

An Introductory Survey of Genesis
Geoff Smith

Genesis

1. Title

The Hebrew Bible consisted of three parts: The Law (Torah), the Prophets and the Writings.¹ Genesis is the first of the five books of The Law of Moses. These books were originally one book which the Jews called The Torah (meaning 'instruction'). It was not until about 300 years before Christ, when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint/LXX)², that the Torah was divided into 5 books. Each of the five books were named after the first words of each book. In the Hebrew Bible our 'Genesis' was called 'beresit' (pronounced bereshith) following the words 'in the beginning'. 'Genesis' is a translation of the Greek word 'geneseos' that translates the Hebrew word 'toledot' ('generations'). See Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2).

2. The Author

Up until the 17th century both Jewish and Christian communities believed Moses wrote Genesis. In 1671 Spinoza proposed Ezra was the author. Following Spinoza, critical scholars³ continued to theorize. Their problem: (a) Different names for God in the Pentateuch; (b) unable to reconcile parallel stories (e.g. Sarah Gen 12/Gen 20); (c) Linguistic differences – therefore the Pentateuch must have different authors. Our current Pentateuch is the result of an editor putting all the sources together. At the back of their critical approach was (a) the prevailing sceptical rationalism of their day; (b) their presupposition that the Pentateuch (& the whole Bible) was written by man about God, not written by God for man. It's a book of human reflections not divine revelation.

The case for Mosaic authorship includes (1) The Jews of our Lord's day believed that the Torah was one unit and that Moses was the author⁴; (2) Jesus himself believed Moses was the author of the Torah (Matt 19:8; Mark 7:10; Luke 16:29-31; 20:37; 24:27; John 7:19,22);

¹ Tanakh, the name for the Hebrew Bible is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: **Torah** ("Teaching", also known as the Five Books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy); **Nevi'im** ("Prophets" – 8 books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and the minor prophets) and **Ketuvim** ("Writings" – 11 books also known as the 'hagiographa' – Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles). Hence the word '**TaNaKh**'. The Book of Ruth was originally placed before the Psalms but in the Middle Ages it was moved next to the other smaller books Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Esther. Why three parts? Three main theories have been suggested: (1) There were three different historical stages when the books were canonized; (2) the books in section two were written by prophets while books in section three were not; (3) the books were divided according to their literary character.

² LXX/Septuagint = 'Seventy'. Tradition has it that 70/72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria (Egypt) translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, which at that time was the popular language of Israel – at the time of the Greek empire.

³ Jean Astruc (1753) and Johann Eichorn (1780) both believed in a dual authorship: 'E' (Elohim) 'J' (Yahweh – Jahweh in German). In the 1850's-1860's Hermann Hupfeld, Karl Graf and Abraham Kuenen further categorized the Pentateuch material adding 'D' (Deuteronomist, supposedly composed under Hilkiah as part of Josiah's reforms around 621 BC) & 'P' (Priestly code – all about rituals and sacrifices). In 1876 Julius Wellhausen developed the documentary hypothesis (late dates): 'J' Yahwist in Southern Kingdom circa 950 BC; 'E' Elohist in Northern Kingdom circa 850 BC; 'D' Deuteronomist circa 650 BC; 'P' Priestly Code circa 525 BC.

⁴ Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish-Christian writer believed Moses was the author of the Pentateuch Against Apion, 1:8. Cited by Thomas Constable, Sonlight. Genesis.

(c) the Pentateuch itself affirms Moses as its author (Ex 17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9) and the Pentateuch attributes large amounts of its content to Moses [(Ex 20:2-23:33; 34:11-26; Lev 1:1; 27:34; Numbers 1:1; 36:13; Deut 1:5-4:40; 5:1-26:19; chs 27-28; 30:2-20; 31:30-32:43]⁵; (d) Other OT books testify to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Josh 1:7-8; 8:32,34; 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:4) (e) eyewitness details point to a participant being the author, not an editor who lived centuries later (Ex 15:27; Num 2:1-31; 11:7-8); (f) the authors information about Egyptian names, words, customs, and geography would have been difficult for an author or editor to have obtained in Canaan centuries after Moses time (Gen 13:10; 16:1-3; 33:18; 41:43; cf Acts 7:22).

How did Moses get the information contained in Genesis when in fact he was born 300 years after the last events recorded in Genesis? It may have come through oral tradition emanating all the way back to Adam & Eve; it may have come from written records which he used which he used under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; it may have come directly from God in the Sinai encounter (Ex 19:16-25; 20:18-19). Obviously someone else (perhaps Joshua) must have written the account of Moses death (Deut 34). Whatever the means of revelation, Moses had been well prepared for the task of writing this crucial information (Acts 7:22).

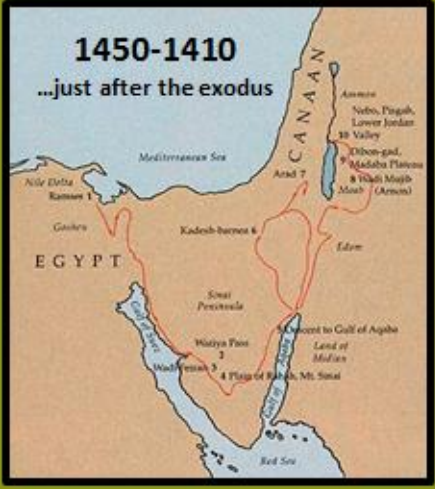
3. The Date


Moses may have written Genesis while still in Egypt, or while in the desert of Midian. But neither of these options seem to have the necessary impetus for what Moses has recorded in Genesis. Most (but by no means all) conservative scholars date the writing of Genesis somewhere around 1450-1410 BC.⁶ This would place the writing of Genesis soon after the Exodus.

When was Genesis written?

Big questions....

1. Who are we that we should exterminate the Canaanites?
2.
3. Why do we need to go into the land?
4.





Foundations 2017

⁵ Bruce K Waltke, Genesis: A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) p.22

⁶ This assumes an early date for the Exodus

4. Structure & Purpose




With the Exodus behind them and the daunting task of the invasion of Canaan before them, God through Moses prepares the people of Israel for the future by reminding them of the past...

GENESIS ONE

Note 1. The Structure of Genesis 1:1-3

Genesis 1:1-3

	View #1	View #2	View #3
1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.	Creation starts here A Perfect creation	Creation starts here (stage 1)	Summary Statement
1:2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.	Chaos (negative) A Gap (Geological ages etc.) "Now the earth became..."	Primeval material (positive) (stage 2) "And the earth was..."	Chaos (negative) "Now the earth was..."
1:3 And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light.	Re-Shaping starts here	Creative acts (stage 3)	Re-shaping starts here
	C.I.Scofield, W.H. Griffith Thomas, E.W.Hengstenberg, Arthur C Custance.	C.F. Keil, Derek Kidner, John F MacArthur, Gordon Wenham	Gerhard Von Rad, Bruce Waltke, Allen Ross, M F Unger; E. A. Speiser




Foundations 2017

Note 2. The Days of Creation

(a) The Issue of the Creation 'Days'

Creation Days of Genesis 1




Solar days : Gen 1:3-5a Light/darkness

Figurative day: Gen 2:4 "in the day"

Creation Days: Gen 1:5b "the first day.."

1. 'evening & morning' over 100X in OT – always 24hr day
2. 'Day' with numeral over 100X in Pentateuch – always 24hr day
3. Exodus 20:8-11 links Sabbath day (24 hr day) with 6 day week of creation
- 4.



Foundations 2017

(b) Events of the six days

FORMLESSNESS (tohu) <i>Replaced in 1:3-13 with</i> FORM		EMPTINESS (bohu) <i>Replaced in 1:14-31 with</i> FULLNESS	
DAY 1	Light with darkness (First Separation: Day from Night)	DAY 4	Lights for the Day and Night
DAY 2	Sea and Sky (Second Separation: Waters of Sea from Waters of Sky)	DAY 5	Creatures for the Water & Air
DAY 3	Fertile Earth (Waters of sea from dry land)	DAY 6	Creatures for the Fertile Earth

(a) Day One (1:3-5): Light & Darkness

This “Light” has been understood as:

(1) Natural physical light from the sun.

In this view the sun (as a heavenly body) came into existence at the very beginning of creation (either prior to Gen 1:1, or at Gen 1:1) but it did not become visible until the fourth day.⁷

(2) Natural physical light not from the sun

In this view the sun did not come into existence until the fourth day, therefore this light must have come from an unspecified source of light outside the earth.⁸ John F MacArthur thinks it was “a disembodied & diffused light of some kind...an ethereal temporary brilliance decreed by God to illuminate His creation until permanent lights were set in place”⁹ He then asks: “Could it have been a mass of glowing matter that was later shaped into the sun?”¹⁰

(3) The Shekinah Glory of God Himself.

In this view the light was from the “...shining of that essential glory that belongs to God Himself. The glory of God....dispelled the darkness that had enveloped it. It was God’s presence...that brought light and caused a separation between light and darkness.”¹¹

⁷ M. F. Unger, Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 6. Unger’s position seems preferable to Wenham’s idea that the evening and morning appearing as they do three days before the sun & moon (which are explicitly stated to be for “days and years” v14), poses no problem. He “solves” the problem by saying that Genesis 1 is outside the main historical outline of Genesis (not under the heading “These are the generations of”). Therefore Gen 1 does not stand four square with the rest of Genesis but is rather to be understood as an overture to the rest of the story. This being so, asserts Wenham, it is not to be interpreted according to precisely the same criteria. Wenham, Word Biblical Commentary p.40

⁸ Charles C Ryrie Ryrie Study Bible, p.7 N 1:3; Schraeder, Liberty Bible Commentary p.11, John J. Davis Paradise to Prison, p.49

⁹ John F. MacArthur, p. 80, p.108.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, p.80

¹¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come, p.30

(b) Day Two (1:6-8) Sea & Sky

Until now, water covered the surface of the earth. On Day Two God created an “expanse” that thrust a separation causing two separate masses of water – the atmospheric waters and the territorial waters.¹² “Up to this point these waters would have been chaotically mixed. With the creation of an expanse between these bodies of water the atmosphere may have been like a dense fog; there may have been very little visibility and very little light shining through.”¹³ The ‘expanse’ is the Sky, or the ‘atmosphere’. When the Scripture refers to “the water above it” (v7 i.e. “the expanse”), some scholars think¹⁴ that there was an unusually large amount of water suspended in the atmosphere that served to (a) make the earth semi-tropical and steamy & thus facilitated rapid and lush growth; (b) contained sufficient water to supply the rains for the great flood in Ch 9; (c) protected the earth from the suns rays and thus accounted for the unusual longevity on the earth (see Gen 5). On this day God spoke the atmosphere into existence.

(c) Day Three (1:9-13) Fertile Earth

God performed two works on this day:

(1) Separation of sea from dry land

This is the separation of the sea, not the creation of the sea – the sea already existed (Gen1:2). This separation of the sea from the land was “probably accomplished by gigantic volcanic upheavals.”¹⁵ See Psalm 104:6-9,31; Psa 33:7-9. Notice that it is God who controls the sea, not the Canaanite god Prince Yam or Prince Sea¹⁶

(2) Production of Vegetation.

