archaeological and historical data are assembled around the events, they fit perfectly within the setting, and the details of the narratives make perfectly good sense.

Theological Interpretation. Genesis was not intended as a chronicle of the lives of the patriarchs, a history for history's sake, or a complete biography. It is clearly a theological interpretation of selected records of the nation's ancestors, but this does not destroy its historicity. Interpretations of an event can differ, but the offering of interpretations is a good witness to the actuality of the events. The author retold the events in his own way, but he did not invent them.

Tradition. What was thus committed to writing is tradition in the reverent care of literary genius. Scholars prefer words such as "traditions" or even "sagas" to describe these narratives. Doing so only makes the claim that the stories preserve the memory of the people of Israel; it makes no claim that the events themselves are historical. The biblical understanding, however, is that these stories were recorded under divine inspiration and are therefore historically true and reliable.

In all probability, Abram brought the primeval accounts and the family genealogies from Mesopotamia, and stories about the family were added to these collections. Joseph could easily have preserved all the traditions, both written and oral, in Egypt with his own records. Moses could then have compiled the works substantially in their present form while adding his editorial comments. Since he worked under God's inspiration and guidance, the narratives record exactly what God wanted written and correspond precisely to reality.

Instructional Literature. Since Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (the "Torah" or Law), it may be best to classify it as "Torah Literature" (Hebrew *torah*, "instruction, law"). Genesis is instructional literature that lays the foundation for the Law. It is theological interpretation of the historical traditions standing behind the covenant at Sinai. In the way it is written, one may discern that Moses was preparing his readers to receive God's law and the fulfillment of the promises made to their forefathers. Genesis is therefore a unique work. Theology, history, and tradition come together to instruct God's people and prepare them for blessing.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Israel's most important questions were answered by the Genesis narratives. Life and death, the possession of the land of Canaan, and how Israel ended up in Egypt are explained as God's providential working in history. Israel was part of God's plan in this world. His plan had

a starting point at creation and will have an end point in the future when the promises are completely fulfilled.

Israel, the Chosen People. The central theme of Genesis is that God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He promised to make them his own people, heirs of the land of Canaan, and a blessing to the world. Genesis gave Israel the theological and historical basis for its existence as God's chosen people.

Israel could trace its ancestry to the patriarch Abraham and its destiny to God's promises (12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-8). Because the promise of a great nation was crucial, much of Genesis is devoted to family concerns of the patriarchs and their wives, their sons and heirs, and their birthrights and blessings. The record shows how God preserved and protected the chosen line through the patriarchs. Israel thus knew that they had become the great nation promised to Abraham. Their future was certainly not in slavery to the Egyptians, but in Canaan, where they would live as a free nation and as the people of the living God, and where they could mediate God's blessings to the people of the world.

Blessing and Curse. The entire message of Genesis turns on the motifs of blessing and cursing. The promised blessing would give the patriarchs innumerable descendants and give the descendants the land of promise; the blessing would make them famous in the earth, enable them to flourish and prosper, and appoint them to bring others into the covenant blessings. The curse, meanwhile, would alienate, deprive, and disinherit people from the blessings. The effects of the curse are felt by the whole race as death and pain and as God's judgment on the world.

These motifs continue throughout the Bible. Prophets and priests spoke of even greater blessings in the future and an even greater curse for those who refuse God's gift of salvation and its blessings. The Bible reminds God's people not to fear human beings, but to fear God, who has the power to bless and to curse.

Good and Evil. In Genesis, that which is good is blessed by God: It produces, enhances, preserves, and harmonizes with life. That which is evil is cursed: It causes pain, diverts from what is good, and impedes or destroys life. Genesis traces the perpetual struggle between good and evil that characterizes our fallen human race. God will bring about the greater good, build the faith of his people, and ultimately triumph over all evil (cp. Rom 8:28).

God's Plan. Genesis begins with the presupposition that God exists and that he has revealed himself in word and deed to Israel's ancestors. It does not argue for the existence of God; it simply begins with God and shows how everything falls into place when the sovereign God works out his plan to establish Israel as the means of restoring blessing to the whole world.

God's Rule. Genesis is the fitting introduction to the founding of theocracy, the rule of God over all creation that was to be established through his chosen people. Genesis lays down the initial revelation of God's sovereignty. He is the Lord of the universe who will move heaven and earth to bring about his plan. He desires to bless people, but he will not tolerate rebellion and unbelief. His promises are great, and he is fully able to bring them to fruition. To participate in his plan has always required faith, for without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6).

FURTHER READING

- VICTOR P. HAMILTON
The Book of Genesis (1990)
- DEREK KIDNER
Genesis (1967)
- KENNETH A. MATHEWS
Genesis (1996)
- ALLEN P. ROSS
Creation and Blessing (1988)
- GORDON WENHAM
Genesis 1-15 (1987)
- Genesis 16-50* (1994)

1. CREATION (1:1–2:3)

In the Beginning (1:1–2)

1 In the beginning God ^acreated the ^bheavens and the ^cearth. ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the ^dSpirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Six Days of Creation (1:3–31)

Day One: Light, Darkness

³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Day Two: Sky, Waters

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.” And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

Day Three: Land, Sea, Vegetation

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.”

1:1
Ps 89:11; 102:25
Isa 42:5; 48:13
John 1:1–2
^abara' (1254)
• Gen 1:27
^bshamayim (8064)
• Exod 16:4
^cerets (0776)
• Gen 9:11

1:2
Isa 45:18
^druakh (7307)
• Gen 45:27

1:3
Isa 45:7
2 Cor 4:6

1:6
Job 26:10
Ps 136:5–6

1:9
Job 26:7
Ps 95:5
Prov 8:29
Jer 5:22
2 Pet 3:5

The Creation (1:1–2:3)

Ps 33:6–9
Prov 3:19; 8:22–31
Isa 40:26–28; 45:11–12, 18–19
Jer 10:11–16
John 1:1–4
Rom 8:18–25
2 Cor 5:17
Col 1:15–20
Rev 4:11; 21:1–5

The creation account in Genesis is foundational to the message of the entire Bible, not just of Genesis or the Pentateuch. Understanding the early chapters of Genesis is thus crucial to forming a biblical worldview.

This part of Genesis deals with fundamental questions: Who created the world, and for what purpose? Why is the world in its present condition? Genesis answers these questions, dispelling the idolatry that Israel had acquired from their pagan masters in Egypt. In the Promised Land, they would also be surrounded by people who believed in many false gods and worshiped created things rather than the Creator. Genesis taught Israel that the one true God created and has absolute authority over all things; he alone is worthy of worship.

Every worldview attempts to explain where the world came from, what is wrong with the world, and how it can be set right again. The creation account in Genesis teaches that as God made the world, it was “very good” (1:31). Through creation, God turned disorder into restful order and emptiness into the fullness of abundant life. In this environment, humans enjoyed unbroken fellowship with their Creator until their rebellion severed that fellowship and implanted evil in human hearts (ch 3; see chs 4–6). The world’s evil does not come from some defect in creation; God put the world under a curse because of human rebellion.

Since that first rebellion, humans have been alienated from the Creator and no longer recognize his presence and authority. This alienation results in shame, fractured relationships with God and other humans, estrangement from the rest of creation, and death (3:7–19). Since that time, God has been working purposefully in history to restore humans to fellowship with him, which he is doing through Jesus Christ. Restored humans are a new creation (Gal 6:15); through Jesus, eternal life is open to all and God will one day renew all things (see Isa 65:17–25; Rom 8:19–22). The whole cosmos will be made new (Rev 21:1).

1:1–2:3 These verses introduce the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) and teach Israel that the world was created, ordered, and populated by the one true God and not by the gods of surrounding nations. • God blessed three specific things: animal life (1:22–25), human life (1:27), and the Sabbath day (2:3). This trilogy of blessings highlights the Creator’s plan: Humankind was made in God’s image to enjoy sovereign dominion over the creatures of the earth and to participate in God’s Sabbath rest.

1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . or When God began to cre-*

ate the heavens and the earth, . . .): This statement summarizes the entire creation account (1:3–2:3). Already a key question—Who created the world?—is answered (see also Prov 8:22–31; John 1:1–3). Although the modern naturalistic mindset rejects this question and that of creation’s purpose, Genesis affirms God’s role and purpose in creation.

• The common name for *God* (Hebrew *’elohim*) emphasizes his grand supremacy. The word *’elohim* is plural, but the verbs used with it are usually singular, reflecting the consistent scriptural proclamation of a single, all-powerful God. • *created* (Hebrew *bara’*): In the OT, God is always the agent of creation

expressed by this verb. It describes the making of something fresh and new—notably the cosmos (1:1, 21; 2:3), humankind (1:27), the Israelite nation (Isa 43:1), and the future new creation (Isa 65:17). • *The heavens and the earth* are the entire ordered cosmos.

1:2 This verse gives the background for the summary in 1:1 and the detailed description in 1:3–2:3. God’s creative utterances bring order to the chaotic state of the universe. • *formless . . . empty* (Hebrew *tohu . . . bohu*): This terse idiom means something like “wild and waste.” It sets a stark contrast to the final ordered state of the heavens and the earth (1:1). • *deep waters*

1:10
Ps 33:7; 95:5
1:11
Gen 2:9
Ps 104:14
Matt 6:30
1:14
Ps 74:16; 104:19
1:15
Gen 1:5
1:16
Ps 8:3; 19:1-6;
136:8-9
1 Cor 15:41
1:18
Jer 33:20, 25
1:20
Gen 2:19
Ps 146:6
**nepesh* (5315)
• Gen 2:7
1:21
Ps 104:25-28

And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

Day Four: Sun, Moon, Stars

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons,

days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

Day Five: Birds, Fish

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other ^elife. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and

Formless	CHAOS	Empty
DAY 1 (1:3-5) Light, Dark	HEAVENS	DAY 4 (1:14-19) Sun, Moon, Stars
DAY 2 (1:6-8) Water, Sky	WATER & SKY	DAY 5 (1:20-23) Birds, Fish
DAY 3 (1:9-13) Sea, Land	EARTH	DAY 6 (1:24-31) Animals, Humans
Formed	COSMOS	Filled
	DAY 7 (2:2-3) Rest	

◀ **The Structure of the Creation Account** (1:1–2:3). God transformed chaos into the present cosmos. In the first three days, he transformed the formless void into the structured universe—the HEAVENS (outer space), the WATER and SKY, and the EARTH (cp. Exod 20:11; Ps 135:6). In the second three days, he populated each empty realm. The seventh day (2:1-3) stands apart: As God's day of rest, it provides the weekly pattern for human activity (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) and speaks of the rest that God promised to those who live by faith in him (see Heb 3:7–4:11).

two collections of water (cp. Job 37:18; Ezek 1:22). In the ancient Near East, the cosmos was understood as a three-tier system, with rain originating from the outermost tier (see 7:11-12 and note). **1:9-10** *Let the waters . . . flow together*: Other ancient cultures viewed the sea as a hostile force. Genesis shows God as further restraining chaos (see note on 1:2) by prescribing specific boundaries for the sea. The flood—an act of God's judgment (6:7)—undid these boundaries and returned the earth to chaos (7:1-24). **1:14-31** On days 4–6, God filled the domains that had been formed during days 1–3 (1:3-13). **1:14** *Let them . . . mark the seasons, days, and years*: The movement of the heavenly bodies defined Israel's liturgical calendar, whose roots in creation gave a sacred timing to Israel's festivals and celebrations (see Exod 23:15; Lev 23:4).

(Hebrew *tehom*): Some scholars say this alludes to the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (representing chaos), but Genesis views *tehom* as inhospitable chaos, not as a deity or goddess that God engaged in cosmic battle. • *the Spirit of God*: God directly superintended the creation process.

1:3-13 In the first three days, God formed the chaos into a habitable world.

1:3 *Then God said*: Nothing in Gen 1 is created apart from God's powerful word (cp. Ps 33:6, 9). • "Let there be . . ." and *there was*: God's command enacted his will to create the world. God is not a part of creation or limited by it; he is the supreme ruler over everything (cp. Neh 9:6).

1:4 *Light* is antithetical to chaotic *darkness* (1:2); the light is declared *good* but the darkness is not (cp. John 1:5). God is the source of this light (cp. 1:14-19). God *separated* the light, as he did water

(cp. 1:6-8), by his creative word. Light is associated with life and blessing (Job 38:19-20; Ps 19:1-6; 97:11; 104:19-20; Isa 60:19-20) and sets a boundary on the darkness that would destroy cosmic order. Darkness often typifies terror, death, and evil (see 15:12; Job 18:6, 18; Ps 88:12; Eph 5:11-12; 1 Jn 1:5).

1:5 *God called* (or *named*): To name something is to exercise authority over it (see also 2:19-20). • *day*: The Hebrew *yom* can refer to daylight (1:5a), to a 24-hour period (1:5b), or to an unspecified time period (2:4b, "When," literally *in the day*; cp. Exod 20:8-11). • *evening* . . . *morning*: The Hebrew day began at sundown, just as the first day began with darkness and brought the first morning light.

1:6-8 The creation account describes the appearance of things from a human perspective. The *sky* is viewed as a shiny dome that is a buffer between

the surrounding pagan cultures, the *two great lights* were worshiped as deities, but in Genesis they serve God and humanity (see Ps 136:7-9; Jer 31:35). The sun and moon are not named; they are simply called *the larger one* and *the smaller one*. Not including their names may have reminded Israel that they were not gods. • *govern*: Cp. 1:26, 28; Ps 136:9. • *the stars*: The starry heavens testify to God's creative power as they proclaim his glory (Ps 19:1; 148:3). They do not predict the future, as Israel's neighbors believed (see Jer 10:2).

1:21 Contrary to the pagan idea that the *great sea creatures* were co-eternal with God, Genesis states that *God created* them and is sovereign over them. The Hebrew word *tanninim* ("creatures") elsewhere refers to crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), powerful monsters (Jer 51:34), or the sea creature, Leviathan (Isa 27:1; cp. Job 41:1-34).

swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

Day Six: Animals, Humankind

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God ^fcreated human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

Sabbath Rest (2:1-3)

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. ³And ^gGod blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of ^hcreation.

1:24
Gen 2:19
1:26
Gen 5:1; 9:6
Ps 8:6-8
Acts 17:28-29

1:27
*Matt 19:4
*Mark 10:6
*bara' (1254)
† Gen 2:3

1:29
Gen 9:3
Ps 104:13; 136:25

1:30
Ps 104:14; 145:15

1:31
Ps 104:24

2:1
Deut 4:19; 17:3
Ps 104:2
Isa 45:12

2:2
Exod 20:11; 31:17
*Heb 4:4

2:3
Isa 58:13
*barak (1288A)
† Gen 12:2
*bara' (1254)
† Gen 6:7

2:4
Gen 1:3-31; 5:1; 6:9;
10:1
Job 38:4-11

1:22 *God blessed them:* God’s blessing commissions and enables the fulfillment of what God has spoken (see “Blessing” at 48:8-20, p. 113). • *Let the fish . . . let the birds:* These directives define the blessing. The fish and birds are fertile by God’s command, not by pagan ritual, as some of Israel’s neighbors thought.

1:26 *Let us make* is more personal than the remote “Let there be” (e.g., 1:3, 6). • The plural *us* has inspired several explanations: (1) the Trinity; (2) the plural to denote majesty; (3) a plural to show deliberation with the self; and (4) God speaking with his heavenly court of angels. The concept of the Trinity—one true God who exists eternally in three distinct persons—was revealed at a later stage in redemptive history, making it unlikely that the human author intended that here. Hebrew scholars generally dismiss the plural of majesty view because the grammar does not clearly support it (the plural of majesty has not been demonstrated to be communicated purely through a plural verb). The plural of self-deliberation also lacks evidence; the only clear examples refer to Israel as a corporate unity (e.g., 2 Sam 24:14). God’s speaking to the heavenly court, however, is

well-attested in the OT (see 3:22; 11:7; 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; 38:7; Ps 89:5-6; Isa 6:1-8; Dan 10:12-13).

• *human beings:* Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. • *The descriptors in our image and like us* are virtually synonymous in Hebrew. Humans enjoy a unique relationship with God. • *They will reign:* Humans represent the Creator as his ambassadors, vice-regents, and administrators on earth.

1:27 The first poetry of Genesis reflectively celebrates God’s climactic feat in creating humankind. • *human beings (Or the man;* Hebrew reads *ha-adam*): This term is often used to denote humanity collectively (see 6:1, 5-7; 9:5-6). Though traditionally translated “man,” gender is not at issue here; both *male and female* are included.