Some have seen enough room in the words “Let the land produce vegetation” to believe in theistic evolution.¹⁷ But “when it is stated that the earth produced these plants, this does not mean that the power for this lay within the earth itself. It merely indicates that the divine will caused plants to sprout forth from the earth.”¹⁸ Notice that God created the plants and the trees with seeds for their self-perpetuation – an important polemic point is being made here: it is God who is responsible for fertility (not the Canaanite God Baal). This vegetation will later become the food for animals and man (1:29).

(3) “...according to their various kinds” (Gen 1:11,12).

The expression ‘kinds’ is used in Genesis 1 to refer to both plants and trees, water creatures (1:21), birds (1:21), animals (1:24). It is a very important phrase – and it is used repeatedly in

¹² M.F.Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p.6.

¹³ Allen P. Ross Creation & Blessing, p.109.

¹⁴ See John Whitcomb & Henry Morris, The Genesis Flood; see Ryrie Study Bible notes, p7, N1:7; See J.J.Davis, Paradise to Prison, p.60-61

¹⁵ M.F.Unger, Ungers Commentary on the Old Testament,p7.

¹⁶ Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing, p.110

¹⁷ as Derek Kidner confesses he is, Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p. 48. But as John J. Davis points out evolution cannot be correct since trees were created before marine life. This means trees did not evolve out of marine life. Davis, Paradise to Prison, p.63.

¹⁸ Aalders, Genesis, The Bible Students Commentary, p.63.

Genesis 1 with respect to fertility and reproduction. This word 'kinds' underscores the very truth evolution denies: that when living creatures reproduce, they can produce only creatures similar to themselves. Apes do not give birth to humans...Science has never observed, and never will observe, the evolution of one species into a new life form. That is a genetic impossibility....The genetic structure of every living organism limits that organism to what it is – no more, and no less. There is no genetic information that can enable an organism to transform itself into something that it is not.”¹⁹ However, “we know that genes sometimes mutate...Mutations can alter or destroy existing information in an organisms genetic code, but they cannot add new information. Mutations are genetic mistakes. They can cause a form of evolution called microevolution, where the characteristics of a species are slightly altered....But genetic mistakes cannot explain macroevolution, the theoretical process by which a whole new species is formed. While it is easy to understand how a species of insect might, through genetic mutations, lose its wings and its ability to fly, there is no known genetic process that might explain how any species of non-flying creatures could develop anything as complex as wings and aerodynamic capabilities.”²⁰

(d) Day Four (1:14-19) Lights in the Sky

The Lights were to govern the day and the night (Gen 1:16). Four things are indicated at this point: separation of night and day; communication of various signs; regulation of the seasons; and illumination of the daylight hours.

(1) Separation:

This section is problematic. How do we understand the placing of lights in the sky to govern the night and day when there is already light and darkness, morning and evening, as far back as day one (Genesis 1:3)? Two explanations have been suggested:

[a] Explanation # 1: The Lights now become visible.

In this view the lights are already created but are not visible from earth.²¹ They are somehow veiled,²² probably by atmospheric conditions prevailing at the time of Gen 1:2 – 13. But now, on Day four, they are commanded to become visible and take their place in the earth's system.

[b] Explanation # 2: 'The Lights' now replace 'the light'

“The light source of the first day (see notes on Day One) was replaced by the sun and moon.”²³ “The introduction of the sun and the stars on day four doesn't alter the definition, nor...the rhythm, or the duration of the days. Rather the sun

¹⁹ John F MacArthur, The Battle for the Beginning, p.133-134

²⁰ John MacArthur, Battle for the Beginning, p. 136

²¹ M.F.Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p.7 Allen P Ross concurs, Creation & Blessing, p.111. Both scholars would see the creation of the universe, including solar systems, planets, including the sun & moon etc prior to Genesis 1. Unger sees 1:1 as a title, but referring only to the earth and the atmospheric heavens (not the universe). His position is strengthened when it is understood that the Hebrew term for heavens in 1:1 is the same as sky in 1:6 & 1:14

²² Derek Kidner, Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p.49 G.Ch Aalders also agrees, Genesis, Bible students Commentary, p.63 where he differentiates between the substance already in existence in the first three days, but here the emphasis is on function. Keil & Delitzsch think the sun and moon were created but not formed into governing heavenly bodies until Day four.

²³ Ryrie Study Bible p.8 N 1:14-19 John J Davis, Paradise to Prison, p.64; Schraeder, Genesis, Liberty Bible Commentary, p.12 John MacArthur, Battle for the beginning, p.108

and moon are set in place to fulfil their governing roles as permanent markers 'to divide the day from night'.²⁴

(2)Communication:

The Lights would serve as signs (Gen 1:14). Obviously the lights of the sky (sun and moon) would communicate time (day/night) and the seasons. But it could also be that the sun and moon were intended to provide any number of other signs. Apart from being Chronological signs (marking hours of the day etc.) and Seasonal signs (marking the seasons of the year etc) the sun and moon could be thought of as...

- a. Celestial signs – like the rainbow in the sky (Gen 9:12)²⁵
- b. Navigational signs – stars to guide the travellers
- c. Prophetic signs (Matt 24:29) – atmospheric disturbances
- d. Meteorological signs (Matt 16:2) – “Red sky at night, Shepherds delight; Red Sky in the morning, Shepherds warning.”
- e. Religious signs - of God's glory (Psa 19:1-6). “Their vastness, their complexity, their beauty and their sheer number all reveal the glory and wisdom of an all-powerful Creator.”²⁶

(3)Regulation:

The Sun and Moon would regulate the seasons & calendar segments.²⁷ There is no doubt that the varying relationships between the earth and the sun create the four seasons of the year. Israel's calendar was to be organised according to the seasons (Lev 23:4) The sun and moon were “markers to indicate times and seasons (v14)...and in that way they regulate our lives. They set our calendars. They determine the length of a year. They divide the year into seasons.”²⁸ “Think of it: The rotation of the earth on its axis is what determines a twenty four hour day. The moon's orbits around the earth determine our months. And the earth's revolutions around the sun determine our years.”²⁹

(4) Illumination:

The sun and moon were to give light to the earth. Properly speaking the sun *radiates* light while the moon *reflects* light – but, using phenomenological language (i.e. the language of appearance), we still speak of ‘the light of the silvery moon’ - even though it is a reflected light.

(e) Day Five (1:20-23) Creatures for Water & Air

On Day 5 God fills the earth with fish, birds and the great creatures of the sea.

²⁴ John MacArthur, *Battle for the Beginning*, p.108

²⁵ As well as chronological signs and seasonal signs, Gispén sees these lights creating ‘celestial signs’ such as rainbow Gen 9:12.

²⁶ John MacArthur, p.105

²⁷ A.E. Speiser sees “let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years” as a hendiadys (“to serve as signs for the fixed seasons that is days and years”) & sees this as referring to only one category, i.e. chronological order in the world. Claus Westermann thinks the signs have 2 categories, (a) fixed times i.e. seasons, and, (b) days and years. Gispén sees three categories (a) signs – celestial signs such as rainbow Gen 9:12, (b) seasons, (c) Chronological segments of days and years.

²⁸ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning*, p.113

²⁹ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning*, p.115

(1) The Sea Creatures

The great creatures of the sea seem to have been specially mentioned to help Israel guard against the Canaanite belief that these creatures had god-like status. For this reason they are very clearly portrayed as creatures of God under His sovereign control (like Leviathon Psa.104:26)

(2) Living Creatures

The term “living creatures” (1:20) is a term that covers all animate creation. A ‘Living creature’ is qualitatively different from the rest of Creation in that it is mobile, it has a central nervous system and it has conscious life.³⁰

NB: The term ‘Living Creature’ (KJV ‘living soul’) is used of land animals (1:24), man himself (2:7), animals and birds³¹ (9:10), animals and man (9:16) anything that has the breath of life (1:30). The old idea that it is the breath of life that sets man apart from the animal creation fails at this point, since both man and animals have the ‘breath of life’. “Like the animals, man moved and breathed and was a conscious life form. But there the similarity ended. Man was a unique creature unlike any other created being.”³²

(3) God’s blessing

God’s ‘Blessing’ is an important and recurring theme in Genesis - “God blesses animals (1:22); mankind (1:28); the Sabbath (2:3); Adam (5:2); Noah (9:1); & frequently the patriarchs (12:3, 17:16,20)”³³ God’s blessing is about making people successful & productive. “The word of blessing ...guarantees and effects the hoped-for success. So here the words of command ‘be fruitful and multiply’ carry with them the Divine promise that they can be carried out.”³⁴

(f) Day Six (1:24-31) Creatures for Fertile Earth

This day is the climax of creation.

(1)The importance of Day Six

NB: More is said of day six than any of the other days. Also, God’s pronouncement indicates importance – this time God declared what He had made to be very good (1:31, not just good). Four divine speeches are made on this day (twice as many speeches as on any other day of Creation). Note the entirely new phase that occurs on this day: “Let us make man”. The threefold use of the word ‘create’ in Gen 1:27 indicates importance. All of this indicates that the “structure of Genesis 1 is climatic. After God had made everything else, he was then ready for His masterwork”³⁵ – the creation of man.

³⁰ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning*, p.123

³¹ “Let birds fly” (1:20) is literally “let flying things fly” and is broad enough to include insects (Deut 14:19-20)

³² John MacArthur, *Battle for the Beginning*, p.162

³³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 24.

³⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 24

³⁵ Ronald Barclay Allen, *Majesty of Man*, p.83

(2) The Creation of land animals (1:24-25)

Like man, animals were formed out of the ground (Gen 2:19). When the text says 'Let the land produce' (Gen 1:24) it means that animals are made from the earth (Gen 2:19), not that they spontaneously evolved out of the ground.³⁶ So the creative power is in the hand of the Maker, not in the chemicals of the earth.

(3) The Creation of man (1:26-29)

Animals have much in common with man...but humans are set apart from animals by the Divine Plan, the Divine Pattern and the Divine Purpose.³⁷

[a] The Divine Plan – “Let us make man”

This plural verb ('make') has caused a fair amount of theological debate. Our only interest in the phrase at this point is to notice how the text uses different language (from the repetitious 'let there be..') to draw attention to the creation of man as something very different from the rest of creation. (It is not said of animals, vegetation, the fish, birds or water creatures, the lights of the sky or the earth & its atmosphere). The phrase is used uniquely of the creation of man.

Without minimising the Trinitarian nature of God, we should possibly understand this phrase as God speaking of Himself and with Himself³⁸ about the most serious & significant decision to be made in the creation process. It portrays God as being aware of His own inherent power & sovereign right to act decisively in what would be the crowning act of creation. This makes man the most important part of creation by far. Erich Sauer saw “an ascending line” developing: “at the tip of the pyramid is man, for he alone of all creatures is closest to God. His creation alone is preceded by a solemn decision in God’s heart: ‘let us make man in our own image’. Only man, therefore, owes his existence to a voluntary decision in the depths of God’s heart....no creature is closer to God than he. Before God he is the centre and goal of creation.”³⁹ “When the creation of man is described, such a wonder is envisioned by Moses that he uses ‘bara’⁴⁰ three times in one verse....It is wonder and newness that marks ‘bara’ in its three-fold use in Gen 1:27. When God made man he made something entirely new in the created order.”⁴¹

[b] The Divine Pattern - “in our image”⁴²

God said “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness”. The relation between image and likeness has been debated by scholars for centuries.⁴³ The

³⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p.112; G. Ch. Aalders, p.68 – “There is an indication here that that the bodies of animals were formed out of the materials that were present in the earth.”

³⁷ Allen P. Ross p. 112.

³⁸ God is a Trinity. Here it seems the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are communicating with each other; consulting each other; co-operating with each other, and conforming to the Divine plan together.

³⁹ Gerhard Von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, p.103

⁴⁰ See p 16 of this study for more information on 'bara'.

⁴¹ Ronald Barclay Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, p.85

⁴² The subject is addressed fully in study two pp. 19-22

‘image’ and the ‘likeness’ cannot refer to a physical likeness, because God is spirit, He is non-corporeal (Deut 4:15-16; John 4:24).⁴⁴

The words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ have been variously understood. Some understand the terms to be synonymous & therefore interchangeable.⁴⁵ Others think they are not quite interchangeable,⁴⁶ and that we might be best to understand that man is *like* God in certain respects⁴⁷ in order that he can be God’s *image* (representative) on earth. We can only be His image⁴⁸ (representative) if we have His likeness. In this way that the ‘image’ and the ‘likeness’ are inextricably related.⁴⁹

Being made in the image and likeness of God stresses our unique relationship with God. “It establishes a personal relationship between God and man that does not exist with any other aspect of creation – not with light, not with water, not with the other elements or even the earth itself, not with the sun, the moon, the stars or the stellar bodies – and not even with the other living creatures He made. He has no personal relationship with any of those things in the same sense He does with humanity.”⁵⁰

[c] The Divine Purpose – “Let them rule”

Man is in a different class to the animals – he was made to rule over them (Gen 1:26), and not only over *them*, but over the *whole earth*. As God’s representative man is in a class of his own. The animals are “under his feet” (Psalm 8:6-7), while man is made just “a little lower than God” Himself! (Psalm 8:5) .

⁴³ “The rarity of the phrase in the Bible and the uncertainty of its etymology make the interpretation of this phrase highly problematic” G.J.Wenham, Genesis, Word Biblical Commentary p.29

⁴⁴ Some contemporary theologians have included physicality as part of the image and likeness of God (Geisler, Systematic Theology, Vol 2, p. 452). The problem with including physicality as part of the ‘image and likeness’ is that animals also possess physicality, but they are not made in the ‘image and likeness’ of God – that ‘image and likeness’ factor is unique to man. Therefore physicality cannot be considered part of the image of God in man.

⁴⁵ Charles L Feinberg, “The Image of God” Bibliotheca Sacra # 129, p.237; Ryrie Study Bible Notes p.8 n 1:26; MacArthur, p.162

⁴⁶ “Usually the two words are synonyms in the Old Testament. Thus there is ordinarily no distinction between them. But in the grammatical construction here, each one may carry a distinctive emphasis. Hebrew scholars have suggested that the root meanings may provide a clue.” William H Baker, In the Image of God, p.35

⁴⁷ Humans are like God because they are personal, relational, spiritual, moral, rational and regal. “The word for likeness (Heb ‘demuth’) is more clear in its root meaning: ‘to be like’ ” William H. Baker, The Image of God, p.36. Ross concurs and says the word ‘likeness’.. “describes a similarity e.g. ‘like a man’ in Ezek 1:10.” [Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing] p. 112]. “He knew of course that in the fullness of time even He would become a man. In that day, He would prepare a human body for His Son (Heb 10:5; Luke 1:35) and it would be ‘made in the likeness of men’ (Phil 2:7) just as man had been made in the likeness of God. [Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record, p74-75].

⁴⁸ Some think that the preposition ‘in’ (‘in our image’) is better translated with ‘as’. [“The prepositions ‘in’ and ‘as’ are not exact synonyms...but in this verse most commentators agree that ‘in’ is virtually equivalent to ‘as’...” See Exodus 6:3 for the same use of the preposition: “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty” A.P. Ross says “the preposition ‘in’ probably is a ‘bet’ of essence, and therefore should be rendered ‘as’ and not ‘in’. p.112]. This would make the verse read: “Let us make man as our image”, that is, as our representative. William Baker thinks that the etymological root of the word ‘image’ (Heb ‘selem’) comes from the ideas to ‘carve’ or ‘cut’ arguing that “The Arabic cognate supports the meaning ‘to cut’. William H. Baker, The Image of God, p.54 n3. Allen P. Ross agrees that “the term ‘image’ (selem) is used in the Old Testament for actual forms and shapes of idols (1 Sam 6:5,11), which fits well with the ideas of ‘carving’ or ‘cutting’ an image Allen P. Ross Creation & Blessing p.112. In this case Adam is God’s representative – His image on the earth. Allen Ross continues: “The significance of the word ‘image’ should be connected to the divine purpose for human life. Von Rad has made the analogy that, just as kings set up statues of themselves throughout the border of their land to show their sovereign domain, so God established His representatives on earth. [Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing, p.112-113. See also David J. Clines, W.Gross & H Wildberger] It is precisely because man is God’s representative that he is commanded to “fill the earth and subdue it” (1:28), and that his life is considered sacred & therefore protected (Gen 9:5-6).

⁴⁹ In this view then, the Image has to do with who we are for God (emphasis is on our calling); the Likeness has to do with who we are in God (emphasis is on our constitution). As for the meaning of image and likeness in Gen 5:1,3: “...whatever ‘image’ involved was passed on to the son, for Seth was in the likeness and in the image of his father. The spiritual capacities that were imparted to Adam & Eve, that endowed them with the ability and responsibility to represent God on earth, were passed on by natural reproduction.” – Allen P. Ross p. 174. See Study 2, pp.19-22

⁵⁰ John MacArthur, Battle for the Beginning, p. 159.

Note 3: The Issue of the Age of the Earth


Young Earthers – are frequently concerned Old Earthers are playing into the hands of evolutionists. Young earthers opt for 6 literal 24hr days of creation because they think it best fits the text.

Old Earthers – are frequently concerned Young Earthers are comprising the findings of science. Not all Old Earthers are evolutionists. If the world predated Gen 1:1 then the earth can be very old, while the six literal 24 hr day creation remains true.

Note 4: The Revelation of God

The Revelation of God

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
powerful	living
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
creative	creator
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
singular	sovereign



Foundations 2017

GENESIS TWO

Note 1: History or Myth?

- (a) **Denial of Historicity.** Many theologians deny the historicity of these chapters and classify them instead as 'myth'. Miethe describes 'myth' this way:

"A story in a set literary form (such as poetic imagery or cultural narrative) with a truth or moral, rather than historical narrative as its point. The word appears 5 times in the NT: 1 Tim 1:4, 4:7, 2 Tim 4:4, Titus 1:14, 2 Peter 1:16. In each case the term refers to a fable as distinct from a historical or factual truth.....A large group of modern liberal theologians, following Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) insist that Biblical accounts of miracles as well as concepts such as the atonement are myths needing reinterpretation so as to be understandable to the modern scientific mind. Bultmann's method begins with an assumption that supernatural events are impossibilities."

- (b) **The Problem of Demythologizing.** There is an obvious problem with demythologising the Bible: "If we approach the Bible this way where does myth end and history begin? Where is the line of demarcation? If Adam and Eve are myth, then so is the story of Cain & Abel. And if Cain and Abel are a myth, then so is Noah and the flood. Since the record moves right on without a break into the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are we to assume that these too are myths? If so, where does history begin? How can you detect the place where myth, fantasy and legend end, and actual human history begins? ...When you begin looking for myths in these Old Testament stories, you will find that it is impossible to draw the line anywhere except where you, for some emotional reason, may choose to draw it...Such a process carries right over into the New Testament and the story of the virgin birth becomes a myth...the incarnation itself...the Christmas story...the miracles of Jesus...the crucifixion and the resurrection...where do you stop? Well, the answer is you don't stop....there is no stopping place when you apply this kind of theory to the biblical records. Of course, if you treat the Bible that way, then you must in all good conscience treat any other ancient document in the same way. If you carry this out to its logical conclusion we are left without any knowledge whatsoever of the ancient world."⁵¹

- (c) **Five reasons to reject the concept of Adam and Eve as 'myth'**

(1) Because Genesis presents Adam & Eve as real, historical persons.

The whole Adam & Eve account is an integral part of a carefully constructed historical narrative built around the repeated phrase "these are the generations of..." (See Gen 2:4), which appears ten times throughout Genesis. The phrase is deliberately used to introduce a piece of historical data and, in fact, becomes the basic structure for the literary framework of the whole book of Genesis. Everything in the book of Genesis is tied together & unified by this phrase. Now if Abraham, Isaac & Jacob are historical persons, so must be Noah & his family, Cain and Abel and Adam & Eve. The historical structure and sequence cannot be broken.

⁵¹ Ray Stedman, Understanding Man,

(2) Because the N.T. assumes Adam and Eve were real, historical persons
(Luke 3:38, Acts 17:26; Rom 5:12-15, 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49, 1 Cor 11:8-9, 2 Cor 11:3, 1 Tim 2:13-14)

(3) Because Christ taught Adam and Eve were real, historical persons
In Matt 19:4-5 Christ directly refers to the literal and historical existence of Adam & Eve.

(4) The Bible connects every real man in history to the real, historical Adam.

Adam is critical to the Biblical doctrines of sin and salvation. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). See Rom 5:12-21. In a nutshell then, the problem with 'demythologising' Adam is this: If Adam is not literally and historically real, then his sin did not occur in space-time history. And if neither he nor his sin is 'real', then our connection to him is neither historical, literal, biological or actual in any sense of those words. If that is true, then the human race never 'fell'. If the human race never 'fell' then the sacrificial, representative substitutionary death of Christ is an irrelevant act of unjustifiable extravagance.


(5) The historicity of Jesus Christ and Adam are inextricably linked.

In importance Adam is second only to Christ. He is the "pattern for the One to come" - i.e. Christ (Rom 5:14). Christ is called, the second Adam (1 Cor 15:47) and "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45). The comparison between Jesus and Adam in Romans 5:12-21 is too tight for one to be mythical and the other historical.

Note 2. Five observations about the Origin of Man

5 observations about man

- 1. Created being** (Gen 2:7-8)
 - God made man personally – not impersonally
 - God made man instantly – not gradually
 - God made man separately – not derivatively
- 2. Physical being** (Gen 2:7)
- 3. Social Being** (Gen 2:18,20-24)
- 4. Working Being** (Gen 2:15)
- 5. Religious Being**



Foundations 2017

1. Man is a created being

(1) God made man directly (not impersonally)

The text will not permit the idea that man just spontaneously appeared out of nowhere, or that he slowly came into being through an impersonal process – even if that impersonal process was kick-started by God as theistic evolutionists assume. The text presents the creation of man as something that occurred by the direct intervention of God – God created man by personally forming Him from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7), and God personally breathed into man's nostrils the life principle. Man came onto the earth fresh from the hand of God.