1:28 *God blessed them:* See note on 1:22; see also 17:16; 48:16; Deut 7:13. • *said:* God’s message to humankind is direct and intimate; we are stewards of his delegated authority. • *govern. . . . Reign:* As God’s vice-regents, humans are entrusted with the care and management of the world God created (see also 9:2; Ps 8:5-8).

1:29-30 These verses highlight the extent (*throughout the earth*) and variety (*every seed-bearing plant . . . all*

the fruit trees) of God’s provision for humans, *animals*, and *birds*.

1:31 The Creator declares his work *good* seven times in ch 1; following the creation of human beings, God declares it all *very good*.

2:1-3 Humankind is the high point of God’s creative acts (1:26-31), while day 7 is the climax of the creation week. When God *rested (or ceased)*, he endorsed all of creation—there was nothing more to do! This seven-day framework structured Israel’s week, with the *seventh day* as the precedent for their weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath was intended to celebrate God’s finished work; the seventh day would be set apart as *holy* and dedicated to the Creator, who also rested (see Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; cp. Matt 12:1-8; Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Heb 4:1-11).

2:3 The first six days of creation involved separation (light from darkness, day from night, water from dry land). The last act of creation separated what is ordinary from what is *holy*, thus laying the foundation for Israel’s worship. It also anticipated a coming age of rest (Heb 4:1-11; 12:2; 13:14). • The absence of the usual “morning and evening” reflects the Creator’s willingness to enter into unending fellowship with humankind.

2:5
Gen 1:11
2:7
Gen 3:19
Job 33:4
Ps 103:14
Ezek 37:5
Zech 12:1
John 20:22
*1 Cor 15:45
ʾnepesh (5315)
Deut 12:23

2. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREATION (2:4–4:26)

Superscript (2:4a)

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Creation of Man and Woman (2:4b-25) Creation of the Man

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains

were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living ⁱperson.

Human Sexuality (1:27-28)

When God created the first human beings in his own image, he created them as sexual beings, male and female (1:27). Through their sexuality, they were to fill and govern the world (1:28) and provide intimate companionship for one another in marriage (2:18-25). Male and female sexuality is central to what it means to be human.

Sexual intimacy united the first man and woman as one being, an effect that sexual intimacy continues to have. Since biblical sexuality is not just physical but has the total person in view, it validates sexual relations only as part of the partners' mutual commitment to each other's ultimate good. The Bible speaks of engaging in sexual intercourse as literally "knowing" another person intimately (see note on 4:1). Since creation, the purpose of sexuality has been to join people in an intimate union of marriage—a permanent and loving heterosexual commitment—that God blesses and calls "very good" (1:27-28, 31). The sexual relationship cements the marriage bond in an intimacy that continues even when reproduction is no longer possible.

Although sexuality was created before sin, it did not emerge unscathed from human rebellion. Sexuality is a powerful force that is easily corrupted if not carefully channeled (see Lev 18; 1 Thes 4:3-8). Sexual intimacy apart from marital commitment perverts the order that God intended for creation. Incest, for example, violates sexual boundaries (see Lev 18:7-14), collapses family structures (see 19:30-38), and fragments the community. Whereas perverted sexuality tears the community down (see 38:1-30; 39:7-9; Judg 19:1–20:48) and exalts the individual (see 2 Sam 13:11-14), biblical sexuality builds up the sexual partners and the community.

Our sexual identity has been damaged through our fall into sin (ch 3), but God has redeemed it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 6:12-20; Eph 5:31-33). He restores sexual wholeness in those who trust his work in their lives by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:9-11, 15-20; 1 Thes 4:1-5). Those who commit their sexuality to Christ can testify to God's love for his people (Eph 5:25-33).

Gen 2:18-25
Lev 18:1-30
Deut 22:13-29
Ruth 4:11-13
2 Sam 11:2-27
Ps 127:3-5
Ecc 2:8-11
Song 1–8
Mal 2:15-16
Matt 19:3-12
1 Cor 6:12–7:40
Eph 5:31-33
1 Thes 4:3-8

2:4–4:26 This account (see note on 2:4) of the heavens and the earth is not a second creation account; rather, it is a theological and historical expansion on 1:1–2:3. The focus is now on what the cosmos produced rather than on its creation. Special attention is given to the first man and woman. As the story progresses, it is colored by contrasts of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, harmony and discord.

2:4 *This is the account* (literally *These are the generations*): This or a similar phrase is repeated throughout Genesis, creating an internal outline for the book. In other occurrences, it introduces the genealogy or story of a key personality (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). • Some have argued that the first half of 2:4 belongs with 1:1–2:3, but it is more likely the

introduction to the account that follows.

• **LORD God** (Hebrew *Yahweh Elohim*) is the second name used for God in the early chapters of Genesis. *Elohim* (1:1–2:3) describes the all-powerful creator God. *Yahweh Elohim* speaks of the eternal God who formed a lasting covenant with Israel (Exod 3:6, 13-15). Accordingly, 2:4-25 focuses on God as provider more than as creator. The three themes of sexuality, dominion, and food in ch 1 are now addressed in reverse order (food, 2:8-17; dominion, 2:18-20; sexuality, 2:21-25).

2:5 *cultivate*: Work does not result from sin; it was part of the original structure of creation and is directly tied to human identity and purpose (1:28; 2:15).

2:6 *springs* (Or *mist*, as traditionally rendered): The word refers to subterranean springs that rose to the surface of the ground.

2:7 In 1:1–2:3, creation happens at a distance, by divine command ("Let there be . . . and that is what happened"). In this account, the creative act is much more intimate (see also 2:8-9, 21-22). • **from the dust of the ground**: In Hebrew, *'adamah* ("ground") forms a word play with *'adam* ("man"). The earth remains the definitive reference point for humans, who in death return to dust (3:17-19; 4:11; Job 4:19; 10:8-9; Isa 29:16). • **breathed . . . into the man's nostrils**: God's *breath* is not imparted to other animals; only humans are formed in God's image (1:27) and enjoy dialogue with their Creator (2:16-17; 3:8-13). They alone have spiritual awareness and moral conscience (see Job 32:8).

Creation of the Garden

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the

Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

2:8
Gen 3:23; 13:10
Isa 51:3
Joel 2:3
2:9
Gen 3:22
Prov 3:18; 11:30
Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14
2:10
Rev 22:1, 17
2:14
Gen 15:18
Deut 1:7
Dan 10:4
2:15
Gen 2:8

The First Command

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

Biblical Marriage (2:18-25)

Gen 24:65-67
Ps 45:8-15
Is 54:5
Hos 2:19-20
Mal 2:10-16
1 Cor 7:1-40
2 Cor 6:14-16
Eph 5:21-33
Heb 13:4
1 Pet 3:1-7

At the first wedding, God the father gave the bride away to the groom and witnessed the couple's interaction in his sanctuary-garden (2:18-25). Married love is thus a binding covenant commitment before God. Breaching that covenant (e.g., through adultery) is a crime against persons and against God, who is a divine witness to and guarantor of the marriage covenant (see Mal 2:10-16; cp. Gen 39:6-9; Jer 3:1; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Heb 13:4). Although marriage is exclusive, it is not private. It is legally declared in public, with community recognition, witnesses, and accountability (see Lev 20:10-12; Deut 22:22; Jer 29:20-23).

Marriage is also a metaphor of the Lord's relationship with his people, first with Israel (see Exod 19:3-6; 20:2-6; 34:14; Isa 54:5; Ezek 16; Hos 2:19-20), and then with the church (see 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33). A marriage points to something greater than itself—God's people (Christ's "bride") await the return of Christ (the "groom"). Married Christians are called to live in unity and dignity as they anticipate the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9). Christ will live forever with his faithful people in glory (Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9).

2:8-14 Analogous to the sacred time marked out on the seventh day of creation (2:2-3), the sacred space of the *garden in Eden* was separate from the surrounding world. It functioned as a garden-temple or sanctuary because the Lord manifested his presence there in a special way.

2:8 *Eden* was the general location in which the *garden* was placed, not the garden itself. The term could mean "plain," "delight," or "fertility." The description that follows favors the idea of fertility. • *in the east*: The exact location of Eden is left to speculation, but it was east of Canaan, Israel's later home. • *God placed the man* in the garden for divine fellowship and physical blessing (see also 2:15 and note).

2:9 Beauty and bounty characterized humanity's original environment (cp. 13:10). • *The tree of life* represented God's presence and provision. The one who ate of it would have everlasting life (3:22), which made it a rich image for later Israelite and Christian reflection (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). The candlestick in Israel's Tabernacle may have been a stylized representation of it (Exod 25:31-35). • Eating the fruit of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* enabled humanity's capacity for wisdom (3:6) and moral

discernment (3:5, 22; cp. Deut 1:39, "innocent"). Eating from it represented a human grasp for autonomy and wisdom that were God's alone (cp. Prov 30:1-4). Humans sidestepped God's revelation as the means of moral discernment, flaunting their independence rather than submitting to God's will (cp. Prov 1:7). Choosing human wisdom over God's instruction brings death and destruction (see Ps 19:7-9; Ezek 28:6, 15-17).

2:10-14 This detailed description portrays the eastern region around Eden as a mountain with rivers flowing out to the world. Eden's beauty and fertility enriched the whole earth.

2:10 *The river that was watering the garden* was a material blessing (bringing agricultural fertility) and a symbol of God's presence (cp. Ps 46:4; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8; Rev 22:1-2). • *dividing into four branches* (literally *heads*): The common understanding is that one river had its source in Eden, flowed down through the garden, and then split into the four rivers named.

2:11 *The Pishon* and the Gihon (2:13) cannot be identified with certainty. If *the land of Havilah* was in southeast Arabia or on the African coast, as some biblical data suggest (see 10:7; 25:18; 1 Sam 15:7), then the Pishon was possibly the Nile River. Josephus thought that Havilah and the Pishon were in India

(*Antiquities* 1.1.3). Two other proposals suggest: (1) rivers in the mountains of eastern Turkey where the Tigris and Euphrates (2:14) also flow, and (2) the marshy delta near the Persian Gulf. Current geographical conditions make any theory impossible to prove conclusively.

2:12 The magnificence and fertility of the garden are pictured as spreading to the surrounding regions through the rivers flowing out from it. The four rivers possibly imply that the garden's bounty flowed out to the four corners of the earth. • *Gold* and *onyx* were later used for decorating the Tabernacle, the Temple (Exod 25:3-9; 1 Chr 29:2), and the priests' clothing (Exod 28:9-14, 20). • *Resin* was used in sacred incense (Exod 30:34).

2:13 *Gihon*: Though unknown, proposals have included the Nile (as in the Greek version of Jer 2:18; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1.3), the Jordan, or, according to Jewish tradition, a river that formerly ran through the Kidron Valley (1 Kgs 1:33; 2 Chr 33:14). • Although *Cush* is the name of ancient Ethiopia, Mesopotamian regions associated with Babylon seem to be the immediate setting (see 10:8); Cush is possibly the land of the Kassites, a dynasty ruling in Babylonia.

2:14 *Tigris* . . . *Euphrates*: These well-known rivers flow from the mountains of eastern Turkey.

2:16
Gen 3:1-3

2:17
Gen 3:1, 16-17
Deut 30:15, 19-20
Rom 6:23
Jas 1:15

2:18
Gen 3:12
Prov 18:22

2:19
Gen 1:20-25

2:22
1 Cor 11:8-9
1 Tim 2:13

2:23
Gen 29:14
Eph 5:28-30

2:24
*Matt 19:5
*1 Cor 6:16
Eph 5:31

2:25
Gen 3:7, 10-11

16But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

Creation of the Woman

18Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one.²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

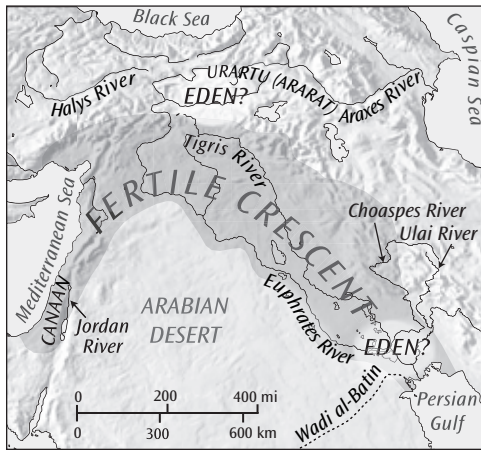
21So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening.²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

23"At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

24This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

25Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.



◀ The Location of Eden (2:8-14). Eden might have been located in the mountains of Ararat or near the Persian Gulf (see notes on 2:8-14). Possibilities for the four rivers (2:10-14) exist in either location (see note on 2:11). Eden represented God's presence on earth that was withdrawn at the Fall and re-inaugurated at Sinai (see Exod 3:1-6; 24:9-18; 40:34-38).

distinctions (cp. 29:14). • Adam declares that "She will be called 'woman' (Hebrew *'ishah*) because she was taken from 'man' (Hebrew *'ish*)." He understood the nature of their connection (see Eph 5:28-29). Adam had earlier assessed the animals without finding the characteristics he needed in a partner. How different this evaluation is!

2:24 Marriage between a man and a woman is not just a human social construct but is rooted in the created order. • *a man leaves . . . and is joined*: Marriage entails a shift of loyalty from parents to spouse. • *the two are united into one*: Marriage and its commitments make it the most fundamental covenant relationship observed among humans. Marriage is a powerful image of Israel's covenant with God (Hos 2:14-23) and of Christ's relationship to the church (Eph 5:22-32). Marriage is designed as an inseparable, exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. The family unit it creates is the basic building block of human society.

2:25 *both naked*: Prior to the Fall (ch 3), nakedness reflected innocence and trust. After the Fall, it denoted vulnerability and *shame* (see 9:22-23; Lev 18:1-23; Isa 47:3). Shame is more than embarrassment; it connotes exploitation and humiliation (see Deut 28:48; Isa 58:7; Jas 2:15-16).

2:15 to *tend and watch over*: The garden required maintenance and oversight. Tending the *Garden* was humanity's dignifying work. These roles in God's garden-sanctuary were later applied to God's Tabernacle (see Lev 8:35; Num 3:5-10; 4:46-49).

2:17 *except* (literally *but you must not eat*): This prohibition is given in the same legal format as Israel's Ten Commandments (see Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). The Lord built law and obedience into the fabric of his covenant relationship with humanity. • *the knowledge of good and evil*: See note on 2:9. • *you are sure to die*: The consequences of disobedience would be immediate spiritual death (loss of relationship with God) and eventual physical death (see 3:22-23; Eccl 12:6-7).

2:18-23 As human creation was the climax of ch 1, so human intimacy is the high point of ch 2. God's concern for mutual human support and companionship finds no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature.

2:18 *It is not good*: This is God's first negative assessment of an otherwise excellent creation (1:31). *The LORD God* is portrayed as a father who obtains a bride for his son (cp. 24:1-67). • The answer to the man's need is *a helper who is just right for him*; she is his perfect complement, made in the same image of God (1:26-27), given the same commission (1:28; 2:15), and obligated by the same prohibition (2:17). The man cannot fulfill his created purpose alone.

2:19-20 to *see what he would call them*: Following God's example (1:5, 8, 10), the man *chose a name for each* of the creatures. In so doing, he was exercising his reign over creation (1:26, 28).

2:19 *the man*: Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

2:21 *took out one of the man's ribs* (or *took a part of the man's side*): Cp. 2:23; Eph 5:28.

2:23 Adam recognized the woman as a "helper just right for him" (2:20). His celebration of her in poetry and song observed his unity with her, not their

The Ruin of God's Creation (3:1-24)
Temptation to Sin

3 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

Man and Woman Rebel against the Creator

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her hus-

band, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

God Interrogates the Man and Woman

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.

⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

3:1
2 Cor 11:3
Rev 12:9; 20:2
3:2
Gen 2:16
3:3
Gen 2:17
Exod 19:12
3:4
John 8:44
2 Cor 11:3
3:5
Gen 2:17; 3:22
Isa 14:14
Ezek 28:2
3:6
2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:14
Jas 1:14-15
1 Jn 2:16
3:8
Lev 26:12
Deut 23:14
Job 31:33
3:9
Gen 4:9; 18:9
3:10
Deut 5:5
3:12
Prov 28:13
3:13
2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:14

3:1-24 The rebellion of the man and the woman shattered their unity and harmony with earth, animals, each other, and God.