(2) God made man instantly (not gradually)

From a plain, straightforward reading of the text the children of Israel, who lived in a pre-scientific age, would have inevitably concluded that man was made instantly and miraculously within the time frame of a 24 hour period. Given that Genesis was written to them and for them (in the first instance), this must have been the message God intended the Hebrews to receive.

(3) God made man separately (not derivatively)

The Biblical text will not permit us to think that God made man out of an ape-like being, or from any other being – pre-human, sub-human, or non-human. Man is no up-grade or revamp of an existing being into a higher form of being. The text of Genesis could not be more explicit on this point. It's a case of accepting the Scripture and rejecting evolution, or accepting evolution and rejecting the Scripture – but the two are mutually exclusive.⁵² According to the Genesis record, man has no ancestor at all – man was made separately and distinctly, in a class of his own.

[a] Note the separateness between animals and man. Though made on the same day, the creation of the animals is finished and pronounced completed (v24-25) before God proposes the creation of man.

[b] Note the bodily difference between animals and man.

See 1 Cor 15:39 where Paul refers to four different kinds of 'flesh': **fish, birds, animals, man**. Note that each kind of flesh referred to in 1 Cor 15:39 corresponds to the different 'kinds' mentioned in Genesis 1: ("**sea creatures** & every living thing with which the water teems, *according to their kinds*" [1:21a]; "every **winged bird** *according to its kind*" [1:21b]; "**living creatures** *according to their kinds*" [1:24a]; and finally **man** [1:26a]).

[c] Genesis strengthens this separateness between animals and humans when it records the creation of Eve by God from Adam's side. (Gen 2:21-22, 1 Cor 11:8). To then turn around and "... connect Adam's body with the animal kingdom, (while admitting) that Eve's body was directly created would be absurd."⁵³ If evolution were true, Eve would also have to have evolved from an animal – and the text plainly says she did not.

⁵² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 265

⁵³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 265

2. Man is a physical being

(1) Its about : Man's Home is the Earth.

Being made from the earth indicates the close relationship man has with the earth. Gen 2:7 has been translated this way: "God formed *the earthling* from *the earth*."⁵⁴ Our body enables us to interact with our earthly environment.

(2) It's about : Man is a Creature of dust.

In the imagery of the Old Testament, dust is often equated with lowliness (2 Kings 13:7, Psalm 18:42, 72:9, 119:25). It was also used to describe the lowly position of people before they were raised up to positions of importance (1 Sam 2:8, Psal 113:7, 1 Kings 16:2). "To be 'raised from the dust' means to be elevated to royal office, to rise above poverty....he is raised from the dust to reign"⁵⁵ "What a combination he is of grandeur and dignity (made in God's image) and lowliness (formed of common dirt)."⁵⁶

(3) It's about : He is the Potter, we are the clay.

Gen 2:7 pictures God as a potter⁵⁷ shaping an earthen vessel. This is an indication of God's sovereignty over that which is formed. Paul uses the same imagery in Romans 9 to indicate the absolute sovereignty of the Potter.(Rom 9:20-21).

(4) It's about : God is the Artist

The Psalmist said he was "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God (Psalm 139:14).The human body is God's masterpiece!⁵⁸

(5) Its about : We return to Dust

Man comes from the dust of the ground and returns to it. (Gen 3:19 See also Job 7:21, cf 17:16, 20:11, 21:26).

3. Man is Social Being

4. Man is a Working Being

5. Man is a Religious Being

⁵⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, NICOT, p.156

⁵⁵ Victor P. Hamilton (*Genesis*, NICOT p.158), drawing on W. Brueggemann, "From Dust to Kingship" ZAW 84 (1972) 1-18

⁵⁶ M.F. Unger, *Unger's Old Testament Commentary*, p.11

⁵⁷ the verb 'formed' (Heb 'yasar') is used elsewhere in the Old Testament of God as the potter (Jer 18:2-6; Isa 41:25)⁵⁷, and therefore it is legitimate to see in the word 'formed' a reference to shaping by a potter

⁵⁸ Paul Enns, *Approaching God*, Daily Readings in Systematic Theology, July 3

Note 3: The Probation of Man (Gen 2:8-9; 2:15-17)

(a) The Context: Maximum provision & Minimum prohibition

(b) The Reason:

(1) Need to develop -

(2) Need to develop -

(3) Need to develop -

(4) Need to develop -

Note 4: The Two Trees

The two trees singled out for special mention were both located in the middle of the garden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9).

(a) The trees were pivotal

Their location in the middle of the garden suggests they are central to life in the garden and they are immediately accessible.

(b) The trees were real.

(1) they are mentioned in the context of the other actual & literal trees God caused to grow out of the ground (Gen 2:9)

(2) that they are called “tree of life” and “tree of the knowledge of good & evil” is no reason for us to think they are non-literal symbols (e.g. the “Ark of the Covenant”; the “Blood of the Atonement” were also literal and, at the same time, ‘spiritual’ issues). It is true that God could just as easily have singled out a river or mountain for this purpose and said “Don’t cross the river” or “Don’t climb the mountain”. But it still would have

been a literal river or mountain, because God was dealing with real, literal people in a real literal garden in real, space-time history.⁵⁹

(c) The trees were good


Like everything God had made these trees were good (Gen 1:31)

(d) The trees are not magical.

The 'power' does not reside in the trees or their fruit, but rather in the One who created and planted them. H.L. Ellisen has commented: "There is no suggestion that any animal feeding on them would have acquired wisdom or length of life"⁶⁰

Note 5: The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

What was the Tree of Knowledge?




- ☐
- ☐ Not way to an understanding of evil
- ☐
- ☐ Not sexual act
- ☐

a symbol of God's Moral authority

- Fits with Satan's own attempt at moral authority (Isa 14:12-17)
- Fits with Eve's desire to get wisdom (3:6)
- Fits with Satan's words "you will be like God knowing..." (3:5)
- Fits with God's comment "He has become like one of us..." (3:22)

Foundations 2017




This tree represents God's sovereignty to decide what is right and what is wrong. In taking of the forbidden tree Adam and Eve are grasping for an authority and autonomy that is not theirs. This means they would no longer look to God to determine what is right and wrong (good and evil). Instead they would decide of themselves. Henri Blocher writes insightfully: "Man cannot, without destroying himself, be anything other than what he is by God's decree." Man is safest and happiest when he is in submission to His Creator.

⁵⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space & Time* () p. 72

⁶⁰ H.L. Ellisen, *Fathers of the Covenant*, p. 24

Note 6: The Tree of Life

What was the Tree of Life?



?

Physical life

?

Extraordinary physical life

?

Extended physical life

?



The Tree of Life has been notoriously difficult to understand. Obviously the Tree of Life represents Life. Allen P. Ross writes: “The grammatical constructions *probably* indicate that the tree of life produced life (that is, it is not a genitive of attribute meaning ‘a living tree’)...”⁶¹ Or, this tree may simply represent ‘Life’. It is important to reiterate that the trees are not magical and, contra Walton, have no inherent powers in themselves (Walton thinks the Tree of Life had high doses of antioxidants in it to prevent aging, and that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge had unusually high doses of hormones in it). The powers of life and death come from God (not the trees) – life comes as His gift, death comes as His judgment.

The question is: what kind of life does the Tree of Life supply? Again, several views have been posited:

(a) Maintains Physical Life.

In this view, the Tree of Life provides physical life, in which case the Tree of Life appears to be just one of the trees that enabled Adam and Eve to exist.

(1) This over-looks the fact that man’s physical life was already provided for in two ways:

[a] internally - through the ‘life principle’ received when God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life & caused the continuous and automatic Physiological function (lungs breathing, heart beating)

[b] externally – through the plants and trees God had provided for physical sustenance (1:29, 2:9). Adam survived quite well on those plants & trees for a further 930 years (Gen 5:5).

(2) This over-looks the special significance attributed to the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9, 3:22). It was not just ‘one of the many trees’ given to sustain man, though it shared much in common with them. It had been set apart for a unique role & was at least as

⁶¹ Allen P. Ross “Ibid. p. 123.

equally significant as the tree of knowledge. Its' uniqueness therefore ought not to be minimised.

(3) If this tree simply promoted physical life, it is hard to see how eating from this tree of life would result in a life that lasts "forever" (Gen 3:22).

(b) Extra-ordinary Physical Life

In this view the plants and trees of Gen 1:29 & 2:9 provide for the day- to-day physical needs of Adam & Eve, but the Tree of Life is necessary for Adam & Eve to be able to live in "top-notch" physical condition – a kind of abundant physical life, or fountain of youth.⁶²

(1) This doesn't provide any exegetical explanation for the idea that the Tree of Life was to provide "top-notch" physical life.

(2) It describes life as living abundantly, but the text speaks of living 'forever', not just abundantly (Gen 3:22)

(3) Thirdly, are we to understand that expulsion from the garden enforced by the presence of the Cherubim with the flaming sword, was simply to prevent Adam enjoying a 'top-notch' quality of physical life?

(c) Extended Physical Life

In this view the Tree of Life provides continuous life (it doesn't specify whether it is spiritual life, or physical life, or both).⁶³ Like the two views already mentioned, this view believes man was feeding from the Tree of Life from the moment He was created. The Tree of Life then, provided "the ceaseless communication of the life given by God."⁶⁴ But this life was always suspendable. As long as man continually ate of the tree he would survive. The moment he stopped eating of the tree he would forfeit his life.

(1) it assumes the human body was created mortal and needed the Tree of Life to keep mortality at bay. This seems to run counter to 2:17 which sees death as an un-natural intrusion and a punishment for sin, not a 'natural phenomena'. Death is a penalty for sin (Rom 5:12, 6:23) and thus death is an enemy (1 Cor 15:26).

(2) The text does not say Adam and Eve were eating of the Tree of Life before the temptation. In fact Gen 3:22 indicates the exact opposite – i.e. Adam and Eve had not yet eaten of the Tree of Life. Notice carefully the wording of the text & particularly notice the word 'also' in Gen 3:22 – "he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." This strongly suggests that while Adam and Eve had eaten of the other trees in the garden, they had not yet partaken of the Tree of Life - hence the need for immediate banishment from the garden lest he "take also from the Tree of Life."⁶⁵

(3) The sin was not a sin of omission (not eating from the Tree of Life, and therefore dying) but a sin of commission (eating from the Tree of Knowledge and being punished with death).

⁶² If I understand H.L. Wilmington correctly this is what he has suggested. *Wilmington's Guide to the Bible*, p. 23. Others like Walton have suggested that the tree of life means 'tree of youth'. John H Walton, *Genesis – NIV Application Commentary*, p. 170

⁶³ "God gives life....life from Him constantly renewed....we believe [this] is the meaning of the text."Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 122

⁶⁴ Ibid. p123

⁶⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis NICOT*, p. 209. Hamilton, following Keil & Delitzsch (*Commentary on the O.T.* Vol 1, p. 107) astutely observes that the word 'also' is used as well in Gen 3:6 where it also indicates a new and additional action that had not been executed before – "she also gave some to her husband..." This strengthens the idea that Adam and Eve had not yet partaken of the fruit of the Tree of Life.