3:1 Genesis describes the deceiver as a *serpent*, one of the animals God created (see also 3:14 and note). He is later identified as Satan, the great enemy of God's people (Rev 12:9; 20:2). His manipulative language and his disguise as a serpent, the *shrewdest of all* creatures, show him as a master deceiver. Satan has various methods for opposing God's people (see 1 Chr 21:1; Zech 3:1-2); deception remains among his key strategies (cp. 2 Cor 11:3, 14). The Hebrew term for shrewd (*arum*) can be positive ("prudent," Prov 14:8) or negative ("cunning," as here; Job 5:12). It forms a word play with "naked" (*arumim*) in 2:25. Adam and Eve were naked and vulnerable; the serpent was shrewd and cunning. • Probably the serpent *asked the woman* because the prohibition was given to Adam prior to Eve's creation (see 2:16-17). Adam was probably aware of the serpent's cunning, having assessed and named all the animals before Eve was created (2:19-20, 23). • *Did God really say?* The deceiver began by twisting God's language to cast doubt on God's goodness. God's original prohibition applied to only one tree (2:16-17), not to all (*any*) of them.

3:2-3 The woman attempted to set the record straight; in the process, she belittled the privileges God had given her and her husband in several ways: (1) She reduced God's "freely eat" (2:16) to *may eat*; (2) she downplayed God's emphasis on the availability of fruit

from every tree but one (2:17); (3) she added not touching to God's prohibition against eating (2:17); and (4) she softened the certainty of death (2:17).

3:4-5 *You won't die!* This is the exact negation of God's clear and emphatic words: "you are sure to die" (2:17). The serpent capitalizes on the woman's uncertainty by baldly denying the penalty and quickly diverting her attention to the supposed prize—to *be like God, knowing both good and evil*. The deceiver falsely implies that this would be an unqualified good for them. The term rendered God is *Elohim*; it can also mean "divine beings" (i.e., God and the angels; e.g., Ps 29:1; 89:7).

3:6 *She saw . . . she wanted:* The woman made two grave errors. (1) She assumed the right to decide what was and was not good, though God alone has this right; and (2) she coveted God's wisdom (see Deut 5:21). • *her husband . . . with her:* Although Scripture is clear about the woman's central role in the Fall (cp. 1 Tim 2:14), the man was clearly present and culpable as well. He comes to center stage in the verses that follow and in biblical theology. The consequence of his sin for the entire human race was immense. The Good News is that in Jesus Christ, the "second Adam," God has made salvation universally available (Rom 5:12-21).

3:7 *Shame* is opposite to the naked innocence Adam and Eve enjoyed prior to their rebellion (2:25). Their relationship with one another and with God was fractured. • *sewed fig leaves together:* These covered their physical bodies, but

not their shame. They could not mend their broken relationships (see also 3:21 and note).

3:8 *When the cool evening breezes were blowing:* The Hebrew has traditionally been interpreted as referring to the cool part of the day, most likely the evening. Others think that the language refers to a powerful manifestation of God's presence (a *theophany*; see Exod 19:16-25; 1 Sam 7:10) as a storm. If this view is correct, the man and the woman were hiding from the sound of the Lord appearing in judgment (see 2 Sam 5:24; Ps 29). • *the man:* Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. • *God put trees in the garden* as an environment for humanity to enjoy fellowship with God. Now the man and woman used them to evade the divine presence.

3:9-10 *Where are you?* The true intent of this rhetorical question is revealed in the man's answer (3:10). The real question was, why are you hiding? (cp. 4:9-10). • *I was afraid because I was naked:* Modesty was not the issue. The shame brought on by rebellion drove Adam and his wife to hide. Possibly they also feared punishment (see note on 3:8).

3:12 *It was the woman you gave me:* Rather than confessing, the man became evasive. He blamed the woman for giving him the fruit and God for giving him the woman.

3:13 *What have you done?* is another rhetorical question that is really an exclamation of horror (cp. 4:10). • *The serpent deceived me:* As the man implicated the woman (3:12), the woman accused the serpent. The serpent did play

3:14
Deut 28:15
Isa 65:25

3:15
John 8:44
Rom 16:20
Heb 2:14
‘zera’ (2233)
Gen 12:7

3:16
1 Cor 11:3
Eph 5:22
1 Tim 2:15

3:17
Job 5:7
Eccl 1:3
Rom 8:20-22

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied.
“That’s why I ate it.”

God Indicts and Convicts

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are
cursed
more than all animals, domestic and
wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you
and the woman,

and between your offspring and her
offspring.

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your
pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your
husband,
but he will rule over you.”

¹⁷And to the man he said,

ADAM (2:4–3:24)

Gen 1:26-31;
4:25–5:5
Hos 6:6-7
Luke 3:38
Rom 5:12-21
1 Cor 15:22, 45-49
1 Tim 2:13-14

Adam was the first man, the father of the human race. God created the first couple in his image to populate the earth and rule the created order (1:26-31). God made Adam from earth and breathed life into him (2:7); he was to cultivate the garden (2:15), name the animals (2:19-20), and follow God’s instructions (1:28; 2:16-17). God created the woman as a companion and helper for Adam (2:18-22). Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib portrays the unity that God intended for man and woman in marriage (2:23-25).

After the serpent deceived Eve into rejecting God’s rule, Adam also rebelled (3:1-6). Their willful disobedience disrupted their relationship (3:7) and separated them from God. God looked for Adam after his rebellion; he was hiding among the trees, already aware of his alienation (3:8). When God questioned him, Adam blamed Eve and, by implication, God (3:12). Adam’s rebellion brought hardship in governing the earth as well as physical and spiritual death (3:17-19, 22). God provided animal skins to cover Adam and Eve (3:21), and promised that Eve’s offspring would defeat Satan (3:15; see Rom 16:20; Rev 12:1-9; 20:1-10).

Adam was a historical individual (4:25; 5:1-5; 1 Chr 1:1; Hos 6:7; Luke 3:38; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45; 1 Tim 2:13-14; Jude 1:14) who represents humanity as a whole. God’s mandates (1:26-30) and curses (3:16-19) affected not only Adam and Eve, but the entire human race. Adam represents the separation from God that all humanity experiences.

The apostle Paul contrasted those represented by Adam, the first man, with those who follow Christ, the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45-50; see Rom 5:12-21; 8:5-11, 20-22). Those represented by Adam live only in him; they partake of his sin, his alienation from God and creation, and his spiritual death. Those who follow Christ live by faith in him. They are recreated in Christ’s image and become “new people” who partake of a new creation (see Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 5:17). The barriers Adam raised are removed by Christ (Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 5:19; Gal 3:27-28; 6:15; Eph 2:14-16); Christ restores what Adam lost.

a role and would be punished (3:14), but that did not release the woman or the man from their guilt.

3:14-19 The parties were judged in the order of their transgression—serpent, woman, man. Each received a punishment unique to his or her situation, and each had a key relationship altered. God is principled in judgment, not fickle; each punishment is proportionate to the offense.

3:14 to the serpent: Though later revelation identifies the deceiver as Satan, it is the created animal who was cursed, like the ground (3:17). • **Groveling in the dust** is a posture of humiliation and defeat (Ps 72:9; Mic 7:17).

3:15 hostility: The prophet Isaiah envisions the day when the Messiah’s

kingdom will restore all of creation to a harmonious state like the Garden of Eden before humans sinned (see Isa 11:8). • **her offspring** (literally *her seed*): This collective noun can refer to a single descendant or many. The ancient Near Eastern concept of corporate solidarity (e.g., “you and your descendants,” 28:14) is also behind this description of the ongoing hostility that would exist between humans and snakes. The pattern is set using singular terms (*He . . . you*). Christian interpreters have traditionally understood this verse as a prophecy of Christ, the seed of Abraham and the culmination of the woman’s seed (Gal 3:16; 4:4). • **strike** (Or *bruise*, in both occurrences): The striking of *his heel* is a reference to the suffering of God’s servant (see Isa 53),

while striking the serpent’s *head*—a more definitive blow—is ultimately fulfilled in Christ’s death, resurrection, and final victory over Satan (1 Cor 15:55-57; Rev 12:7-9; 20:7-10).

3:16 Judgment falls on the woman’s unique role of childbearing and on her relationship with her husband. • **And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you** (Or *And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you*): The marriage relationship now included an element of antagonism rather than just security and fulfillment. New life in Christ allows for the restoration of a man and a woman’s marriage relationship (Eph 5:18-32; cp. Matt 20:25-28).

3:17-19 God highlighted his original

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

Expulsion and Hope

²⁰Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live ^kforever!” ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate

the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty ^acherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

*Results of Rebellion (4:1-24)
Cain and Abel*

4 Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD’s help, I have produced a man!” ²Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to

3:18
Job 31:40
Heb 6:8
3:19
Gen 2:7
Ps 90:3; 104:29
Eccl 12:7
1 Cor 15:47
3:20
2 Cor 11:3
1 Tim 2:13
3:21
2 Cor 5:2-3
3:22
Gen 1:26
^kolam (5769)
↳ Gen 9:16
3:24
Ezek 10:1
Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14
^akerub (3742)
↳ Exod 25:18
4:2
Luke 11:50-51
4:3
Lev 2:1-2
Num 18:12
4:4
Exod 13:12
Heb 11:4
4:6
Jon 4:4
4:7
Rom 6:12, 16
Jas 1:15

command *not to eat* the fruit by speaking of eating several times in 3:17-19. The judgment affected humanity’s ability to get food, and it was proportionate to their offense of eating what had been prohibited. • *the ground is cursed*: The relationship of the man to the ground (see note on 2:7) was now antagonistic as judgment fell on his primary role (2:5, 15). He must labor and toil to work the ground, but with diminished productivity. Human sin has broad effects on creation (see 4:12; 6:7; Lev 26; Deut 11:13-17; 28; Rom 8:22).

3:20-24 Soon after they were judged for their sin, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden.

3:20 *Eve* (Hebrew *khawah*) sounds like a Hebrew term (*khay*) that means “to give life.” Following God’s pronouncement of Adam’s impending death (3:19), Adam expressed hope by giving Eve a name associated with life. Adam’s naming of Eve in such close proximity to 3:16 may suggest that the narrator views it as Adam’s first act of ruling over the woman after the Fall (see note on 2:19-20).

3:21 God mercifully provided more substantial clothing for Adam and Eve (cp. 3:7) before expelling them into the harsh environment outside the garden.

3:22 *human beings: Or the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. • *like us*: The

plural probably reflects God’s conversation with his angelic court (see note on 1:26). • *the tree of life . . . live forever!* Mercifully, God prevented humankind from eating of the tree of life and having to live forever in a fallen state. Through Jesus Christ, however, eternal life is once again made available (see Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

3:23 *So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden*: Before the Fall, the garden was a sanctuary in which humans could move freely in God’s holy presence. Now their sin required expulsion from that environment. This same principle was behind the laws that restricted an Israelite’s access to God’s presence in the Tabernacle or Temple (e.g., Lev 16:1-2; Num 5:3).

3:24 *Cherubim* are a class of angelic beings that guard access to God’s presence (Exod 26:31; Ezek 28:14). • *east . . . of Eden*: In Genesis, movement eastward often implies leaving the presence or blessing of God, whether in judgment (see also 4:16), self-aggrandizement (11:2; 13:11), or estrangement (25:6).

4:1 *Adam: Or the man*; also in 4:25. • *had sexual relations* (literally *knew*): In certain contexts, the Hebrew term meaning “to know” is an idiom for sexual knowledge of another person (4:17; 19:33, 35). It is never used of animals, which mate by instinct. • *With the*

LORD’s help: Eve fulfilled her God-given role of procreation despite the negative effects of the Fall (see 3:16, 20). • *I have produced: Or I have acquired. Cain* (Hebrew *qayin*) sounds like a Hebrew term (*qanah*) that can mean “produce” or “acquire.”

4:2 *his brother . . . Abel*: The name (Hebrew *habel*) means “breath,” “vapor,” or “meaningless,” anticipating his tragically brief life (cp. Eccl 1:2).

4:3 There was nothing wrong with offering grain to the Lord (Lev 2:14; Deut 26:2-4), but Cain brought only a token gift (*some of his crops*), whereas God requires the first and best (Exod 23:16, 19; 34:22, 26). Cain’s heart attitude made his offering inferior to Abel’s (cp. Heb 11:4).

4:4-5 *the best of the firstborn lambs: Or the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions*. Abel was giving God the best animals and the richest parts. Abel’s offering, in contrast to Cain’s, was the best he had to offer. True worship is a costly privilege.

4:7 *Sin is crouching at the door . . . you must subdue it*: Sin is pictured as a vicious animal lying in wait to pounce on Cain (cp. note on 3:16). Either sin will dominate Cain, or Cain will resist the temptation to sin. There is no neutral ground in that conflict.

4:8
Matt 23:35
1 Jn 3:12

4:9
Gen 3:9

4:10
Num 35:33
Deut 21:1
Heb 12:24

4:11
Deut 27:15-26

4:12
Deut 28:15-24

4:14
Gen 9:6
Job 15:22

4:17
Ps 49:11

control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood.

¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you

work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

¹⁵The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to

Original Sin (3:1-19)

Genesis 3 describes how human moral innocence collapsed through rebellion (3:11, 17). What God declared as “very good” (1:31) was no longer completely so. Man and woman ate the fruit that promised knowledge of good and evil and thus broke God’s command (2:17). Worse, they tried to become like God (3:5) and thus fell from their sinless state. Alienated from God, one another, and creation, they also became subject to death.

The term “original sin” denotes sin’s complete, universal infiltration into individual lives and human society as a result of human rebellion. When the first man and woman ate the fruit in disobedience to God, they forfeited their own innocence and that of their children, the entire human race (Rom 5:12-14; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49). All humans are “fallen,” born in sin, predisposed to sin (8:21; Job 4:17-21; Ps 51:5; 103:10; 143:2; Prov 20:9), and awaiting death. As people yield to their inherited predisposition to sin, they become responsible for their own wrongdoing (Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:23).

The first man, Adam, introduced sin, but the “second Adam,” Jesus Christ, is sin’s antidote (1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21). When Christ died as Redeemer, he made God’s salvation from sin available to all (John 3:16; Rom 1:16).

Gen 8:21
Exod 34:7
Job 4:17-21
Ps 51:5
Prov 22:15
Ezek 36:16-36
John 8:1-11
Rom 1:18–3:20;
5:12-21
1 Cor 15:21-22
Gal 3:22; 5:17-24
Eph 2:1-10
1 Jn 3:14

4:8 The effects of the Fall on human relationships are tragically expressed in the first murder. • The word *brother* is used seven times in 4:2-11, highlighting Cain’s fratricide in the face of familial responsibility. • *Let’s go out into the fields*: As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks this phrase.

4:9 *Where is your brother?* The questions God asked Cain (4:6, 9, 10) recall those that God asked Cain’s parents (3:9-13). In both cases, humans put up evasive answers (cp. 3:12-13). Cain’s answer is shockingly defiant—another clue that the problem with his token offering was the attitude that lay behind it.

4:10 *What have you done?* is more an expression of horror and rebuke than a fact-finding question (cp. 3:13). • Abel’s *blood* is personified as a legal witness that *cries out* against Cain. • *from the ground*: See note on 4:11-12.

4:11-12 As with his father (cp. 3:9-12, 17-19), Cain’s interrogation (4:9-10)

was followed by God’s verdict. Adam’s sin had already caused *the ground* to be cursed. Now Cain was *cursed and banished* from the land he farmed because he had contaminated it with innocent blood. • *homeless wanderer*: Cain was condemned to ceaseless roving in a land that would provide neither sustenance nor security. The effects of sin were escalating.

4:13-14 For Cain, eviction *from the land*—the domain of his vocation as a farmer (see 4:2; cp. 3:23)—amounted to exile from God’s *presence*. The Israelites were warned that unfaithfulness to the Sinai covenant would similarly result in eviction from the Promised Land and from God’s presence in the Temple (see, e.g., Lev 26:27-32).

4:13 *My punishment*: Or *My sin*.

4:15 *Sevenfold punishment* was the full weight of justice. Cain complained that his punishment was too great, but the full sentence that would fall on anyone who committed Cain’s crime against him shows how gracious the Lord

was to Cain. Cain deserved death (see 9:5-6). • The *mark* graciously provided protection following Cain’s judgment (cp. 3:21).

4:16 *Nod* means “wandering.” The name speaks more of Cain’s fate (see 4:12, 14) than of a specific geographical area (the location is unknown). Cain’s sin denied him rest and a sense of belonging. • Cain’s exile *east of Eden* is another point of connection with Adam’s story (cp. 3:24). Cain did not learn from his father’s mistake, so he also suffered estrangement from the ground and exile to the east (see note on 3:24).

4:17–5:32 These back-to-back genealogies do more than list names for the record. They contrast the ways that human culture spread, some in rebellion against God (Cain, 4:17-24) and some in obedience to God (Seth, 4:25–5:32). In Genesis, the history of the rejected branch is generally explained before carrying forward the line that led to Israel. Two points of contrast are especially worth noting: (1) Lamech, the seventh from Adam through the lineage

Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹His brother's name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²²Lamech's other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah. ²³One day Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.
I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,

then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

Epilogue: The Birth of Seth (4:25-26)

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

3. THE ACCOUNT OF ADAM'S DESCENDANTS (5:1–6:8)

Human Identity Restated

5This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. ²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

Genealogy: Adam to Noah

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just

4:23
Lev 19:18
Deut 32:35

4:25
Gen 4:8; 5:3
1 Chr 1:1
Luke 3:38

4:26
Gen 12:8
1 Kgs 18:24
Joel 2:32
Zeph 3:9
Acts 2:21

5:1
Gen 1:26; 6:9
1 Chr 1:1

5:2
Gen 1:27
*Matt 19:4
*Mark 10:6

5:3-32
1 Chr 1:1-3
Luke 3:36-38

5:3
Gen 1:26; 4:25
1 Cor 15:49

of Cain, is the main focus of the first genealogy. Like his ancestor, Lamech took human life and had to live in constant fear of death as a consequence (4:23-24). By contrast, Enoch, the seventh from Adam through the lineage of Seth (see 4:25–5:32), lived in a way that pleased God and avoided death altogether (5:24). (2) Advances in human culture and technology came through Cain's line (the first city, livestock, shelter, metallurgy, music), but the effects of sin still dominated. No technological advances are mentioned in Seth's line; instead, people began “to worship the LORD” (4:26) and to find “favor with the LORD” (see 6:8).

4:17 Cain's *wife* was probably one of his sisters (5:4). Cain's marriage to his sister would not have caused genetic problems so early in the development of the human gene pool. • Cain was condemned to be a wanderer. Perhaps he *founded a city* in rebellion against that verdict, seeking to defend himself by enclosing it in walls. Naming it *after his son* reflects a tendency among those who rebel against God to idolize humanity and its achievements.

4:18 *the father of: Or the ancestor of,* and so throughout the verse. Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

4:19 Marrying *two women* was contrary to God's ideal pattern for marriage (2:24), and might be another manifestation of the arrogance and rebellion of Cain's descendants.

4:20-22 Technological advancement

masks increasing self-assertion and distance from God (see note on 4:14–5:32).

4:23-24 Lamech's chilling taunt shows the further escalation of sin's effects on humanity. Cain's line had reached a crescendo of violence with Lamech's contempt for life. In his arrogance, he put his deed into poetic verse.

• *punished seventy-seven times!* God warned that anyone who tried to kill Cain would experience the full weight of justice (4:15). Lamech's declaration that anyone who harmed him would receive an even more severe penalty is a claim to be accountable to no one, including God.

4:25–5:32 The story returns to Adam and follows the line of Seth, whose lineage led to Abraham and the Israelite nation.

4:25 *another son . . . in place of Abel:* Cain (4:8-16) and Lamech (4:19-24) illustrate sin's consequences; the birth of Seth brought renewed hope. See also note on 5:1-2. • *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.”

4:26 *Enosh* means “humankind.” In the OT, the term is often used in poetic texts that emphasize human mortality, frailty, and weakness (e.g., Ps 144:3, “mere mortals”). Enosh was born at the time when people began to *worship the LORD by name* (literally *call on the name of the LORD*). In Genesis, that meant calling on the name of the Lord through sacrifice and prayer (similar Hebrew terminology is found in 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25).

5:1-32 The genealogies of Genesis go beyond simply recording history. By selective information and by structure, they communicate spiritual truth. The genealogies highlight God's blessing, authenticate the family heritage of important individuals, and hold the Genesis narrative together by showing familial continuity. Adam's genealogy through Seth traces ten generations to Noah (see 1 Chr 1:1-4; Luke 3:36-38), with the flood intervening before another ten generations from Noah to Abram. The number ten indicates completeness (ten plagues, Exod 7:8–11:10; Ten Commandments, Exod 20:2-17). Noah closed history before the flood, and Abram inaugurated a new era.

5:1-2 This is the prologue to the second *account* in Genesis (5:1–6:8; see note on 2:4); it connects God's purpose in creation with Seth's line rather than Cain's (4:17-24).

5:1 *written account:* Although the previous account (2:4–4:26) focused on Adam, Eve, and their first children, it was technically “the account of the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 5:1-32 is a more typical genealogy. • *human beings:* Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2. • *like himself:* See 1:26 and note.

5:2 *male and female . . . “human”* (Hebrew *adam*): See 1:27 and note. • *blessed them:* See 1:28 and note.

5:3 *just like him—in his very image:* The image and likeness of God (see note on 1:26) is preserved in human beings despite sin. Adam's sinful nature was also carried forward (Rom 5:12-14).

5:5
Gen 2:17
Heb 9:27

5:18
Jude 1:14

5:22
Gen 6:9; 48:15

5:24
2 Kgs 2:1, 11
Ps 73:24
Heb 11:5

5:29
Gen 3:17
Rom 8:20

5:32
Gen 7:6; 9:18

6:1
Gen 1:28

6:2
^bben 'elohim (1121,
0430)
Deut 14:1

6:3
Ps 78:39
1 Pet 3:20

- like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth. ⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.
- ⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.
- ⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.
- ¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.
- ¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.
- ¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.
- ¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.
- ²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After the

birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

- ²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.
- ²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. ²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.” ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ³¹Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.
- ³²By the time Noah was 500 years old, he was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Corruption of the Human Race

6 Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ²The ^bsons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. ³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time,

5:5 he died: Death indeed came to Adam (see 2:17; 3:18-19) and his descendants (see Rom 5:12-14). Cain's violence is omitted (see 4:8, 15, 23-24) and key figures in Seth's line live in hope (5:29).

5:6 the father of: Or *the ancestor of*; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

5:7 After the birth of: Or *After the birth of this ancestor of*; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26 (see note on 5:6).

5:22 Enoch lived in close fellowship with God (literally *Enoch walked with God*; also in 5:24): Enoch's position as seventh from Adam in the genealogy strikes a contrast with Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain (see note on 4:17–5:32).

5:24 Unlike all other sons of Adam, Enoch did not succumb to death; rather, *he disappeared, because God took him* (cp. 2 Kgs 2:9-12; see also Heb 11:5).

5:27 969 years: This statement and the numbers given in 5:25, 28 and 7:6 mean that Methuselah died in the year

of the flood.

5:28-29 As with Enoch (5:21-24), the normal genealogical formula is interrupted to highlight important theological information about Noah. *Noah* sounds like a Hebrew term (*nakhm*) that can mean “relief” or “comfort,” and another term (*nuakh*) that means “rest.” As the first person born after Adam's death (see note on 5:5), Noah prompted his father *Lamech* to hope that the curse brought on by Adam's sin (3:17) might be lifted. See 8:21; 2 Cor 1:3-7; 2 Thes 2:16-17.

6:1-8 Human wickedness reached a climax, prompting God to send the flood to destroy all living things. A glimmer of hope appears in God's favor toward Noah (6:8).

6:1-2 *The sons of God* have generally been understood as fallen angels (cp. the same Hebrew phrase in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps 29:1; 89:7). This interpretation is prominent in ancient Jewish and Christian literature (e.g., *1 Enoch* 6:1-7:6; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.5) and is apparently supported by the NT (see 1 Pet 3:18-20; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6-7).

Some interpreters do not believe that God would permit angels to procreate with humans and doubt that the above NT texts should be read in this way. Another possibility is that *sons of God* refers to the righteous descendants of Seth, while the *beautiful women* (6:2, literally *daughters of men*; also in 6:4) were female descendants of Cain's wicked line. This interpretation is in harmony with 4:17–5:32, but is weakened by the language of 6:1-2, which seems to refer to the daughters of humanity in general, not the daughters of Cain specifically. Others believe that *sons of God* refers to tyrannical human kings (possibly demon-possessed) who took Lamech's polygamy (4:19) to a new height of wickedness by seizing the daughters of the righteous. Language reminiscent of 3:6 (*saw . . . took*) shows the rebellious nature of this act.

6:3 will not put up with (Greek version reads *will not remain in*): Many think that this is an announcement of God's decision to withdraw the restraining influence of his *Spirit* from human society and allow human wickedness to run its full course. Others think it

for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have ^ccreated from the face of the earth. Yes,

and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.”

⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

4. THE ACCOUNT OF NOAH’S FAMILY (6:9–9:29)

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only ^dblameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.

6:4
Num 13:33
Jude 1:6-7

6:5
Ps 14:1-3

6:6
Exod 32:14
Num 23:19
1 Sam 15:11, 35
2 Sam 24:16

6:7
Deut 29:20
^abara’ (1254)
• Ps 51:10

6:8
Exod 33:17

6:9
Job 1:1
Ezek 14:14
^ttamim (8549)
• Gen 17:1

6:11
Deut 31:29
Judg 2:19
Ezek 8:17

NOAH (6:8-22)

Gen 5:28–10:1
1 Chr 1:4
Isa 54:9
Ezek 14:12-20
Matt 24:37-38
Luke 3:36; 17:26-27
Heb 11:7
1 Pet 3:20-21
2 Pet 2:5

Noah was the son of Lamech, a descendant of Seth (5:3-29). Lamech might have hoped that Noah (whose name means “rest” or “relief”) would ease the curse of hardship in working the ground (see note on 5:29). God used Noah to help relieve the world of evil.

God intended to destroy creation because of pervasive human wickedness (6:1-7; see Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27), but he decided to preserve Noah (6:8). God gave Noah, a righteous and blameless man (6:9), precise instructions for building the ark in which only the eight people of his family would be saved, along with every kind of creature (6:14–8:19). When Noah and his family finally emerged from the ark after the flood, Noah pleased God by building an altar and sacrificing burnt offerings. God promised that he would never again flood the whole earth or disrupt the sequence of the seasons, despite human sin (8:20–9:17).

Noah’s sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. All the nations of the earth descended from them (9:18-19). When Noah became drunk on wine from his vineyard, his sons and their descendants were cursed or blessed in accord with how they responded to him (9:22-27). Noah lived for 950 years, including 350 years after the flood (9:28-29); he is an example of righteousness, obedience, courage, and faith (see Ezek 14:12-20; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5).

means that God would withdraw his life-giving breath from humans at an earlier age (*ruakh*, the Hebrew term for “spirit,” can also mean “breath”; see 6:17; 7:22; see also Ps 104:29-30). • **normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years** (literally *his days will be 120 years*): It is possible that this was a new restriction on the number of years individuals would generally be allowed to live (so the NLT). However, for generations after the flood, humans lived well beyond 120 years (see, e.g., 11:10-26). An alternative interpretation sees this as a 120-year grace period before the arrival of the flood (see Jon 3:4; Matt 24:37-38; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5).

6:4 giant Nephilites (Hebrew *nephilim*): The term may mean “fallen ones.” The context implies that they were the offspring of the “sons of God” and would be destroyed in the flood. Num 13:31-33 uses the same term to describe other giants who were hostile toward God’s people and would also be destroyed (see also Deut 2:11, which connects the

Anakite *nephilim* with another group called the *rephaim*).

6:5 everything they thought or imagined (literally *every intention of the thoughts of their hearts*): In the OT, the heart is the core of volition, thought, and morality (see Prov 4:23). Wicked actions stem from a corrupt inner life. • **consistently and totally evil**: Strong language captures the pervasiveness, depth, and persistence of human wickedness. Human nature continued to be corrupt even after the flood (see 8:21).

6:6 the LORD was sorry: The extent of human wickedness made the Lord regret having created them (see also 6:7; cp. 1 Sam 15:11, 35). • **It broke his heart**: The evil in humanity’s heart (6:5) pained God greatly. Sending the flood was a heart-wrenching act on God’s part.

6:7 wipe . . . from the . . . earth: As Adam and Eve were banished from the garden sanctuary (3:23), all of humankind would be expunged from God’s good creation. • **every living thing**:

Human sin had so corrupted the earth that judgment fell on the animals and birds over which they had dominion (see 1:28 and note). The special role of humans in the created order (1:28-30) means that nature is affected by human moral choices (see 8:1; Job 38:41; Hos 4:3; Rom 8:19-22).

6:8 Noah and his godly life stand in stark contrast to the sinfulness of the rest of the people.

6:9 the account: See note on 2:4 • **a righteous man, the only blameless person**: The text does not claim that Noah was without sin (see Rom 5:12-14). Noah’s righteousness and blamelessness came about because *he walked in close fellowship with God*. See also 7:1; 17:1; Heb 11:7.

6:11-13 See 6:5-7. • **violence** (Hebrew *khamas*): Murder had especially corrupted the line of Cain (4:8, 23-24).

6:14 a large boat: Traditionally rendered *an ark*, this was a long rectangu-

6:12
Ps 14:1-3
6:13
Isa 34:1-4
Ezek 7:2-3

6:14
Exod 2:3
1 Pet 3:20

6:17
Ps 29:10
2 Pet 2:5

6:18
Gen 9:9-16; 17:7;
19:12

6:20
Gen 7:3

6:21
Gen 1:29

6:22
Gen 7:5
Exod 40:16

7:1
Gen 6:18
Matt 24:38
Luke 17:26-27
Heb 11:7
1 Pet 3:20

7:2
Lev 11:1-47
Deut 14:3-20
Ezek 44:23

7:4
Gen 6:7, 13

7:6
Gen 5:32

7:7
Gen 6:18

¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.

¹³So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴“Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive.

²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

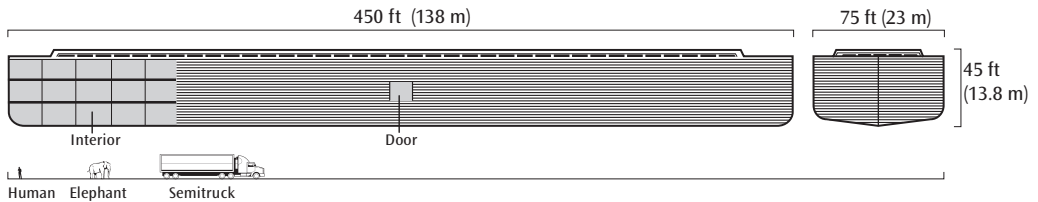
²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

The Universal Flood

7When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife



▲ **Noah’s Ark (6:14-16).** An ark built to the dimensions specified in Genesis would have been immense. Its ratio of length to width (6 to 1) is the most stable known and is used for the design of modern tankers and freight-hauling ships. The ark was able to carry 20,000 tons of cargo; the required number of young adult land animals would have occupied less than half of the available space. The design given was perfect for the ark’s function.

lar barge designed for survival, not for navigation. The Hebrew word *tebah* is used again only of the basket in which the baby Moses was floated on the Nile (Exod 2:3, 5). • **cypress wood:** Or *gopher wood*. It is not clear what kind of wood this was. It was possibly from a conifer, such as cypress.

6:15 The ark’s dimensions: Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] long, *50 cubits* [23 meters] wide, and *30 cubits* [13.8 meters] high. This floating barge displaced around 43,300 tons of water.

6:16 An 18-inch opening (Hebrew an opening of 1 cubit [46 centimeters]) below the roof encircled the boat, providing light and air. • Noah was to build a door and God would close it (7:16). God was the captain of this peculiar boat with no sail or rudder. God also brought the animals to Noah (6:20).

6:17 cover the earth with a flood: Some propose that the flood might only have covered the ancient Near East as it was known to Noah or Moses. However, the flood’s stated purpose—to destroy every living thing that breathes (see also 6:7, 11-13; 7:1, 4, 18-23; 8:21)—and its effect of undoing creation (see notes on 1:9-10; 7:11-12) suggest that the flood covered the entire planet (see also 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; 3:6).

6:18 This first explicit mention of a covenant in the Bible refers to the unilateral pact that God made with humankind and the world after the flood (see 9:9, 11, 14-17).

6:19-20 God’s instructions to Noah repeat the language of creation (every kind, cp. 1:24). • a male and a female: These animals would procreate and repopulate the earth after the flood.