(4) The idea that man had to continually eat of the Tree of Life in order to have continual existence, cannot be proven from the text.⁶⁶ Genesis 3:22 is better understood to mean that *once* man had eaten from the Tree of Life, he would have lived “forever”, (and would not need to have eaten again).

(5) Exclusion from the garden is not merely exclusion from ‘extended physical life’. Even without the Tree of Life Adam lived 930 years (Gen 5:5).

(d) Eternal/Immortal Life

In this view the Tree of Life represents ‘eternal-immortal life’.⁶⁷ We have hyphenated the term because, theologically speaking, eternal life & immortality are ‘joined at the hip’.⁶⁸ Put simply, if you get eternal life, then you also get immortality.⁶⁹

At this point we must define what we mean by the word immortality. In few places is it more important to have precise definitions of terms than in discussing this particular issue. In this study immortality is not to be understood as merely ‘endless existence’ (as Greek philosophy has always taught). Rather, as the N.T. indicates, it is that glorious quality of life that is immune to decay or death of any kind & comes to the believer from God as a gift, as a result of sharing in God’s life.⁷⁰ It is clear from Gen 3:22 that had Adam eaten from the Tree of Life he would have lived “forever”. This seems to mean that Adam would have received eternal life & its corollary immortality.

There are four good reasons for adopting this view.

- (1) The Grammatical reason - the term “live forever” (3:22) can be and probably is best to be understood as meaning eternal life. The noun ‘forever’ (Heb ‘olam’) can

⁶⁶ Henri Blocher (In the Beginning, p. 123) & John H. Walton, (Genesis NIV Application Commentary p.) represent this view. Walton (p185) suggests there was something naturally inherent in the fruit that enabled the prolongation of life (though he does not argue for magical properties). David M. Fouts writes: “One does not know if one bite of its fruit would have yielded continual physical existence forever, or if it would have been necessary to continually eat from it to produce the same results.” (Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies, p. 46). However, if one asks, ‘how many times did Adam and Eve have to eat from the Tree of knowledge before they were subject to death?’ The answer would be simple. They took and ate once. It only took one act of violation of God’s command to make Adam a sinner. Given the juxtaposition of these trees we can reasonably expect that it would also only take one act of participating in the Tree of Life to receive its blessing. To be theologically consistent we might ask, ‘how many times must one trust Christ in order to be saved?’ Or, ‘how many times must one be born again to become a member of God’s family?’ – surely the answer would be ‘only once’. Once we have tasted the water of Life, we never thirst again! Perhaps Blocher is tipping an Arminian hand when he writes: “Strangely enough, many commentators assert that he had not eaten from [the tree of life]....In order to draw that consequence from the text, it is necessary to suppose that to eat of it once was sufficient in order to have eternal life that could never be forfeited. But that is not stated by the Text.” (In the Beginning, p. 123).

⁶⁷ Commentators who see ‘eternal life’ here include Gerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* p.38; G.Ch Aalders, *Genesis*, p. 88; David M. Fouts, *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study*, Genesis p.54; Fred H Klooster, *Continuity & Discontinuity*, p. 140; Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol 1) p.107; John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol 2 p.49; John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, p. 18. Commentators who see ‘immortality’ here include G.J.Wenham, *Genesis* p. 87; Charles P. Pfeiffer, *Genesis*, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Eternal Life and Immortality are flip sides of the same coin. The NT makes it clear that eternal life and immortality are related. The search for immortality is answered when one receives eternal life (Rom 2:7). Christ brought ‘life and immortality’ to light in the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10). For a fuller discussion see Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, p.199-201.

⁶⁹ There is much discussion as to when the believer receives immortality. The discussion by Murray Harris (*Raised Immortal* p.194-197) summarises the possibilities: (a) at the death-resurrection of Christ; (b) at regeneration [1 Peter 1:23]; (c) at the death of the believer; (d) at the resurrection. I believe it is possible to say that the ‘right to immortality’ is received at the new birth when the believer is born again of “imperishable seed” (1 Peter 1:23), where as the ‘reality of immortality’ comes at the resurrection. In this case it would be much like the coming of the bud (regeneration) that is followed by the full flower (resurrection). The guaranteed title to immortality at regeneration can be seen as the product of spiritual resurrection (Eph 2: Col 3:1), where as the actual tenure of immortality awaits physical resurrection (1 Cor 15:53-54).

⁷⁰ Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal* p 191. In the matter of presenting a definition of immortality I am drawing heavily on the definitive work by Murray J. Harris, (*Raised Immortal*, pp 273-275). An abridged & modified summary of his working definition of immortality is found in Appendix 1 of these notes. Put simply, immortality is immunity from decay, deterioration & death – both spiritual and physical – that comes from sharing in the life of God. Immortality is inherent in God alone (1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16). It is given to believers (only) as a gift (Rom 2:7). Viewed positively it is the possession of everlasting life, and viewed negatively it is deathlessness.

(2) refer to the continual existence, or perpetuity of people, places, & events (Eccl 1:4; Isa 25:2, Psa 148:6). It can also be used of God and His attributes (Isa 40:28; Deut 32:40, Psal 36:1ff). "Since such extreme safeguards were made to keep man from eating the fruit of the tree of life, one may think that the ideas of perpetuity or eternity are in view."⁷¹

(2) The Logical reason - the two significant trees are set in contrast to each other (2:9) To eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was certain death (2:17) in all its dimensions - spiritual death, physical death and, if not remedied, eternal death. To eat from the Tree of Life must therefore have been certain life in all its dimensions – spiritual, physical and eternal.

(3) The Biblical reason - the 'Tree of Life' appears again (in the Genesis sense) in Revelation 22:2,14,19. Rev 22 is to Genesis 3 what an 'epilogue' is to a 'prologue'. Given that Rev 22 is the story's obvious end and is in effect the re-establishment of the Edenic paradise⁷², it is safe to assume that the Tree of Life in Revelation 22 is a 'transplant' from the Garden in Genesis 3. Since the Tree of Life in Revelation 22 clearly represents eternal life/immortality, it must also be true of the Tree of Life in Genesis 3.

(4) The Theological reason - we must be clear that when Adam & Eve came from the hand of God they were not immortal. Had they been immortal (i.e. immune to decay and death) they would never have been able to die (Gen 2:17, 5:5).⁷³ Neither were they mortal – death only came through sin (Gen 2:17, Romans 5:12).⁷⁴

This suggests that the two special trees actually offered alternative destinies. To eat from the tree of Knowledge would issue in immediate mortality (Gen 2:17). To eat from the Tree of Life would issue in immediate immortality.

Because Adam and Eve sinned & took the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were condemned to die (Gen 2:17). God's judgment would prevail, and Adam and Eve would not be allowed to short-circuit God's judgment by taking from the Tree of Life in order to live forever.⁷⁵ Thus they were banished from the garden.

⁷¹ David M. Fouts further comments: "Normally to express eternity the noun would appear in an intensified plural. However there are places where the singular suffices (Psalm 90:2, Isa 9:6, Micah 4:7). (Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies p. 54.)

⁷² Revelation 22:2,14,19 all refer to the Tree of Life and "are immediately relevant to the interpretation" in Genesis 2:9 & 3:22-24, because the verses in Revelation "involve a re-creation of an Edenic existence at the Eschaton." Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis NICOT p.162.

Clearly, we must carefully take into account that Genesis & Revelation are different in genre, written by different authors at different times, but the Superintending Author of both is the one & the same God (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21), & the literary & theological connections are as clear as daylight – what begins in Gen 1-3 finds its conclusion in Rev 20-22. A helpful chart of comparison & contrast is in W. Graham Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, Vol 1, Chart 13, p. 65.

⁷³ "There seems to be a logical difficulty in the idea of losing immortality. However defined, immortality implies the permanence and irreversibility of the immortal state." Murray Harris, Raised Immortal, p. 193

⁷⁴ Murray J. Harris, Raised Immortal, p. 192.

⁷⁵ Had Adam and Eve never touched the Tree of Knowledge they would have eaten of the Tree of Life and obtained immortality – a glorified & endless physical existence. Maybe they would have been transported to Heaven like Enoch was – without dying ("he was no more, because God took him away" - Gen 5:24). It is more likely that Adam & his posterity would have lived on the earth forever in perfect paradise. Some have objected and said that Adam could never have taken from the Tree of Life because it would have been be salvation (a) without repentance, and (b) by works. But this is not the case. Firstly, Adam was repentant – he confessed his sin ("...and I ate" – Gen 3:12); Secondly, he expressed his faith in God's promise - Adam believes God, that even though they will die, the woman will produce the seed from which Messiah will come who will destroy the serpent (3:15) and therefore he renames the woman "Eve" which means "life" or "life producer" – hence "mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). In this Adam is doing exactly what Father Abraham did (Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3-5), he is believing God & counting the promise true. As wicked as Adam's act was, he is here acting in faith & as difficult as it might be to grasp, the principle of Romans 4:5 seems to apply. Thirdly, God clothed Adam in garments obtained by sacrifice (Gen 3:21). Granted we must not overlook the fact that Adam is usually viewed in Scripture as the father of death ('As in Adam all die....by one man came sin and death through sin' 1 Cor 15, Rom 5:12), but we must also do justice to Gen 3:20-21 and admit that 3:20 is an exercise of faith in God. Because Adam might not have been the best example of faith does not mean he had none. Fourthly, this would not have constituted a case of salvation by works. Adam's faith in God's word would have saved him – the word not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

GENESIS THREE

Note 1. The Serpent

In terms of exegesis alone the text of Genesis 3, according to Allen P. Ross “is interested neither in the origin of evil in the snake nor in the nature of the snake. It is primarily concerned with what the snake said. The narrative leaves all other questions enshrouded in mystery”.⁷⁶ This is true in terms of pure exegesis – but exposition of this passage requires explanation & application.

Among evangelicals⁷⁷ there seems to be four views as to how to understand the identity of the serpent:

(1) Satan is Described as a Snake

In this view it is Satan himself who appears to Eve. Satan does the talking (not the animal), because animals have no rational thought or faculty of language – cf Job 1:7f. Satan is simply described as being ‘snake like’ as in Rev 12:9 Rev 20:2. The adjective ‘crafty’ is understood in a pejorative sense and refers to Satan, not the animal.

(2) Satan is Described as a ‘Shining One’

In this view there is no talking snake at all. The view rests on translating the word ‘serpent’ (Hebrew ‘nachash’) as ‘shining one’.⁷⁸ The justification is as follows: ‘nachash’ (serpent) comes from the same root as another Hebrew word ‘nechoshet’ which means ‘bronze’ & is used in Numbers 21:9 for ‘bronze serpent’ (‘nachash nechoshet’). In 2 Kings 18:4 under Hezekiah’s reforms the Israelites smashed the bronze serpent Moses had made which they called ‘Nechustan’. At 2 Kings 18:4 the NIV has a textual note explaining that ‘Nehushtan’ sounds like the Hebrew for ‘snake’, ‘bronze’ and ‘unclean thing.’ Thus, the word has the ideas of shining & luminosity, which fits well with Paul’s description of Satan as ‘an angel of light’ (2 Cor 11:14). In this view the word ‘crafty’ is used in a positive sense - astute or clever.