7:2 of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice (literally of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8): In addition to the animals that were to repopulate the earth, these “clean” animals were for food and for Noah’s sacrifice after the flood (8:20-21). This passage does not use the precise technical language that is found in the regulations concerning “clean” and “unclean” given to Israel at Sinai (see Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-12), but the underlying concept is the same (perhaps God revealed it directly to Noah).

7:4 The number forty is often associated with affliction, trial, or punishment (see Exod 16:35; Judg 13:1; 1 Kgs 19:8; Ezek 4:6; Jon 3:4; Matt 4:2; Acts 1:3).

7:6 covered the earth: See note on 6:17.

and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds,

domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

The Floodwaters Recede

8 But God ^eremembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and

7:9
Gen 6:22
7:11
Ps 78:23
Ezek 26:19
Mal 3:10
7:13
1 Pet 3:20
2 Pet 2:5
7:15
Gen 6:19; 7:9
7:19
Ps 104:6
7:20
2 Pet 3:6
7:23
Matt 24:38-39
Luke 17:26-27
1 Pet 3:20
2 Pet 2:5
7:24
Gen 8:3
8:1
Gen 19:29; 30:22
Exod 2:24; 14:21
Job 12:15
Isa 44:27
*zakar (2142)
* Exod 2:24
8:2
Gen 7:4, 12
8:4
Gen 7:20
8:7
Lev 11:15
Deut 14:14
1 Kgs 17:4
Luke 12:24
8:8
Isa 60:8
Hos 11:11
Matt 10:16

7:8 See note on 7:2.

7:11-12 on the seventeenth day of the second month: Such information gives the flood account a certain solemnity; it reminds readers that this was a true historical event. • *underground waters*: See 2:6. • *rain fell*: The flood undid the boundaries established on the second and third days of creation (1:6-13). Elsewhere, the Bible describes God’s judgment as an undoing of creation (see Jer 4:23-26; Amos 7:4). • *forty days and forty nights*: See note on 7:4.

7:16 the LORD closed the door: The sovereign Judge took responsibility for the annihilation of all outside the boat and the protection of those within (see also 6:16 and note).

7:17 floodwaters grew deeper (literally waters multiplied): The same word used for the proliferation of humans and animals during creation (see 1:22, 28) is now used ironically of the water that would annihilate them. • *covering the ground*: The Hebrew word translated

“ground” or “earth” is mentioned eight times in eight verses (7:17-24). The earth is the domain that humankind had polluted and that was now the object of a cleansing deluge.

7:20 more than twenty-two feet: Hebrew 15 cubits [6.9 meters].

7:22 Everything that . . . lived: See note on 6:17.

8:1 But God remembered: This structural and theological center of the flood story does not mean that God had at any point forgotten Noah. This is covenant language reflecting God’s faithfulness to his promise to ensure the safety of his covenant partner (cp. 6:18; 9:15-16; Exod 2:24; Lev 26:42, 45). • *wind*: The same word is translated “spirit” in 1:2. This and other parallels (see 9:1-2) suggest that the restoration of the earth after the flood was effectively a new creation.

8:2 underground waters . . . torrential rains: See note on 7:11-12.

8:4 exactly five months from the time the flood began: Literally on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. • *mountains of Ararat*: These mountains might be in the region of Ararat (Urartu) southeast of the Black Sea near Lake Van, which touches parts of eastern Turkey, Armenia, and Iran. There is a Mount Ararat (*Agri Dag*) in Turkey, but this specific only identifies the region, not a specific mountain.

8:5 Two and a half months later: Literally On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. • *the waters continued to go down*: Another parallel with the creation week (see 1:9) suggests that the earth’s restoration was effectively a new creation (see note on 8:1).

8:7 The raven is the largest member of the crow family, and was among Noah’s unclean animals (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14). As a scavenger and carrion eater, it was able to sustain itself without returning to the boat.

8:13
Gen 5:32

8:16
Gen 7:13

8:17
Gen 1:22

8:20
Gen 4:4; 12:7; 13:18;
22:2

8:21
Gen 3:17
Exod 29:18, 25
Lev 1:9, 13
Isa 54:9

Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

Noah's Worship and God's Promise

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth."

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice

Retribution (6:1–7:24)

God gave humans the commission of procreating and caring for the world (1:28). Instead, murder and violence multiplied with humanity's spiritual wickedness (4:8, 23; 6:11-13), resulting in a corrupt world that required cleansing.

The purpose of the flood was to enact God's global cleansing and retribution against evildoers. *Retribution* means "giving what is due" and usually refers to recompense for wrongdoing. Retribution is motivated by the conviction that moral order is woven into the fabric of the world and must be maintained or restored (see Ps 7:14-16; Prov 11:18; 26:27).

God maintains moral order by meting out justice, punishing wickedness, and rewarding right behavior (Gal 6:7). Since God oversees the world, it is never entirely overwhelmed by moral chaos; God holds people accountable for what they do. The judgment and exile of Adam and Eve (3:8-24), Cain's sentence and blood-revenge (4:10-15), and the worldwide flood and annihilation (chs 6–9) are OT examples of God's retribution. They reveal a sovereign God who exacts just punishment in the context of his good intentions for the world (see also Num 16; Deut 30:15-20; Josh 7; Mic 2:1-3).

Retribution is an application of God's righteousness; it purifies the world for his kingdom of peace. Through retribution, the divine King proclaims his universal rule and exercises his justice on all who reject his rule or defy his commands (Deut 7:10; 1 Sam 24:19; Ps 149; Prov 15:25; Mic 5:15; 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thes 1:5-10).

For God's people, retribution is his discipline. It is intended to restore covenant fellowship with him (see Isa 44:22; Jer 3:12-14; Lam 3:19-33; Hos 14:1-2; Joel 2:12-13). When God's people experience his chastening, they can respond in hope because God's truth and righteousness will triumph (Ps 58:10-11) and God will redeem and restore his people who trust in him (Lev 26:40-45; Hos 2:2-23).

Lev 26:14-39
Ps 7:6-17; 57:6;
95:8-11
Prov 6:27-35; 26:27
Mic 2:1-3
Rom 2:5-16
Gal 6:7-8
Heb 10:26-31
12:5-11, 25-29

8:11 Unlike the raven (8:7), the *dove* feeds on vegetation. Since olive trees are not tall, Noah could tell that the water was *almost gone*.

8:13 *On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began* (literally *On the first day of the first month*; see 7:11): This was two months after the peaks of the mountains first became visible (8:5).

8:14 *Two more months went by*: Literally *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. • *the earth was dry!* This special word for dry land is uniquely used in connection with the sea to portray God's sov-

ereignty over both domains (see 1:9-10; Exod 14:22, 29; Ps 95:5; Jon 1:9).

8:17 *be fruitful and multiply*: See 9:1.

8:20 This first mention of an *altar* in the Bible (see "Altars" at 35:1-15, p. 91) shows Noah's gratitude for having passed through the judgment. • *sacrificed as burnt offerings*: The same term is used of the whole burnt offering in Leviticus (Lev 1:3-9); however, it can refer to any offering that is burned. Noah gave this offering to thank and worship God, who had delivered him and his family from the flood. • *the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose*: Literally *every*

clean animal and every clean bird.

8:21 *pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice* (literally *smelled the sweet aroma*): The narrator uses anthropomorphic language (i.e., he describes God's activity in human terms) to show God's acceptance of Noah's offering (see also Exod 29:18; Lev 1:9; Num 15:3). The common ancient Near Eastern notion that the gods ate the sacrifices offered to them is notably absent. • *to himself* (literally *in his heart*): The phrase echoes "broke his heart" (6:6), just as *think or imagine* echoes "everything they thought or imagined" (6:5). God's commitment to a new order replaced

and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

God’s Covenant with All Living Creatures

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the ^flifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image.

⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I hereby confirm my ^gcovenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the ^hearth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the ⁱeternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

8:22
Ps 74:17
9:1
Gen 1:22
9:2
Gen 1:26-29
Ps 8:6-8
9:3
Ps 104:14
9:4
Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10
Deut 12:16
Acts 15:20, 29
^dam (1818)
‣ Gen 49:11
9:5
Exod 21:28-32
9:6
Exod 20:13; 21:12
Num 35:33
9:9
^berith (1285)
‣ Gen 15:18
9:11
Isa 24:5
^erets (0776)
‣ Gen 12:1
9:12
Gen 17:11
9:13
Ezek 1:28
9:15
Deut 7:9
9:16
^olam (5769)
‣ Gen 21:33

his grief over the old. • *I will never again curse . . . destroy*: The old curse was not lifted (5:29), but God promised not to add to it, thus establishing new limits for life in a disordered world (cp. Isa 54:9). The flood was to stop violence, not to reform the human heart (6:5). Humankind’s *bent toward evil* would be contained to some degree through accountability to a new law (9:5-6).

8:22 God’s promise to sustain the rhythm of the seasons reaffirmed the created order (1:14; see also Jer 33:20; Zech 14:7).

9:1-7 God’s first post-flood speech opens and closes with blessing (9:1, 7). In it, human and animal relationships are again defined, with some modification of the original created order. The sanctity of life is given special focus.

9:1 *Be fruitful and multiply*: The blessing and mandate first given to Adam (1:28) are now reissued to Noah, the “Adam” of the newly cleansed world in need of repopulation.

9:2-3 There are two modifications to the original created order. (1) Previously, humans reigned over *the animals* (1:28), but now animals would live in *terror* of humans (similar military language is found in Exod 23:27-31; Deut 11:25; 31:8). (2) The animals’ *terror* was related to a change in human diet. Humans were now permitted to eat the meat of animals to supplement their subsis-

tence on grains, fruits, and vegetables (1:29).

9:4 A key restriction is imposed. Since blood was identified with life, it had to be drained from a slain animal before its *meat* could be eaten (see Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-14; Deut 12:16, 23). The law of Moses prohibited eating animals that died naturally, since their blood had not been drained (Deut 14:21). God provided animal blood to atone for human sin (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22).

9:5-6 Violence, including murder, was a major factor in bringing about God’s judgment of the flood (4:8; 6:11, 13). At this new beginning for humans, God affirmed the sanctity of human life and established a system of retributive justice for the taking of human life (see also Ps 9:12; “Retribution” at 6:1-7:24, p. 35). The function of law is to restrain human wickedness and preserve moral order. This law was further developed in the law of Moses (Exod 21:12-14; Lev 24:17-22; Num 35:16-34; Deut 17:6-7; 19:15).

9:6 *For God made human beings in his own image*: The death penalty has a theological basis. God’s image gives humans a unique status and authority within creation (1:26-28). Since murder destroys a person made in God’s image, the ultimate penalty must be imposed on a murderer. See also Exod 21:23-25. We are not to pursue personal revenge

(Rom 12:17-19), but are to uphold the justice of the “governing authorities” that God has established (Rom 13:1-7). • *human beings*: Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.

9:7 *Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate* (literally *swarm and fill*): In contrast to those who would destroy human life (9:5-6), God’s desire is that human life should abound and flourish.

9:8-17 God’s second post-flood speech conveys his promise and plan for preserving creation.

9:9-10 God had promised this *covenant* before the flood (6:18). Its scope extends beyond humanity to include the earth and all animals.

9:11 This promise does not prohibit worldwide judgment, but it restricts the means by which God will do it (see 2 Pet 3:4-13).

9:12 In the Bible, covenants are frequently confirmed by some sort of *sign* (e.g., 17:11; Exod 31:13, 17; Luke 22:20).

9:13-16 God brought cataclysmic judgment through the rainstorm; now, the *rainbow*, a meteorological phenomenon associated with the rainstorm, would be an image of peace for *all the earth* (see 9:17). • “Rainbow” and “bow” are the same term in Hebrew. Since God is sometimes pictured as a warrior who shoots arrows of judgment (see Deut 32:42; Ps 7:12; 18:13-14; Hab 3:9-11),

9:21
Gen 19:35
9:22
Hab 2:15
9:25
Deut 27:16

Noah's Sons; Curse and Blessings

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.)

¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and

told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!
May he be the lowest of servants to
his relatives.”

God's Covenant with Noah (9:1-17)

The first explicit reference to a covenant in Scripture occurs after the flood (9:1-17). *Covenant* (Hebrew *berith*) means “bond”: A covenant is a binding relationship rooted in a commitment that includes promises and obligations. Whether between individuals (e.g., 21:27), whole nations (e.g., Josh 9:15-18), or God and humans, the covenant relationship calls for faithfulness and makes peace and harmony possible.

Here God took the initiative to bind himself again to human beings and to the whole creation despite human faithlessness (see 6:1-7). When God charged Noah to build an ark to escape the impending deluge (6:13-17), he also promised to establish a covenant with him (6:18). The corruption and violence of the human race had provoked God's anger (6:11, 13), but his gracious favor remained with Noah (6:8). Through this covenant, God guaranteed that he would maintain a relationship with one family even as other divine-human relationships were being severed. God's covenant promise to Noah came with his command to build an ark (6:14); Noah's receipt of the covenant blessing depended on his obedience to this divine command (6:22; 7:5).

When Noah made an offering to God after the flood (8:20-22), God elaborated on his covenant with Noah as a universal covenant with humans and with all living creatures (9:8-10). God promised never to send such a flood again as judgment on the world.

This covenant helps us understand God as a covenant-maker. Although human beings deserve punishment because of their wickedness, God withholds ultimate destruction. God's covenant with Noah did not establish an intimate relationship between God and each living being, but it recalibrated moral and ecological life to be as God intended it (9:1-7), leaving open the possibility of a more intimate covenant to come (see 17:1-21). Despite their evil, human beings are allowed to live in God's world and seek a deeper relationship with the world's Creator during their time on earth. God's later covenants with his people made intimacy with him freely available to all (see Acts 2:22-40; 3:17-26).

Ezek 14:12-23
Matt 24:37-39
Heb 11:7

some think that the imagery in 9:13-17 is of the Divine Warrior hanging up his bow of judgment.

9:18 Ham is the father of Canaan: See also 9:20-27; 10:6-20. The text emphasizes Canaan's ancestral connection to Ham to show that the Canaanite identity was inseparably linked to Ham's shameful behavior (9:20-27). The citizens of both Egypt (from which Israel escaped slavery) and Canaan (to which Israel was headed) were Ham's descendants (10:6; see Lev 18:3, 24-26; Ps 105:23, 27; 106:22). Later stories in Genesis emphasize the immoral climate of both Egypt (12:10-20) and Canaan (chs 34, 38). See 9:20-27 and 10:6-20.

9:20-27 The story of Noah begins with him walking in righteousness and

obeying the Lord (6:9), but it ends with him lying drunk and naked in his tent and then delivering a curse on Canaan. Even after the great flood, the human race exhibited some of the same sinful characteristics that warranted the judgment in the first place. Special attention is given to the cursed origin of the Canaanites, the corrupt and idolatrous nation Israel would later displace from the Promised Land (see also 15:16 and note; Lev 18:3; 20:23).

9:21 wine . . . became drunk: Wine is a gift from God (Deut 14:26; Ps 104:15; Isa 55:1; see Luke 22:14-20; John 2:1-11). Scripture is clear, however, that excessive consumption of alcohol is a perilous sin (Prov 23:20-21, 29-35; 1 Cor 6:10).

9:22 the father of Canaan: See note on

9:18. • Ham's behavior was shameful. He gazed upon his naked father and, rather than covering him and keeping the matter secret, robbed him of his dignity by announcing it to his brothers (see Exod 21:15, 17; Lam 4:21; Hab 2:15). An ancient Near Eastern tale says that a son is expected to come to his father's aid when he is drunk (*Tale of Aqhat*; cp. Isa 51:17-18). Ham's neglect of familial duty explains why Noah praised Shem and Japheth but cursed Ham (9:24-27).

9:25 Noah's curse foresaw Ham's actions as morally representative of Ham's descendants through Canaan (see 10:6). • **lowest of servants:** Having refused aid to his family, Ham was condemned to base servitude.

²⁶Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed,
and may Canaan be his servant!

²⁷ May God expand the territory of Japheth!

May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,
and may Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

5. THE ACCOUNT OF NOAH’S SONS

(10:1–11:9)

Nations of the Ancient World (10:1-32)

Superscript

10 This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

Descendants of Japheth

²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth.

9:26
Gen 14:20

9:27
Gen 10:2-5
Isa 66:19

9:29
Gen 2:17

10:1
Gen 9:18
1 Chr 1:4

10:2
1 Chr 1:5-7
Isa 66:19
Ezek 27:13; 38:2-3, 6

10:3
Jer 51:27
Ezek 27:14

10:4
1 Chr 1:6-7

10:6
1 Chr 1:8-10

10:7
Isa 43:3
Ezek 27:15, 20, 22

9:26 Noah refers to God as *the LORD*, who formed the covenant with Israel. *Shem* was the privileged forefather of the Israelites (see 10:21-32).