(3) The serpent was an ‘anthropoid’

In this view the serpent was in a special category, different from and separate to all other creatures. Astute & more clever than the animals, it stood in special relationship to mankind, having some human characteristics. At the very least it walked up rightly & could communicate in the same language as man. Traditionally this has been a rabbinic view, but there are some evangelical

⁷⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 134.

⁷⁷ For non-evangelical views (fable, legend, myth, parable) see E.J. Young, *In the Beginning*, p. 82 or a précis by James M Boice, *Genesis, An Expository Commentary*, Vol 1 p 128-131

⁷⁸ “I am very sorry that this word in the Hebrew was ever translated ‘serpent’ because it has given rise to a very false idea about this story – that there was in the garden of Eden a talking snake....this account does not really say that there was a snake in the garden.....But here it was not a snake that appeared but a shining one, of whom snakes have become symbols.” (Ray C. Stedman, *Understanding Man*, p.56-57); “The idea of the devil appearing as a snake is of course ridiculous. That is not the word at all. It is a shining one. Eve was beguiled by a brilliant appearance.” (G.Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, p. 173).

positions which seem to approximate it.⁷⁹

(4) The Serpent was a literal creature possessed by Satan

In this view the creature is a literal animal used by Satan to tempt Adam & Eve. This view has the following strengths in its favour:

[a] It takes the text in its plain, straightforward, sense, understanding that the temptation is occurring through one of the 'animals of the field'.⁸⁰ See 3:1,14 – the animal that speaks is the animal that is cursed. Satan is cursed separately (3:15).

[b] The term 'nahash', a common O.T. word for serpent⁸¹ can be taken in its natural sense. That the animal is described as 'crafty' is probably to be understood positively (i.e. the animal was 'astute' or more 'clever' & of higher intelligence than other animals) rather than negatively (the animal was 'cunning' or 'devious').⁸² It is unlikely that the animal was itself jealous of Adam and Eve's blessings⁸³, or resentful towards man's dominion over it⁸⁴, because this would suggest that evil (jealousy, resentment etc) had somehow come into the animal world ahead of the fall. According to Gen 1:31 everything, including this animal, was "very good" – Gen 1:31. But it might be that after Satan entered the animal it became 'crafty' in the negative sense.⁸⁵

[c] It fits with the close connection between Satan and the serpent – both were cursed for their part in the fall of man.⁸⁶ The New Testament elsewhere makes the connection unquestionably clear in 3 texts: Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2 ; Romans 16:20. Perhaps it might be said that "Satan, the wisest of God's created angelic beings, appropriated the body of the wisest of God's earthly creatures and used it as the instrument through which he approached Eve."⁸⁷ Satanic possession is taught in the NT with respect to persons (John 13:27) and animals (Matt 8:28-34). It seems that, unlike Christ who was able to simply materialise and

⁷⁹ J.M.Boice writes: "the idea that Genesis 3 presents us with a talking snake is based on an inaccurate reading of the passage.... there is no reason for thinking that this was any other than an upright creature, *not totally dissimilar to Adam and Eve themselves*..... undoubtedly an extra-ordinary and beautiful creature." James Montgomery Boice, Genesis – An Expositional Commentary, Vol 1. p.129).

⁸⁰ The NET Bible (margin)

⁸¹ Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis NICOT, p. 187.

⁸² The Hebrew word 'arum', variously translated 'crafty', 'prudent', 'cunning', 'shrewd' and 'clever' can be used to describe a desirable or undesirable character (Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis NICOT, p. 187). Positively: 'arum' is contrasted with the 'fool' (Prov 12:15, 12:23, 13:16) or the 'simple' (Prov 14:15-18). To be 'shrewd' or 'subtle' is not evil in itself, infact believers should be like that (Prov 1:4). The serpent is also viewed positively in Matt 10:16 ("Be as wise as serpents") and in Proverbs 30:18-19). Negatively it has a sinister connotation in Job ('crafty' 5:12, 15:5) Ex 21:14, Josh 9:4, Psa 83:3.

⁸³ Josephus, Antiquities I.I.4. [1.41]

⁸⁴ H.L. Ellison, Father's of the Covenant, (London: Paternoster, 1973) p. 25

⁸⁵ David M Fouts, Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies, p. 50; E..J.Young, Genesis Vol 3, p.9; C.F.Keil & F Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament - Pentateuch, Vol 1, p. 94. J Dwight Pentecost thinks it has a negative connotation but only because Satan had already possessed the serpent. Until then this animal was in perfect subjection to God. Your Adversary the Devil, p. 42.

⁸⁶ See Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology p. 203

⁸⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come p.36. Genesis in Space and Time, p77-78. His point is well made. Certainly the serpent is the tool of The Serpent.


appear in human form in the OT (Gen 16:7-14; Ex 14:19, & 1 Cor 10:4), Satan required the use of a body.⁸⁸ It thus seems appropriate that Satan should exploit the wisest of God's creatures.

[d] It fits with the integrity of the test which God was permitting. This was a test, not a trap. Adam and Eve had dominion over the animal world (Gen 1:27-28) and thus both were fully aware of the nature of animals & how they differed from humans.⁸⁹ They knew full well that animals did not have the capacity for rational thought or human language. When Eve heard the serpent speak, she should have heard the alarm bells ringing immediately. This was not a bright, glorious luminous being that was speaking to her, that she might have mistaken for an angel. This was a talking snake! It was every bit as bizarre as Balaam's talking donkey! (Numbers 22:28). This increased Eve's culpability – having domino over the snake she could have easily dismissed it.⁹⁰ Eve was deceived not by the appearance of the animal, but the words spoken (2 Cor 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14).

Note 2. The Results of the Fall

The Results of the Fall

sin results in a series of alienations....




Man from God (Gen 3:8-10)

Man from Man (Gen 3:12-13)

Man from Self (Gen 3:10, 16, 19)

Man from his environment (Gen 3:17-18)



Foundations 2017

⁸⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, Your Adversary the Devil, p.41-42

⁸⁹ John F MacArthur writes "...Eden was new and undoubtedly filled with many wonders, and the first couple were still just discovering all the marvels of creation. In that paradise, Eve had never known fear or encountered danger of any kind. So she conversed with the serpent as if this was nothing extraordinary. She had no reason to be suspicious. She herself was innocent, having never before encountered 'the wiles of the devil' (Eph 6:11)." The Battle for the Beginning, p.205. See also Ronald Barclay Allen, Genesis, Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, p.11 But this can hardly be true of those who had dominion over the animals and had named them already. Adam & Eve were morally innocent, not intellectually naïve. MacArthur & Allen both ignore the real possibility that the word 'take care' (NIV) in 2:15, might well be translated 'guard' as it is in 3:24. See Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis NICOT, p.171

⁹⁰ Keil & Delitzsch at this point, Commentary on the Old Testament Vol 1, p. 94.

The natural repercussions (Gen 3:7-13)

(a) Personal Shame (Gen 3:7)

Although the word shame never appears in the text, it is shame that drives the couple to sew fig leaves and make coverings for themselves. The fig leaves are small 'aprons' or 'loincloths'.⁹¹ In the OT the word describes a woman's dress (Isa 3:24) and a soldier's belt (2 Sam 18:11). It is obviously to cover their genitalia.

[1] Is this moral shame? Are they attempting to deal with lust and try to "regain some control over the situation?"

[2] Is this ontological shame? Are they ashamed they will now only produce sinners after their own image and likeness (Gen 5:3)?

[3] Is this personal angst? Do they need to wear clothing to face life now?⁹²

[4] Is this relational angst? Do they feel alienated, uncertain, estranged from each other and thus need to hide what differentiates them?

[5] Is this personal embarrassment? They had hoped to be like God, but their genitalia reminds them they are not. Embarrassed, they seek to cover themselves.

(b) Spiritual Death (Gen 3:8-10)

Before Adam and Eve sinned they enjoyed intimate communion & fellowship with God. There were no impediments, no hesitations – just "the joy of His presence, the unguarded relationship, the familiar friendship."⁹³ Now there is fear, alienation and hiding and all of it self-imposed and a sign of a deeper spiritual separation that had already occurred.

(c) Inter-personal estrangement (Gen 3:12)

Interconnectedness has been replaced with self-centredness & Adam has become inordinately self-oriented, self-absorbed, self-focussed and self-centred. It is part of our fallenness that we shift the blame. Adam is against Eve, and soon brother will be against brother (4:1-8). As absurd as it is blasphemous, Adam attempts to shift the blame for his sin off onto God - "the woman you gave me...she gave me some fruit...."

⁹¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis NICOT* p. 191

⁹² Ray C Stedman, *Understanding Man*, p.86f. Stedman argues that clothing is an important mechanism for enabling us But, again, this overlooks the fact that it was only the genitalia that was covered.

⁹³ Charles Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*, p. 202

The formal oracles of Judgment (Gen 3:14-24)

(a) The Oracle against the Serpent (3:14)

The curse involves abject humiliation for the snake and a continual hostility between snakes and mankind.

(b) The Oracle against the Woman (3:16)

The oracle pronounces painful consequences in the woman's two most crucial roles in life – in her role as mother and in her marriage.

The blessing of motherhood becomes a burden (physically and emotionally), reminding the woman of the part she played in bringing sin into the world.⁹⁴

There will also be painful tensions in marriage. What does it mean that the woman's desire will be for her husband but he will rule over her? There are four views:

[1] Sexual Desire.⁹⁵

In this view the woman's 'desire' is for sexual intimacy. The Hebrew word for 'desire' ('teshuga') is understood to have the same sense as in Song of Solomon 7:10, but a different sense to that in Gen 4:7. This view understands Gen 3:16b accordingly: "...her sexual desire toward her husband would so drive her so as to render these curses (on child bearing) inescapable."⁹⁶ The man would have sexual power over the woman.

This view fails on several counts:

[a] It fails to see that, far from being a judgment, a woman's sexual desire for her husband is a normal & natural part of God's 'good' creation.

[b] It fails to see that the woman's 'desire' & the 'husbands rule' are two aspects of the one judgment.

[c] It fails to connect Gen 3:16 & Gen 4:7.

[2] Maternal Desire⁹⁷

In this view the woman desires to be a mother and follow the natural instinct. But the desire will bring constant pain in childbirth & in raising children. The

⁹⁴ Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing p. 146. See David M Fouts., Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies, p. 53. But Walton, (NIV Application Commentary p. 227) argues that the pain has to do strictly with the period between conception & birth & includes the overwhelming anxieties over a woman's ability to reproduce, the physical discomforts of pregnancy, the health of the child in utero, the survival of mother and child through the birth process.

⁹⁵ Keil & Deltizsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 1.p.103. G.Ch.Aalders sees it purely in terms of sexual desire, Genesis, p. 108

⁹⁶ J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament, p. 219.

⁹⁷ John H Walton, NIV Application Commentary, p. 227-228. J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament , p. 219.

male will decide if and when she can reproduce.

This view fails on several counts:

[a] It fails to see that the maternal instinct per se is not part of the Judgment (Gen 1:28ff).

(b) It fails to connect Gen 3:16 & Gen 4:7.

[3] Emotional Desire⁹⁸

In this view the woman's desire is for relational, emotional & psychological intimacy. The idea is that the woman wants the man's unreserved love and attention. But, more often than not, what she will get instead is an aloof, distant, insensitive & often tyrannical master. Thus it appropriately views the rule of man as a judgment.

The view fails on two counts:

[a] Here in Gen 3:16 a judgment is in view, whereas the desire for the man's affection is a totally legitimate thing which God intended (see Gen 2:18ff).

[b] It fails to connect Gen 3:16 & Gen 4:7.

[4] Matriarchal Desire⁹⁹

In this view the woman desires to dominate the man and usurp control. It is a desire for woman to have the headship, instead of the male. This makes the connection between Gen 3:16 and Gen 4:7.¹⁰⁰ The common idea is 'control' - the woman has the same sort of desire for her husband that sin has for Cain (i.e. to dominate, to master, to possess, to control). But as Cain must dominate sin, so man will dominate his wife & in the process will abuse his status and take advantage of his position in an oppressive and dictatorial way. The sense is "you will have a tendency to dominate your husband and he will have a tendency to act as tyrant over you."¹⁰¹ If this is true, here is where the whole history of tension & trouble between the sexes begins. "Man will tend to be as loveless as the woman is now non-submissive"¹⁰², in fact "the woman will chafe

⁹⁸ William H Baker, *In the Image of God*, p.64 favours this view citing the work by Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, p 227-228.

⁹⁹ See among others Susan T Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, p.67-69, "What is the Woman's Desire?" (Westminster Theological Journal, Vol 37 1975, p.376-383). Ronald Barclay Allen, *The Majesty Of Man*, p. 143-145, Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis* NICOT p.

¹⁰⁰ The similarity between the texts (Gen 3:16 & 4:7) are obvious. "The Hebrew text of Gen 4:7b is precisely the same as that in Gen 3:16b with appropriate changes for person and gender" (R.B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, p. 146). Grudem (*Systematic Theology* p.464 n20) agrees & notes that "six words (counting conjunctions and prepositions) are exactly the same & appear in exactly the same order."

¹⁰¹ *Genesis*, Nelsons Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 13 "The verb is a verb of mastery....the couplet is antithetical wherein the man will instead rule." (In this case Gen 3:16b = "But he will rule over you") David M Fouts, *Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies* p. 53 The word "cannot be weakened to mean leadership alone as many expositors wish to do. It is a term that describes dominion, mastery, lordship. It can have a rather harsh application" Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 146. Fouts (p.53) explains the harshness in terms of Judges 14:4, Neh 9:37, Prov 22:7, Isa 19:4) as does G.J. Wenham (*Genesis*, p. 81). Grudem agrees (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* p. 464) & indicates that the term 'rule' here is usually used of monarchical governments not generally of authority within a family. Hence the rule is dictatorial, absolute & can even have the nuance of uncaring authoritarianism.

¹⁰² Ronald B Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, p. 146

under her husbands authority.”¹⁰³ The man will go to excess in exerting his authority. Sin has corrupted the willing submission of the wife and the loving leadership of the husband. There is much to commend this view – it takes full cognisance of the similarities between 3:16 & 4:7; it seems to be sane & straightforward in its interpretation & has “logical simplicity”¹⁰⁴ about it; it corresponds to the reality of the tension of the sexes; it sees the ‘desire’ as part of the imposed judgment; it recognises the antithetical nature of man’s rule.¹⁰⁵

(3) The Oracle against the Man (3:17-19).

[a] Frustration in Work

Man’s whole world has been affected. Both the ground (3:17) and the animals Have been placed under a curse (3:14)¹⁰⁶ See Rom 8:18-21. It is not work that is the judgment (cf 2:15), but the fact that work is now a frustration and a drudgery.

[1] Painful toil

Note : the Hebrew word is the same as that used in 3:16 to describe the woman’s pain in childbirth. This punishment has hit man in his central role as worker & provider, just as it affected woman in her central role as mother.

[2] Frustrating Toil

Though blighted by sin, nature is still grand (Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:18-20) but “insofar as it responds to man”¹⁰⁷, it is filled with frustration. Thistles & thorns grow effortlessly & prolifically compared to the endless energy required just to get a single meal. This is not the way it used to be (Gen 2:5, 2:9).

[3] Continual toil

This painful and frustrating toil will last as long the world is under sinful man’s dominion. The Millennium will see the beginning of the renewal of all things (Hosea 10:8 Isa 55:13, Isa 11:6-9, 65:25, Isa 35). See Gen 5:29).

¹⁰³ John F. MacArthur, Battle for the Beginning, p. 216

¹⁰⁴ G.J. Wenham, Genesis, p. 84 .

¹⁰⁵ The institution of male headship is not an act of judgment. Male headship was part of the created order (1 Tim 2:13) that is reflected in Adam naming Eve (Gen 2:23). It is the distortion of headship into a distant and often oppressive tyranny that forms part of the judgment.

¹⁰⁶ To be cursed has been understood 2 ways: (1) To be cursed is to be removed from God’s favour & protection. See John H Walton, NIV Application Commentary, p. 229; Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing, p. 145; “All God needs to do to change the course of nature is to reduce the flow of power to it and it will lower the fertility results.” Ray C Stedman, Understanding Man, p. 135 (2) to be cursed is to have Gods wrath invoked against you (Wenham Genesis p. 80)

¹⁰⁷ Henri Blocher, In the Beginning, p. 183

[b] Man will suffer disintegration in death

Note the penalty was death (Gen 2:17). On the day that Adam and Eve sinned the germ of death entered their bodies, they became mortal, the aging process began and they were doomed to die.

[1] Note the intrusion. Death was not a part of the natural order of creation. It is inextricably connected to the day of man's rebellion (2:17, 3:11,17).

[2] Note the refrain of Gen 5 – "and he died".

[3] Note the horror. In death man experiences total personal disintegration as his material self separates from his non-material self. His whole 'corporeal self' is dismantled. The body returns to the dust – the non-material self to the custody of the Creator (Eccl 12:7) awaiting judgment.

Note 3. The Relevance for Israel

Israel & the story of the Fall



-  **Trust the word of God**
-  **Explains evil (Egypt & Canaan)**
-  **Satan is real : forwarned = forearmed**
-  **Obedience brings delight but disobedience brings disaster**



Foundations 2017

GENESIS 4-11

The purpose of Genesis chapters four through eleven is to introduce us to the need for the nation of Israel (Gen 12) by describing the drastic and uncontrollable spread of sin in six separate pericopes:

The Story of the sin of Cain (Gen 4:1-16)	The Story of the sin of Lamech (Gen 4:17-26)	The Story of the sin of the Sons of God (Gen 6:1-4)	The Story of the sins of the whole world (Gen 6:5-13)	The Story of the sin of Ham (Gen 9:20-28)	The Story of the sin of Babel (Gen 10:1-9)
---	---	--	---	--	---

Note 1. Cain & Abel (4:1-16)

(a) Cain's wicked nature

Everything we know about Cain portrays him as an unacceptable and undesirable character. True, Cain was born sinful, but so was his brother. Though sinners, the first family are presented as people of faith (3:21; 4:4). We don't know if Satan commandeered Cain from his earliest days & caused him to reject the family faith and become an 'instrument of evil', or whether Satan simply took advantage of Cain's intensely evil character, and quickly enlisted him in the ranks of wickedness. What is clear is that at some point he was given over to Satan's control & consequently the New Testament describes him as one who "belonged to the evil one" (1 John 3:12).

(b) Cain's unacceptable offering

What was the problem with Cain's offering? Scholars have understood the problem three ways:

(1) Cain's offering of crops (Gen 4:3) was good enough in itself, since grain offerings were perfectly acceptable to God (Lev 2:1-16). Cain's problem lay in his unacceptable attitude (4:5-9). It was Cain's unacceptable attitude that made his offering unacceptable.¹⁰⁸ Abel's offering was better because it was made in faith (i.e. with a better attitude). Had Cain repented of his attitude he would have been accepted (Gen 4:7)

(2) Cain's offering of crops (Gen 4:3) was fine enough in itself since grain offerings were perfectly acceptable to God (Lev 2:1-16), but he offered an offering of inferior quality.¹⁰⁹ Whereas Abel gave the best, Cain gave grudgingly. Had Cain replaced the offering with a better quality offering he would have been accepted (Gen 4:7).

(3) Cain's offering of crops was unacceptable in kind¹¹⁰ because it was bloodless.¹¹¹ Abel's offering was better because it conformed to the

¹⁰⁸ Advocates include: Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p.198; *Nelsons Illustrated Bible Commentary*, p.14; J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith that Endures* p.188 *Thy Kingdom Come* p.41; J.J.Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 98; G.Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, p. 120-121; L.A. Schraeder, *Genesis*, Liberty Bible Commentary, p. 24; John H Walton, *Genesis, NIV Application Commentary* p. 263; *NIV Study Bible* p.11 fn on 4:3-4;

¹⁰⁹ Some of those who advocate the "Unacceptable Attitude" view (above) also support this view.

¹¹⁰ Advocates include: John S. Feinberg, *Salvation in the Old Testament*, Tradition & Testament, p. 59-60; Charles C Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 53; John R. Cross, *Stranger on the Road to Emmaus*, p 78 ; Erich Sauer, *Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 64;

requirements of a blood offering (Heb 11:4) and was thus made in faith (i.e. faith in God's prescribed way for sinners to come to Him by blood sacrifice). Had Cain changed his mind and offered a blood offering he would have been accepted (Gen 4:7). This view insists that one must not only come to God with the right attitude, but in the right way.¹¹²

There are two arguments for believing that Cain's offering should have included blood sacrifice:

[a] Gen 4:1-16 must be understood in relation to Gen 3.

Gen 4 is inextricably linked to Gen 3 – stylistically, literarily & theologically. "The cumulative effect of these repeated words and themes serves to show that the present story (Ch 4) is an extension of the preceding account."¹¹³

GENESIS 3	GENESIS 4
Adam & Eve 'hid from God' 3:10	Cain will be 'hidden' from God 4:14
Adam & Eve are banished from the garden 3:22	Cain is driven from the land 4:14
Adam & Eve ate from the fruit 3:6	Cain brought some of the fruit 4:3
God questioned Adam & Eve about their act of sin 3:9-13	God questioned Cain about his act of sin 4:9-10
God's words to the woman 3:16	God's words to Cain 4:7
The voice of God 3:8	The voice of Abel's blood 4:10
The curse by God 3:14,17	The Curse by God 4:11
The speech by Satan (3:4-5) is followed by the act of sin (3:6)	The speech by God (4:6-7) is followed by the act of sin (4:8)

Given the obvious connection, Gen 3 provides the rationale (3:15), precedent (3:21) and the need (sin) for a blood sacrifice. Gen 4 shows an evil man's disregard of this established ritual.