9:27 *May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem* (literally *May he live in the tents of Shem*): Japheth’s descendants would live among Shem’s descendants and share Shem’s prosperity (cp. Rom 11:17-18).

10:1–11:9 The fifth *account* (10:1) in Genesis (see note on 2:4) unites the Table of Nations (10:2-32) and the Babel story (11:1-9) around the theme of scattering the nations (10:5, 18; 11:4, 8-9). The Table of Nations precedes the Babel story even though the Babel incident caused the geo-political situation reflected in the Table of Nations. By reversing the order, Genesis links the repopulation of the earth with the blessing conferred upon Noah and his sons (see 9:1 and note) and shows that Abram’s call (12:1-3) was God’s solution to the problem of human estrangement from God as reflected in the Babel story (11:1-9).

10:1 *Many children were born . . . after the great flood*: This fulfilled the renewed creation mandate (9:1, 9; cp. 1:28).

10:2-32 This section describes the ancestral origin of the nations of the ancient Near East. Ham was at the center (10:6-20), while the descendants of Japheth and Shem spread out to the surrounding regions of Greece, Crete, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Madai, the Arabian peninsula, and northeast Africa. The list selectively highlights nations relevant to Israel. The total of seventy (seven times ten) names indicates completeness (see 46:27; Deut 32:8) and symbolizes

the totality of the world, which would later be blessed by the descendants of Abraham (18:18). • Although Shem is mentioned first in 10:1, he is addressed last in the Table because of his connection to Abram (10:21-31; 11:10-32; 12:1). Although God established the boundaries of all nations (see Deut 32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26), Israel was his special creation—a microcosm of seventy people (46:27) called to be a blessing to a world of seventy nations (see 12:3).

10:2 The seven sons of *Japheth* settled in the region of Anatolia (the western plateau lands of Turkey) and spoke Indo-European languages. • *Gomer* was the ancestor of the later Cimmericians who lived north of the Black Sea. • *Magog* was probably the ancestor of those who settled in the region of Lydia (see Ezek 38:2). • The descendants of *Madai* were the later Medes of northwest Iran (see 2 Kgs 17:6; Jer 51:11; Dan 5:28). • The descendants of *Javan* were the later Ionian Greeks. • The descendants of *Tubal* and *Meshech* were sometimes allies in battle (Ezek 38:2). Both were possibly from the coastal regions of Anatolia (see Ezek 27:13). • The descendants of *Tiras* possibly became the Thracians that lived near the Aegean Sea.

10:3 The *descendants of Gomer* came from near the Upper Euphrates region north of the Black Sea (cp. Ezek 38:1-9). • The descendants of *Ashkenaz* were the later Scythians who inhabited the region between the Black and Caspian Seas. • *Riphath* is near Carchemish. • The descendants of *Togarmah* are associated with Til-garimmu, the capital of Kammanu in modern Armenia (see Ezek 38:6).

10:4 *Elishah* is probably Cyprus. • *Tarshish* is possibly southwest Spain

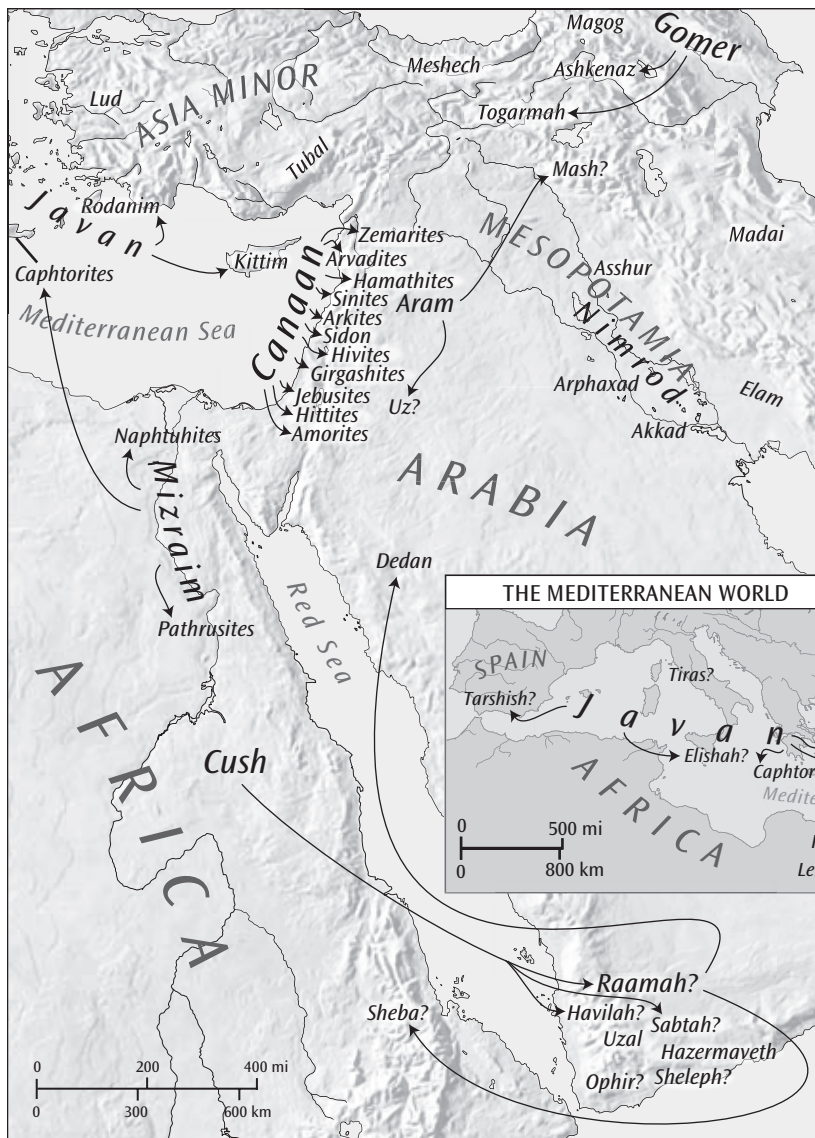
(see note on Jon 1:3). • The *Kittim* were inhabitants of southern Cyprus. • The *Rodanim* (as in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version [see also 1 Chr 1:7]; most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*) were inhabitants of the island of Rhodes, later a territory of Greece.

10:5 *seafaring peoples . . . various lands*: They settled around the Mediterranean and on various islands. • *language*: This occurred after the Tower of Babel episode (11:1-9; see note on 10:1–11:9).

10:6 The peoples descended from Ham’s four sons (Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites) were Israel’s most hostile neighbors. • *Cush* was possibly in Ethiopia or ancient Nubia (northern Sudan). • *Mizraim* was the ancient name for Egypt (50:11). • *Put* was in Libya. • *Canaan* encompassed southern Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine west of the Jordan River. In Moses’ time, Egypt and Canaan were provinces of the same empire. Ham’s descendants were excluded from the blessing of Shem’s line (9:20-28).

10:7 The sons of *Cush* and *Raamah* together total seven. • *Seba* was in northern Africa (see Isa 43:3; 45:14). • *Havilah* was in southwest Arabia. • *Sabtah* was in southern Arabia, in ancient Hadramaut, near the Persian Gulf. • *Raamah* was in southwest Arabia near Najran. • *Sabteca* was in ancient Samudake near the Persian Gulf. • *Sheba* was a kingdom in southwest Arabia with commercial colonies (see 1 Kgs 10). • *Dedan* was in northern Arabia.

10:8-12 Special attention is given to the early history of *Babylonia* and *Assyria*, the Mesopotamian empires that would conquer and exile Israel and Judah.



◀ Nations of the Ancient World (10:1–11:9). Noah's descendants (10:1-32) spread out after "the LORD scattered them" (11:1-9), and they became the nations of the ancient world. Over half of the names listed in Gen 10 are identifiable ancient peoples, whose broad areas of settlement are shown. Arrows indicate lines of descent. In general, Japheth's descendants (10:2-5) went to ASIA MINOR and Europe (JAVAN, etc.), Ham's (10:6-20) to AFRICA and southern ARABIA (CUSH, RAAMAH, etc.), and Shem's (10:21-31) to MESOPOTAMIA and

northern ARABIA (ASSHUR, ELAM, ARAM, etc.). The ancients knew a large area of civilization, from SPAIN to Media (MADAI), and from the Caucasus Mountains (east of the BLACK SEA) to southern ARABIA.

Japheth 9:27
 Gomer Ezek 38:6
 Ashkenaz Jer 51:27
 Togarmah Ezek 27:14; 38:6
 Magog Ezek 38:2; 39:6; Rev 20:8
 Madai [Medes] 2 Kgs 17:6; Esth 1:19; Acts 2:9
 Javan
 Elishah Ezek 27:7
 Tarshish Ps 72:10; Isa 23:1; 60:9; 66:19; Jer 10:9; Jon 1:3
 Tubal Isa 66:19; Ezek 27:13; 38:2
 Meshech Ps 120:5; Ezek 32:26; 39:1

Ham 14:5; 1 Chr 4:38-41; Ps 105:27
 Cush 2:13; Num 12:1; 1 Chr 1:10
 Havilah 25:18; 1 Sam 15:7
 Raamah Ezek 27:22

Sheba 1 Kgs 10:1-13; Isa 60:6; Ezek 27:22-23; Matt 12:42
 Dedan 25:3; Jer 25:23; Ezek 25:13; 27:15
 Nimrod 1 Chr 1:10; Mic 5:6
 Mizraim 50:11
 Capthorites Deut 2:23
 Put Nah 3:9
 Canaan 11:31; 12:5-10
 Sidon Josh 13:4-6; 1 Kgs 5:6; 11:33; 16:31; Ezek 28:21-24; Matt 11:21-22; Luke 6:17; Acts 27:3
 Hittites 23:1-20; Num 13:29; Josh 1:4
 Jebusites Josh 15:63; Judg 19:10-11; 2 Sam 5:6-8; Zech 9:7
 Amorites 14:7, 13; Num 21:21-35; Josh 5:1; 10:1-13

Girgashites 15:21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11; 1 Chr 1:14; Neh 9:8
 Hivites 34:1-2; 36:2; Deut 20:17; Josh 9:3-7; 11:3
 Arkites Josh 16:2; 2 Sam 15:32
 Arvadites Ezek 27:8, 11
 Zemarites 2 Chr 13:4
 Hamathites 2 Sam 8:9-10; 2 Kgs 14:28; 23:33

Shem
 Elam 14:1-9; Ezra 4:9; Isa 22:6; Jer 49:34-39; Ezek 32:24; Dan 8:2; Acts 2:9
 Asshur 2:14; 25:3; 25:18; Ezek 27:23
 Aram 24:10; 25:20; 28:5-31:21; Num 23:7; Judg 3:8; 2 Sam 8:5-6

⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world, his name became proverbial. People would say, "This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world."
¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. ¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria, building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).
¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.
¹⁵Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the

ancestor of the Hittites, ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.
²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.
Descendants of Shem
²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.
²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

10:10
Gen 11:9
10:11
Mic 5:6
10:13
Jer 46:9
10:14
1 Chr 1:12
10:15
Gen 15:20; 23:3
1 Chr 1:13
Jer 47:4
10:16
Gen 15:18-21
10:19
Gen 14:2
10:22
2 Kgs 15:29
Isa 66:19

10:9 *Nimrod* attained great fame by conquest and terror; his empire extended from Babylonia in the south to Assyria in the north (10:10-12). • *the greatest hunter in the world* (literally a great hunter before the LORD): Assyrian monarchs glorified their own power, often depicting themselves as valiant hunter-conquerors.
10:10-12 *Babylonia* (Hebrew *Shinar*) is the area surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates in southern Mesopotamia. This *kingdom* eventually reached into northern Mesopotamia (*Assyria*). • Of the cities mentioned, *Babylon* is most important because of its role in building the Tower of Babel (see 11:4 and note). • *Erech* was ancient Uruk and is now Warka in southern Iraq (see Ezra 4:9-10). • *Akkad* was the ancient Agade north of Babylon, home of the famous ruler Sargon I (2334–2279 BC). • The location of *Calneh* is uncertain, though it is presumably one of Nimrod's cities located north of Aram-naharaim in southern Mesopotamia (cf. Amos 6:2). • *building* . . . *Nineveh*: Like Cain, Nimrod built cities (see 4:17 and comments). Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the east bank of the Tigris River in northern Iraq. • *Rehoboth-ir* was a daughter-city of Nineveh or was located nearby. • *Calah* is modern Tell Nimrud, south of Nineveh. • *Resen* is possibly modern Selamiyeh, northwest of Tell Nimrud.
10:11 *From there he expanded his territory to Assyria*: The Hebrew text can also be translated *From that land Assyria went out*.
10:13-14 The *Ludites* were Lydian tribes west of the Nile delta. • The identity of the *Anamites* is uncertain. They were possibly Egyptians near Cyrene, west of Egypt. • The *Lehabites* were possibly a Libyan tribe. • The *Naphtuhites* inhab-

ited northern Egypt. • The *Pathrusites* inhabited southern Egypt. • *Casluhites*, and *the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came* (Hebrew text reads *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorites*; cp. Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7): The *Casluhites* possibly inhabited an Egyptian district also known as Cyrenaica. The *Caphtorites* were Cretans (see Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7). The *Philistines* from Crete were sea people who lived intermittently in southwest Canaan during the period of the Exodus and later (Exod 13:17; Amos 9:7). They were among Israel's most troublesome enemies during the early monarchy (see 1–2 Sam).
10:15-18 *Sidon* settled in Phoenicia, north of *Canaan*. • *Hittites* (Hebrew *Heth*): The Hittites in Genesis were a coalition of cities within Canaan (see 26:34-35; 27:46; Ezek 16:3). They were probably not the same as the Hittites of Anatolia (Asia Minor), whose empire was one of the great empires of antiquity during the patriarchal period. • The *Jebusites* were ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem (Josh 15:63; Judg 19:10-11; 2 Sam 5:6-9). • The *Amorites* lived throughout the mountains of Palestine in Canaan (see 15:16; 48:22; Num 13:29; Deut 3:8; Josh 10:5; Judg 1:35; 10:8; Ezek 16:3). • Little is known of the *Girgashites*, a Canaanite tribe (15:21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10). • The *Hivites* were an uncircumcised Canaanite tribe (34:2, 13-24; Josh 9:1, 7; 11:3; Judg 3:3; 2 Sam 24:7). • The *Arkites* resided in Tell 'Arqa in Lebanon. • The *Sinities* formed a city-state and inhabited Phoenicia. • The *Arvadites* inhabited Ruid in northern Phoenicia, near the El Kebir River. They were known for shipping (cp. Ezek 27:8). • The *Zemarites* inhabited Sumur (modern Sumra), north of Arka in the Phoenician coast. • The *Hamathites* founded what is now Hama on the Orontes River, the northern boundary of Canaan (see Num

34:8; Josh 13:5; 2 Sam 8:9-10; 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Kgs 14:25-28).
10:19 *The territory of Canaan* is specifically marked off because it would be taken from its inhabitants and given to Israel (see 15:18; Num 34:2-12; Ezek 47:15-20; 48:1-28). • An ancient north-south seacoast highway (the Via Maris) extended from *Sidon* . . . *to Gerar*, connecting Egypt to Mesopotamia. • Modern *Gaza* is 11 miles northwest of Gerar. • *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were cities on the border of the land southeast of the Dead Sea. • *Admah* and *Zeboiim* are mentioned 15 times in connection with Sodom and Gomorrah (14:2, 8; Deut 29:23; see Hos 11:8). All four cities were destroyed by God to cleanse the land (see ch 19). • *Lasha* was possibly in the northern region of the Dead Sea.
10:21 *Shem, the older brother of Japheth* (or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*), was the father of the Semitic peoples. The descendants listed represent countries east of Israel (modern Iraq, Iran, and Syria). The narrator lists these locations within Mesopotamia since Abram, the father of Israel, originated from this area (see 11:27-32). • *Eber* receives special attention because of his connection with Abram (see note on 10:24).
10:22 The descendants of *Elam* lived in the region of modern southwestern Iran (see 14:1, 9; Ezra 4:9; Isa 11:11). • The descendants of *Asshur* were later Assyrians who lived under Nimrod's jurisdiction (see 10:11). Sumerians descended from Ham were ousted by Mesopotamian Semites. • *Arphaxad* possibly settled northeast of Nineveh; his descendants are further described in 11:12-26. • *Lud* was near the Tigris River; its people were related to the Lydians (see 10:13). • *Aram* was a kingdom of tribes that lived in the Mesopotamian plains.

10:23

Job 1:1

10:24

Luke 3:35

10:32

Gen 9:19; 10:1

11:2

Gen 10:10; 14:1

Isa 11:11

11:3

Gen 14:10

11:4

2 Sam 8:13

11:5

Gen 18:21

Exod 19:11

11:6

Gen 9:19; 11:1

²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means “division”), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother’s name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied

extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

³²These are the clans that descended from Noah’s sons, arranged by nation according

to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

The Dispersion at Babel (11:1-9)

The Tower of Babel

11 At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.

³They began saying to each other, “Let’s make bricks and harden them with fire.” (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”

The LORD Disperses the Nations

⁵But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶“Look!” he said. “The people are united,

10:23 The patriarchs later interacted with *the descendants of Aram* (see 25:20; 31:20; Deut 26:5). • **Uz** was the chief Aramean tribe, possibly located northeast of the Jordan; it was Job’s home (see Job 1:1; see also Lam 4:21). • **Hul** is unknown. He possibly founded Armenia. • **Gether** is unknown; he was possibly the founder of the Syrians. • **Mash** might be associated with Mount Masus in northern Mesopotamia or with a part of the Lebanon Mountains.

10:24 Arphaxad was the father of Shelah: Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*. Cp. Luke 3:36. • **Shelah** is unknown, but may be short for Methushelah (cp. 38:5, 11). • **Eber** was the ancestor of Abram the Hebrew (11:10-26); his name is at the root of the term “Hebrew” (see 14:13; 39:14; 40:15; 41:12; Exod 2:11; 3:18).

10:25 Peleg means *division*, anticipating the separation of people into *language groups* after Babel (11:1-9). Peleg’s line led to Abram (see 11:16-26). • **Joktan** was the ancestor of the southern Arabian tribes. The Ishmaelite tribes were in northern Arabia (see 25:13-16).

10:26-32 There were fourteen sons of Shem by Eber through *Joktan*. The placement of the Babel story between the lines of Joktan and Peleg ties Joktan to the judgment of the Babel story (11:1-9) and ties Peleg to Abram (11:27–12:1).

10:26-29 Almodad was an ancestor, region, or tribe in modern Yemen. • **Sheleph** was a tribe of Yemen. • **Hazarmaveth** was related to Hadra-

maut in southern Arabia. • **Jerah** is unknown, but was possibly associated with Mount Barach. • **Hadoram** was an Arabian tribe. • **Uzal** was Sana’a, an old capital of Yemen in pre-Islamic times. • **Diklah** was a southern Arabian oasis in Mina. • **Obal** was between Hodeida and Sana’a in southwest Arabia. • **Abimael** was a Sabaeen. • **Sheba** was in southern Arabia (see 10:7). • **Ophir** was a region of southern Arabia between Sheba and Havilah; it was a source of gold (Isa 13:12). • **Havilah:** See 10:7. • **Jobab** was possibly Jobebitai in southern Arabia.

10:30 Mesha was a region in northern Arabia, south of Hadramaut. • **Sephar** is identified with Isfar, south of Hadramaut in Yemen.

11:1-9 The story of the unfinished tower carries forward themes of language and solidarity from the Table of Nations (ch 10). The builders’ desire for autonomy recalls the rebellion in Eden (ch 3) and establishes the need for Abram’s redemptive faith in the midst of international disorder (ch 12). The scattering of the nations anticipates the warning to Israel that idolatry would result in their being scattered and their cities devastated (see Num 10:35; Lev 26:33; Deut 4:27; 28:64; 30:3). Chronologically, the story is a flashback that explains the rise of the nations during Peleg’s time (see 10:25).

11:1 At one time: The events described in 11:1-9 led to the scattering of nations that is reflected in the genealogies of 10:2-30. The reversal of order has a theological purpose (see note on 10:1–11:9).

11:2 migrated to the east: See note on

3:24. • **Babylonia** (Hebrew *Shinar*) was located in southern Mesopotamia, the region of Nimrod’s later empire and city-building campaign (see 10:10; Isa 11:11; Dan 1:2; Zech 5:11).

11:3 Stone was plentiful in Canaan; in Mesopotamia, stone was scarce and brick technology was developed. • **Tar** was made from bitumen, a natural, cement-like, waterproof asphalt (see 6:14; Exod 2:3).

11:4 Far from the original garden (2:15), the first cities of Genesis represent arrogance (4:17), tyranny (10:8-12), and wickedness (18:20-21). The city on the Babylonian plain was a magnet for human pride and idolatry. • **a tower that reaches into the sky:** This was probably a temple-tower (a ziggurat). Common in ancient Babylonian urban culture, ziggurats were regarded as sacred mountains by which deities descended to earth (Jacob’s dream in 28:12 possibly reflects this idea). • **This will make us famous** (literally *let us make a name for ourselves*): The tower builders sought fame through idolatrous ambition. God promised to give Abram a famous name because of his humble obedience (12:2).

11:5 came down: The tower was a human attempt to ascend to God’s realm (see Deut 26:15; Ps 2:4; 103:19; 115:16). The folly of that attempt was exposed by God’s “coming down” to see their feeble efforts.

11:6 If left unchecked, the tower builders’ solidarity and ambition would allow human wickedness to flourish in unimaginable ways.

and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

6. THE ACCOUNT OF SHEM'S DESCENDANTS (11:10-26)

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. ¹¹After the birth of Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

7. THE ACCOUNT OF TERAH'S DESCENDANTS (11:27-25:11) The Family of Terah (11:27-32)

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.

²⁸But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was

11:7
Gen 1:26
11:8
Gen 9:19
11:9
Gen 10:10
11:10
Gen 10:22-25
Luke 3:36
11:12
Luke 3:36
11:13
1 Chr 1:17
11:14
Luke 3:35
11:16
Luke 3:35
11:18
Luke 3:35
11:20
Luke 3:35
11:22
Luke 3:34
11:24
Josh 24:2
Luke 3:34
11:26
Gen 22:20
1 Chr 1:26-27
Luke 3:34
11:29
Gen 17:15; 20:11-12; 22:20
11:30
Gen 16:1; 18:11; 25:21
1 Sam 1:5
Luke 1:7
11:31
Gen 27:43
Josh 24:2
Acts 7:4

11:7 *Come, let's go down:* God addresses his angelic court (see 1:26; 3:22; and notes). • *won't be able to understand each other:* Their inability to communicate would curtail their unified sinful ambition. The God-honoring unity of language on the day of Pentecost was a symbolic reversal of the Babel dispersion (Acts 2:5-13; see Zeph 3:9).

11:8 *the LORD scattered them:* Similarly, Adam and Eve's punishment for grasping at autonomy and Cain's punishment for murder involved banishment and dispersion (3:23; 4:12, 14; 9:19; 10:5, 25, 32).

11:9 *Babel:* Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." The Babylonians viewed their city as the residence or gateway of the gods. The pun that concludes this account accurately reveals Babylon's spiritual confusion. Babylon achieved prominence under Nimrod (10:10) and in later biblical history (see 2 Kgs 25). Its role as an epicenter of arrogance and idolatry makes it a fitting image for the anti-God forces associated with the end of time (e.g., Rev 14:8; 16:19; 18:2). • The tower builders had centralized to ascend into God's realm (11:3-4). God descended and scattered them all over the world to

frustrate their idolatrous ambition.

11:10 *This account of Shem's family* resumes the line of Shem from 10:21-32, now with special focus on the line leading to Abram. Only Abram and Israel are heirs to Shem's God (see 9:26-27; Deut 32:8-9). The Babel story vividly depicts the culture that Abram was called to abandon (12:1; 24:6-7). Together with the account of Terah's descendants (11:27-32), this second account of Shem's line forms a bridge from the universal history of chs 1-11 to the national history of Israel that begins in ch 12. Abram is the remnant from Babel's confused world. God called him as an act of grace whereby the fractured world of Babel would be blessed (12:3). • *the father of:* Or *the ancestor of;* also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. Hebrew genealogies do not necessarily list every single generation.

11:11 *After the birth of:* Or *After the birth of this ancestor of;* also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 (see note on 11:10).

11:12-13 Greek version reads ¹²*When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan.* ¹³*After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When*

Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Cp. Luke 3:35-36.

11:18 *Peleg:* See note on 10:25.

11:27-25:11 *This is the account* (Hebrew *toledot*; see note on 2:4) *of Terah's family:* What follows are the particulars about the family descended from Terah, notably about Abraham and God's covenant with him, and about Isaac, the child of promise, who carried forward the line and the blessing to the next generation.

11:27-32 This brief section provides a complete summary of Terah's life and accounts for his other sons and their marriages; it also introduces Lot, Abram's nephew, who later played a prominent role. The ancestors, including Terah and his family, were idolatrous, worshiping other gods in Mesopotamia (Josh 24:2).

11:27 *Nahor* was the father of Laban, whose daughters later became Jacob's wives (chs 29-31). • *Lot:* See "Lot," 19:1-38, p. 58.

11:28 The call of Abram occurred in *Ur of the Chaldeans* (15:7; Acts 7:2-4), the

12:1
Gen 15:7
*Acts 7:3
Heb 11:8
¹erets (0776)
• Gen 13:17

12:2
Gen 13:16; 15:5; 17:4;
18:18; 22:17
Zech 8:13
¹barak (1288A)
• Gen 49:28

12:3
Gen 22:18; 26:4
Exod 23:22
Acts 3:25
*Gal 3:8

12:4
Gen 11:26, 31

still living.²⁹ Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)³⁰ But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

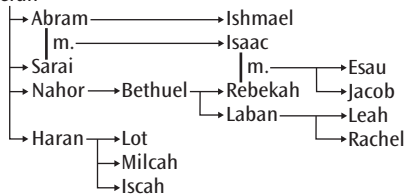
³¹ One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there.³² Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram (12:1-9)

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will ^kbless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot,

Terah



◀ **Terah's Family (11:27-30) to four generations.** See profiles for ABRAHAM (p. 46), SARAH (p. 55), LOT (p. 58), ISHMAEL (p. 53), ISAAC (p. 63), REBEKAH (p. 69), ESAU (p. 71), JACOB (p. 76), LEAH (p. 79), and RACHEL (p. 78).

and *be a blessing* (see note on 12:2). Each directive is followed by three promises conditioned upon obedience.

12:1 Abram knew that he should leave, but he did not know where he was going. Obedience required faith.

12:2 and you will be a blessing (or so that you will be a blessing): This clause is a command in Hebrew, but it is also a promise conditioned upon Abram's obedience to God's command (12:1): "Go . . . so that you will be a blessing. Be a blessing, so that I can bless and curse others." • *make you famous* (literally *make your name great*): Abram received the fame sought by the builders of Babel (see 11:4 and note).

12:3 Based on Abram's obedience to the command to be a blessing (12:2), God gave him three more promises. • *those who treat you with contempt*: People who disregarded Abram and his covenant were rejecting God's choice and plan. • *All the families on earth will be blessed*: By faith, they could participate in the covenant God was making with Abram. The blessing spread to the whole world through Abraham, Israel, the covenants, the prophets, Scripture, and the Messiah (Gal 3:8, 16; cp. Rom 9:4-5).

12:4-9 Abram's obedience to God's call corresponded to God's commands (see note on 12:1-3). He journeyed to Canaan (12:4-6) and became a blessing (12:5-9).

12:4 Abram was middle-aged, settled, prosperous, aristocratic, and polytheistic (see note on 11:27-32). When *the LORD* spoke to him (12:1-3), he obediently left his old ways in Ur to follow God's plan. Since Abram responded in faith, God's promises (12:2-3) could be confirmed in a binding covenant (15:8-21).

12:5 The people (Hebrew *hannephesh*, "the lives") *he had taken into his household* were probably converts; Abram first became a blessing by influencing people in his household to join him in following the Lord.

main city of Sumer in Mesopotamia near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The family had moved there perhaps generations before the call. Their ancestral home ("native country," 12:1) was apparently near Haran, in the region of the descendants of Shem (11:10-26); thus they settled there when they left Ur (11:31) and were later described as "Aramaeans" (Deut 26:5). • *land of his birth*: The same Hebrew phrase is repeated in 12:1 ("native country"), making Ur, not Haran, the location of Abram's call (see 15:7; Neh 9:7; Acts 7:2).

11:29 Sarai means "princess" in Hebrew. No mention is made of Sarai's parentage, perhaps to add suspense to the Abimelech story, which reveals that she was Abram's half sister (20:9-12). Later, the law prohibited such a marriage (Lev 18:9; 20:17; Deut 27:22). • *Nahor's wife was Milcah*: Milcah was Haran's daughter and Nahor's niece (see 11:29). Her son Bethuel was the father of Rebekah, the wife of Abram's son Isaac (24:10, 15, 24). The name Milcah is related to the Hebrew word meaning "queen." In Akkadian, it is a title of the goddess Ishtar, the moon-god's daughter. Terah's name is related to the word for "moon" in Hebrew; his whole family appears to have worshipped Sin, the moon-god (see Josh 24:14).

11:30 Sarai, Rebekah (25:21), and Rachel (29:31) all suffered infertility. Sarai's situation in particular highlights the paradox between the apparent reality and God's promise to give many descendants (12:2). The Israelite nation's origin from barren women fixes its identity in the

sovereignty of God, who miraculously gives children to barren women (see also 1 Sam 1:2; 2:5; Ps 113:9; Isa 54:1).

11:31 Terah took: The text is clear that Abram's departure from Ur was prompted by God's calling (see note on 11:28), but the event is described from Terah's perspective, in keeping with the patriarchy of ancient Near Eastern culture. This cultural deference to the oldest male is evidently why Abram did not continue on to Canaan by himself at this time (see Acts 7:2-4). • *Haran* was 550 miles northwest of Ur, near the Syrian-Turkish border. Despite the similar name, there is no connection with Terah's son Haran, who had died in Ur (11:28). • *Haran* means "caravan." Ancient commercial routes converged there, making it a key site for trade. • *Haran* was also well-known for the moon worship to which Terah's family was apparently devoted (see note on 11:29).

11:32 205 years: Some ancient versions read *145 years*; cp. 11:26 and 12:4.

12:1-9 Through Abram's faith and family, God began restoring the blessing. God called Abram from a pagan world to begin a new nation; his promises to Abram later became a covenant (ch 15). • God's call to Abram later helped convince the Israelites to leave Egypt and go to the land God promised to Abram. It also reminded the Babylonian exiles of their need to return to their own land (e.g., Isa 51).

12:1-3 These verses are structured around two commands to Abram: *Leave*

and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your ^adescendants.” And Abram built an altar there and

dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt (12:10-20)

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down

12:6
Gen 33:18; 35:4
Deut 11:30

12:7
Gen 13:15
*Gal 3:16
*zera' (2233)
* Gen 26:3

12:8
Gen 4:26; 8:20; 22:9

12:9
Gen 13:1; 20:1

12:10
Gen 26:1; 42:5

Gen 9:1-17; 15:1-21;
17:9-14
Exod 6:2-5;
19:1-24:18
Lev 26:1-46
Deut 7:7-15; 29:2-29
Josh 8:30-35; 24:1-8
2 Sam 7:5-16
Ezra 10:1-17
Isa 59:20-21
Jer 31:31-34; 33:19-
26; 34:12-20
Ezek 16:1-63
Luke 22:20
Gal 4:21-31
Eph 2:11-13
Heb 8:6-13; 10:11-
18; 12:24

God’s Covenant Relationships (12:1-9)

The covenant relationships that God established and developed with his people may be the most important theological theme of the OT. The covenant theme in the OT begins with Noah, through whom God made a covenant with all of creation. God promised to uphold the created order and gave the rainbow as the sign of this commitment (9:1-17).

God later established a covenant relationship with Abraham and his family; the sign of this covenant was circumcision (12:1-9; 15:1-21; 17:9-14). God’s covenant with Abraham promised descendants, land, and rulers; these promises formed the basis for the covenants God later made with his people.

God’s covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai was a national covenant (Exod 19–24) whose sign was the Sabbath; it addressed how Israel would be the chosen descendants of Abraham. This covenant took the form of a suzerain-vassal treaty, an ancient relationship established between a great king and loyal subjects (see note on Exod 20:1–23:33).

The Sinai covenant was renewed in Deuteronomy and Josh 24:1-28. The renewal focused on God’s promise of land and how Israel would conduct itself while inhabiting the land. Through his covenant with Israel, God affirmed that he was their God and they were his people, a relationship that required their complete loyalty (Jer 11:4; 24:7; Ezek 11:20; 14:11). God, the great king, would bless and protect the nation Israel. Israel’s obligation was to keep God’s commands, decrees, and regulations (Exod 19:5, 8; 24:3, 7; Deut 30:15-20).

God later formed a covenant with King David (2 Sam 7:5-16), which provided the line of kings promised to Abraham and Jacob (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11).

Years later, at a low point in Israel’s history, the prophet Jeremiah foretold a “new covenant” in Israel’s future (Jer 31:31-33), in which the ideals of the covenants with Abraham and Israel would finally be realized. Jeremiah’s prophecy found fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ (see Luke 22:20; Heb 8:6-13; 12:24). This new covenant provides the ultimate fulfillment of the previous promises that were made to God’s people.

God’s covenants were motivated by God’s faithful love (Hebrew *khesed*), which enabled a relationship to continue between God and his people. God initiated this relationship, announced its conditions, and rewarded his people accordingly. These covenants were not rewards but divine gifts. God may exclude people from the covenant relationship (Hos 1:9), but he will not break, revoke, or withdraw his covenants. If broken or annulled by the human parties, the covenant could be renewed only through a reapplication of God’s faithful love (Exod 34:6-9; Jer 31:31-33). God’s love has preserved the relationship, but his grace must not be mocked (Isa 54:7-10; 55:3; 61:8; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 6:7)

12:6-7 *The oak of Moreh* was apparently a Canaanite shrine; fertile groves of trees were sacred to the Canaanites (cp. Isa 1:29), and *Moreh* means “teacher.” Abram proclaimed (Luther: “preached”) the Lord’s name beside a pagan place of worship and instruction (12:8). • **Abram** continued to be a blessing when he *built an altar* to worship God at *Shechem* and east of Bethel (12:8).

12:7 *The LORD appeared to Abram* at Shechem (12:6) to confirm that *this land* was the Promised Land. Israel was to occupy this land, but sharing in God’s promises required their faith (cp. Num 14; Josh 1:6-9). • **to your descendants** (literally *seed*): Abram did not yet possess the land; he lived as a temporary settler.

12:8-9 *Abram* had to keep moving

camp because the Canaanites had the fertile land.

12:8 *he worshiped the LORD* (literally *he made proclamation of the LORD by name*): Proclaiming the name (identity and character) of the Lord is central to worship and witness (cp. 4:26; see Exod 34:5-7). Abram had to distinguish his sacrificial worship from that of the pagan Canaanites.

12:11
Gen 29:17

12:12
Gen 20:11

12:16
Gen 20:14; 24:35

12:17
1 Chr 16:21
Ps 105:14

12:18
Gen 20:9-10

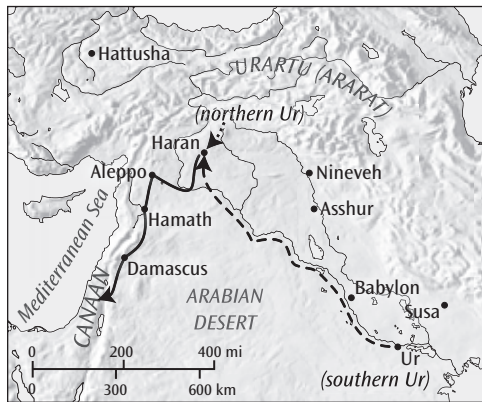
12:19
Gen 20:5; 26:9

to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai's beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of

her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. "What have you done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!" ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.



◀ **Abram's Journey to Canaan (12:1-9).** Traditionally, "Ur of the Chaldeans" (11:28, 31; 15:7) has been identified with UR in Mesopotamia (SOUTHERN UR), a chief city of ancient Sumer. Some scholars have proposed a NORTHERN UR to the north of HARAN, where Abram's extended family settled (see 27:43; 28:10; 29:4; Acts 7:2-4).

that this was Abram's usual strategy (20:13), and his son did likewise. This first occasion was outside the land, the second (ch 20) within, showing that God protected his promise in both regions.

12:14-16 Abram was bound by the king's gift to an unwanted agreement about Sarai that he could not prevent. His scheme had resulted in a terrible bind that endangered him, Sarai, and the promise. • Abram appeared to prosper from his deception, but the new possessions also caused crises. Abram and Lot had to separate (ch 13), and Hagar, an Egyptian maiden, became the mother of the Ishmaelites, perennial enemies of Israel (ch 16).

12:14-15 Sarai was 65 years old, but she lived to be 127; she was like a modern childless woman of about 35. She and Abram came from a noble family (see note on 11:29), so she was regal in her person and dress. Pharaoh was attracted by her physical appearance and her political assets.

12:15 Pharaoh was a title, not a personal name (37:36; Exod 1:15).

12:17-19 God's intervention rescued Sarai and preserved the marriage to fulfill the covenant promise. Sarai's restoration to Abram came with a rebuke from Pharaoh on God's behalf (12:18-19).

12:20 No answer to Pharaoh's questions (12:18-19) was needed, because the rebuke was followed by expulsion. Pharaoh's command paralleled God's command to Abram (12:1), but Pharaoh's demand brought shame and disgrace. God was faithful in preserving his promise.

12:10-20 This episode shows that God would not allow Abram to jeopardize his promises. Just after Abram's obedience to the call, a famine tested his weak faith. God delivered him and his family, even though Abram foolishly used deception rather than trusting in God to preserve him in Egypt. • This story deliberately parallels Israel's later bondage in Egypt. Because of a famine (12:10 // 47:13), Abram/Israel went to Egypt (12:10 // 47:27); there was an attempt to kill the males and save the females (12:12 // Exod 1:22); God plagued Egypt (12:17 // Exod 7:14-11:10); Abram/Israel plundered Egypt (12:16 // Exod 12:35-36); they were expelled (Hebrew *shalakh*, "send"; 12:19-20 // Exod 12:31-33) and ascended to the Negev (13:1 // Num 13:17, 22). Israel was to believe that God would deliver them from bondage in Egypt through the plagues because their ancestor had already been rescued from bondage in Egypt.

12:10-13 Abram's scheme was rooted in fear that jeopardized his family and God's promises. Abram was not walking by faith when he went to Egypt. He stopped building altars and his deceptiveness took center stage. Deception would plague his family throughout Genesis (26:1-11; 27:1-29; 29:15-30; 30:34-36; 31:6-11; 37:18-35; 39:7-20).

• Abram's plan was probably based on a social custom whereby a brother arranged the marriage of his sister (cp. 24:29-61). Abram may have thought that any potential suitor would have to deal with him, giving him time to leave with Sarai. He did not count on Pharaoh's acting without negotiation (12:14-16).

12:10 The Nile River provided ample irrigation, so *Egypt* was often the last region to suffer from *famine*.

12:13 tell them you are my sister: This request occurs three times in Genesis (see also 20:2; 26:7). The text explains

EXPERIENCING THE NLT STUDY BIBLE

To help you get a taste of the content and features of the *NLT Study Bible*, we have put together this sample Bible study guide. Here we will explore a short portion of the book of Genesis, using many of the features in the *NLT Study Bible*. Take a few minutes to experience firsthand what this exciting new Bible is all about.

General Instructions

Use a Bible study journal.

We recommend that you get a blank book with lined paper to write your questions, answers, thoughts, and reflections while studying the *NLT Study Bible*. Write down what you think God is saying to you, and record your prayers to God about what you've studied.

Mark up and write notes in your Bible.

It can be helpful to highlight or mark the parts of the text and study materials that speak to you or answer your questions. Here are some ideas:

- *Underline, circle, or highlight key words or phrases.*
- *Put brackets in the margins or around key sections of text.*
- *Write short notes in the margin as a prompt regarding a topic.*
- *Jot in the margin a cross-reference to your Bible study journal (by page number or date).*

Actively engage with the *NLT Study Bible*

Whenever the *NLT Study Bible* says something that piques your curiosity or prompts a question in your mind, write down the question or the point that grabbed your interest. Then see if you can find out more about it. Actively wrestle with Scripture! God blesses those who wrestle with him (Gen 32:22-30).

Exploring the Introduction to Genesis

Read the "Overview" section of the Introduction (p. 16).

What is the book of Genesis about? What will you learn from reading and studying Genesis? What questions do you have as you come to Genesis?

Look at the "Timeline" section (p. 17).

Approximately when in history did the events recorded in Genesis occur? What else do you know about that era of history?

Look at the map, “The Ancient Near East, about 2100 BC” (p. 16).

In what part of the world did the events of Genesis occur? What countries are there now? What events in your lifetime have taken place in this region? (You might refer to a world atlas.) What else do you know about this part of the world?

Read the “Setting” section (p. 16).

What had happened to the people of Israel just before the book of Genesis was written? How had their lives changed? What need was Genesis written to address?

What similarities, if any, can you see between the situation in which you live and the situation in which the people of Israel were living when Genesis was written?

What needs do you have that you would like to see Genesis address?

Read the “Summary” section (pp. 17-18).

How do all the major sections of Genesis begin? What do these sections describe? What progression do all of the sections include? In what ways is the first section (1:1–2:3) an exception to this pattern?

Read the quotation by Victor P. Hamilton (p. 19, margin).

Does this quotation surprise you? How does it alter your perception of Genesis and the people it portrays? What further questions or thoughts does it prompt?

Look at the “Authorship” section (p. 18).

According to the editors of the *NLT Study Bible*, who wrote Genesis? What other possibilities are there? Which possibility do you think is most likely, and why?

Look at the “Composition” section (pp. 18-19).

There is information in Genesis that was only known later in Israel’s history. How do the editors of the *NLT Study Bible* account for this? What explanation is most plausible to you, and why?

Read the section entitled “Literary Character” (pp. 19-20).

How does Genesis fit, or not fit, the various literary classifications that have been used to describe it? Do you agree or disagree with the *NLT Study Bible* editors?

How does understanding the literary character of Genesis affect how you will approach reading and interpreting what it says?

Read the “Meaning and Message” section (pp. 20-21).

How did Genesis answer Israel’s questions . . .

- *about their own identity as God’s chosen people?*
- *about how they ended up as slaves in Egypt?*
- *about God’s plans for them?*

- *about who God is and how he relates to creation?*
- *about how they could experience God's blessings?*

How might Genesis answer your questions?

What was the message of Genesis for ancient Israel?

How does the message of Genesis speak to you? What might God be saying to you through the book of Genesis?

Exploring Genesis 1:1-2

Read Genesis 1:1-2.

What happened in the beginning? When was "the beginning"?

Read the study note on 1:1–2:3.

What is the title for this section (see outline in the NLT text)? What is the main message of this section?

Think about the people of Israel coming out of Egypt (refer back to the "Setting" if needed). How did the teaching of this section correct Israel's understanding of the world? What difference does all of this make for you in your understanding of the world?

Read the study note on 1:1.

How is 1:1 related to the rest of the creation account (1:2–2:3)?

What question does 1:1 answer? How does it contrast with modern naturalism?

What is the Hebrew word for God? Is it singular or plural? What does this term tell us about God's nature and identity?

What is the Hebrew word meaning "create"? What does the study note on 1:1 tell you about the meaning of this Hebrew word?

Each of the following passages uses the Hebrew word meaning "create": Gen 1:27; 2:3; 6:7; Ps 51:10; 148:5; Eccl 12:1; Isa 40:28; 43:15; 65:17; Mal 2:10. Based on these passages, what else did God create? What do these passages tell you about what it means to "create"? about God?

What was the message of Genesis 1:1 for the original audience? What is the significance for you?

What was the state of the earth "in the beginning"? When was the earth in this state? How does this description correlate with your understanding of the early pre-history of the earth?

If Genesis 1:1 is true, what bearing, if any, does it have on whether or not one accepts modern theories of origins, such as the Big Bang theory and the theory of Evolution?

Read the study note on 1:2.

What do the terms “formless and empty” communicate? How does the rest of the creation account (1:3–2:3) reverse this condition? (See “The Structure of the Creation Account,” p. 23.)

“Deep waters” (Hebrew *tehom*) represent chaos in both Genesis and the rest of the ancient world. How was this chaos viewed in the ancient world? How is the view of Genesis different?

In light of the meaning of *tehom*, what is the significance of God’s Spirit “hovering over the surface of the waters”? How does it counteract the view of the rest of the ancient world regarding *tehom*?

According to Genesis 1:1-2, was the process of creation controlled and directed by God, or was it an uncontrolled and chaotic natural process? Do you agree or disagree?

Reflect on Genesis 1:1-2.

How does Genesis 1:1-2 challenge, change, or confirm your thinking? What is God saying to you through this passage? What would you say to God in response to this passage? Write down your thoughts, and then tell them to God.

Look at the chart, “The Structure of the Creation Account” (p. 23).

What was the state of the “earth” before the six days of creation? How did the first three days of creation transform the earth? How did the second three days of creation transform the earth? What was the state of the earth after the six days of creation? What did God communicate to humanity through the seventh day?

Read the theme note, “The Creation” (p. 22).

What questions was the creation account written to answer? In what way did it correct the false beliefs of the people of Israel?

What kind of world did God make for humanity to live in? What effects have human beings had on the world God created? What has God done to restore his creation?

Read the cross-references listed in the margin of the theme note. What do these passages tell you about God’s creation?

How has God been speaking to you personally about his Creation and our role in relation to it?

Read the person profile, “Noah” (p. 34).

What does Noah’s name mean? What reason is given for his having been given this name? Did Noah fulfill the hopes that his father had for him?

How was Noah pleasing to God?

Read the cross-references about Noah listed in the margin. What do these passages tell us about Noah?

How is Noah an example for us? How has God been speaking to you personally through the example of Noah?

Look at the illustration, “Noah’s Ark” (p. 35).

Does the size of the ark compared with other objects surprise you? Is the shape what you thought it would be? According to the caption, what is notable about the size and shape of the ark? By the reckoning of the editors, was the ark up to the job for which it was built? Do you have any thoughts of your own about Noah and the ark?

Look at the map, “Nations of the Ancient World” (p. 41).

What is the purpose of this map—what information does it show? What do the names on the map mean? What do the arrows show?

Is the information on this map historically true and accurate? What are the implications of this?

Below the map is an index of many of the names. Choose one name, find it on the map, and read all of the passages listed as cross-references for it. (If you have trouble picking, some good choices are Sidon, Tarshish, Jebusites, or Elam.) What did you learn from reading those passages?

Conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed this opportunity to experience the *NLT Study Bible*. We have only been able to provide a small taste in this sampler, so we invite you to get a full copy of the *NLT Study Bible* and continue the experience day by day. The Bible and its message will open up to you as never before as you begin the journey.

THE EDITORS

A NOTE TO READERS

THE *HOLY BIBLE*, NEW LIVING TRANSLATION, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004 and is reflected in this edition of the New Living Translation. An additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

THE PUBLISHERS, OCTOBER 2007

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations

contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were

given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937).

The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow sub-dialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, "ephah" [a unit of dry volume] or "cubit" [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not

generally meaningful to today's readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.

- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, "ten shekels of silver" becomes "ten pieces of silver" to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the "denarius" as "the normal daily wage" to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: "Greek a *denarius*, the payment for a full day's wage." In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the post-exilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: "the third day of the month Adar." This was during the sixth year of King Darius's reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common "o'clock" system. On occasion,

translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’” Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.
- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.
- Metaphorical language is some-

times difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.

- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.
- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the

ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this

explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

All appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *’adonai* YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with *’elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exod 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote.

This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread*.”

- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly

in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Proverbs 3:12; Psalms 8:2; 53:3).

- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, "King Herod" is named in this translation as "King Herod Agrippa" and is identified in a footnote as being "the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great."
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name "Eve" at Genesis

3:20 reads: "Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means 'to give life.' " This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve "would be the mother of all who live."

Cross-References

There are a number of different cross-referencing tools that appear in New Living Translation Bibles, and they offer different levels of help in this regard. All straight-text Bibles include the standard set of textual footnotes that include cross-references connecting New Testament texts to their related Old Testament sources. (See more on this above.)

Many NLT Bibles include an additional short cross-reference system that sets key cross-references at the end of paragraphs and then marks the associated verses with a cross symbol. This space-efficient system, while not being obtrusive, offers many important key connections between passages. Larger study editions include a full-column cross-reference system. This system allows space for a more comprehensive listing of cross-references.

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God's Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God's guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God's Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

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