[b] The N.T. commentary on Cain's Offering

Apart from general comments (1 John 3:12; Jude 11), two other texts address the issue of Cain's bloodless offering: Hebrews 11:4 and Heb 12:23-24.

Hebrews 12:23-24 "You have come to....Jesus the mediator of a better covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." This verse can be understood in one of two ways.

W.R.Newell, Hebrews, p. 378; James M Boice, Genesis, Vol 1 p. 201-201; J. Barton Payne, Theology of the Older Testament, p.381; H. Clay Trumbull, The Blood Covenant, p. 211; Merrill F Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 23-24; Charles F Pfeiffer, The Book of Genesis, p.25.; W.Graham Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, Vol 1. p. 69-70.

¹¹¹ "from the false disposition of the offerer there resulted automatically a false element in the offering" Erich Sauer, The Dawn of World Redemption, p. 64

¹¹² "Bare faith is not the only factor that counts in religion. Man must possess that saving faith which is demonstrated by a mode of worship which is in compliance with the will of God. Sincerity alone is not enough...." J. Barton Payne, A Theology of the Older Testament, p. 381. A man must not only come to God, but he must come in the right way. This is the critical note in the Gospels, Acts and Hebrews.

¹¹³ Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing, p. 154, 159. "Gen 4:1-16 adopts the story form of chs 2-3 to continue the narrative of Eden and the Fall, playing upon the themes and ideas familiar from those chapters." (La Sor, Hubbard & Bush, Old Testament Survey, p. 81) The material in the chart is drawn from Ross's observations p. 154 & 159. See also Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis NICOT, P. 227-228

First: “the blood of Abel” refers to Abels own blood, shed by Cain.¹¹⁴ The meaning is this: whereas Abel’s blood cries out to God for vengeance (Gen 4:10), the blood of Jesus is much superior in that it cries out forgiveness for sins.

Second: “the blood of Abel” refers to the blood Abel shed in animal sacrifice.¹¹⁵ The meaning is this: whereas the animal blood Abel sacrificed had some symbolic and typological value, the blood of Jesus is much superior because it could do what animal blood could not – His blood could remove sin. (Heb 10:4; 9:26-10:14)

The second view seems preferable because: **#1** It fits best with the argument of Hebrews that posits the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice over O.T. sacrifices (Abel’s was the first recorded). Thus the contrast is between the two sacrifices: Christ’s sacrifice of Himself on the one hand and Abels animal sacrifice on the other. **#2** The NIV has supplied words not found in the original text that tend to make us think that the phrase “the blood of Abel” refers to Abel’s own blood. But just as the phrase “the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19) refers to the blood Jesus offered in sacrifice, so “the blood of Abel” (NIV) also refers to the blood Abel offered in sacrifice. This fits well with the literal Greek text: “the blood of sprinkling speaks a better thing than Abel.”¹¹⁶ **# 3** The correct antecedent for the phrase “the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than Abel” is found, not in Gen 4:10, but in Hebrews 11:4 which specifically speaks of Abel offering the animal.

Though dead, the message is still clear: Abel’s blood sacrifice is better than Cain’s bloodless sacrifice - but Jesus blood sacrifice speaks a better word still, for what Abel’s sacrifice could not do (taking away human sin) Christ’s has done in the sacrifice of Himself.

Taken in context, Heb 12:24 & Heb 11:4, indicate that Jesus sacrifice was superior to Abel’s because it was made with His own blood instead of the blood of an animal, and, likewise, Abel’s sacrifice was superior to Cain’s (Heb 11:4) because it was a blood sacrifice as opposed to a bloodless one. Hebrews cannot conceive of a bloodless sacrifice (Heb 9:22), therefore Abel made the better sacrifice than Cain. But Christ’s sacrifice is superior still, for by that sacrifice he has put an end to sin once and for all.

(c) Cain’s Curse

It seems Cain is the first person to be cursed (4:11 cf 3:14; 3:17). To be cursed by God was to be delivered up by Him to a specifically prescribed misfortune as an act of punishment.¹¹⁷ When God cursed Cain He prescribed the exact misfortune and then delivered Cain up to that misfortune - “..you are...driven from the ground when you work the ground it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a

¹¹⁴ Representatives of this view include: Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, The True Image; Erich Sauer, The Dawn of World Redemption p.64-65; Zane C Hodges, Hebrews, Bible Knowledge Commentary Vol 2, p. ; F.F. Bruce, Hebrews, p. .

¹¹⁵ Representatives of this view include: J. Dwight Pentecost, A Faith that Endures, p. 223; Kenneth Wuest, Hebrews, Wuest’s Word Studies p.228-229; Albert E. Barnes, Barne’s Notes on the New Testament, p.1338; Marcus Loane, Key Texts in the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 116-117.

¹¹⁶ B. F. Westcott concedes this is the better rendering, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p.419

¹¹⁷ Gordon J. Wenham Genesis (Word Biblical Commentary) p. 80)

restless wanderer on the earth” (Gen 4:11-12). He had been a successful tiller of the soil (4:2) but now he would have to try and eke out a living by hunting & gathering in a vagabond existence. “This is the deeper horror – the penalty of a long lingering life of painful exile would be more severe than an instantaneous death.”¹¹⁸ Cain understood the curse: (a) “Today you are driving me from the land” (b) “I will be hidden from your presence” (c) “I will be a restless wanderer on the earth”; (d) “whoever finds me will kill me” (Gen 4:13-14)

(d) Cain’s Protection

From 4:15-16 it seems Cain will live in God’s care, but remain unregenerate. We don’t know what this mark was – whether it was an external sign, or some mark on Cain. Certainly the Bible says God knows how to mark His people for protection (cf. Ezek.9: 4; Rev.7: 3;13:16- 18;14:1). What it was we do not know, because we do not need to know. The point is that Yahweh graciously protected him.

(e) Cain’s Wife

Cain’s wife would have been selected from among his relatives. It could have been a sister, a niece or even a grand niece. (5:4) We are not to imagine that Adam & Eve had only a few descendants at this point in time:

Note 2. Lamech (4:1-16)

The text briefly records the advancements in civilization in 4:17 & 4:21-22, but these advancements “have done nothing to stem the tide of sin & death”¹¹⁹ The increasing spiritual and moral defection is plain to see. In one breath the text moves “from unrepentant Cain to defiant Lamech.”¹²⁰

(a) Note the sin of polygamy¹²¹ that contravenes Gen 2:20-24. Some think God condones polygamy because He legislates protection for the women & children of polygamous relationships in the Law (Exodus 21:10 Deut 21:15-16). But the following ought to be taken into account:

- (1) God’s original intention (Gen 2:20-24) - one man, one woman.
- (2) The first mention of polygamy is in the context of a narrative describing escalating sin (Gen 4:19-24)
- (3) Polygamy always produced pain & sadness. Cf Sarah (Gen 16:5) and Rachael (Gen 30:1-13); Abraham (Gen 21), Gideon (Judges 8:29-9:57), Elkanah (1 Sam 1:6, Lev 18:18); David (2 Sam 11 & 13); Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-8). See Deut 17:17.
- (4) Not everything recorded in the Bible is condoned by the Bible. That men ‘of faith’ practised polygamy (Abraham, David etc) does not justify polygamy. It was a failure on their part – they engaged in it “when they were out of God’s will”.¹²² “What this means for our discussion is that one must look at

¹¹⁸ Merrill F Unger, *Unger’s Old Testament Commentary*, p. 28

¹¹⁹ John H Walton, *Genesis, NIV Application Commentary*, p. 284.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p.278

¹²¹ There are many recorded cases of polygamy in the O.T.: Esau Gen 28 & Gen 36; Jacob Gen 30; Gideon Judges 8; Caleb 1 Chron 2:46; Elkanah 1 Sam 1; David 1 Sam 18:27; 1 Sam 25, 2 Sam 3:2-5, 2 Sam 5:13-16, 1 Chron 14; Solomon 1 Kings 11, Rehoboam 2 Chron 11; King Ahab 1 Kings 20; King Jehoiachin 2 Kings 24; Ashur 1 Chron 4; Shalmaneser 1 Chron 8; Aijah 2 Chron 13; King Jehoram 2 Chron 21; Jehoida 2 Chron 24; Belshazzar Daniel 5.

¹²² Stanley A Ellisen, *Divorce & Remarriage in the Church*, p. 116

the more 'principle-like' statements about a topic for guidance....rather than the exceptions in history (e.g. permissions, extreme circumstances). The statements of principle about polygamy, - like the statements of principle about divorce – indicate the behavioural norm we are to follow.”¹²³

(5) Christ taught that taking an additional wife to an already existing marriage is adultery, not polygamy (Matt 19:3-9). The point Christ makes is simple enough: if the original marriage still stands, then a second marriage is sinful adultery (not acceptable polygamy).

(6) The Law God gave about polygamy was “emergency legislation” and was given to protect against greater abuse – so Matt 19:8-9. See Ezra 10.¹²⁴ The Law was only applied “if”¹²⁵ a man and woman had wrongly gotten themselves into a polygamous relationship.

(7) Israel's Kings were not to practice polygamy (Deut 17:17). See (Matt 19:3-9, Romans 7:3; 1 Cor 7:2; 1 Tim 3:2).¹²⁶

(b) The story of Lamech is a vital record of the increasing sinfulness of man, not only ethically (e.g. polygamy) but socially – Lamech is a violent man that sets the scene for 6:11-12. In his song, Lamech celebrates his disrespect and disdain for human life and “vividly portrays the development of the brutality and violence that characterised the Cainites.”¹²⁷ Note the NIV margin: “I will kill...”¹²⁸. At any rate, it is the excessive revenge that catches our attention – Lamech will not hesitate to kill a man for wounding him, and if provoked he would even kill a child.¹²⁹ (cf Exodus 21:25).

Note 3. The Sons of God (6:1-4)

This is one of the most difficult passages, perhaps even the “thorniest in Old Testament interpretation”.¹³⁰ However one interprets the details, the point of the story is that sin is on the rampage, spreading and intensifying as it goes. The story prepares us for Gen 6:6-7.

It seems that the interpretation of verses 1-8 hinges upon the definition of three key terms; ‘the sons of God’ (verses 2,4); ‘the daughters of men’ (verses 2,4); and the ‘Nephilim’ (verse 4).” Scholars offer four views:

(a) Occult Sexual Activity

In this view the ‘sons of God’ are fallen angelic beings (demons) and the ‘daughters of men’ is simply a Hebraism for human women.¹³¹ The sin involved fallen angels sexually engaging human females (6:2) and children were born of these unions (6:4).

¹²³ Glenn Miller, The Christian Think-Tank, www.Christian-thinktank.com (July 23, 1999)

¹²⁴ This is an extreme situation. The nation of Israel is re-establishing itself back in the Promised Land after 70 years of exile on Babylon. The combined infiltration of foreign language, culture, values, ethics & political philosophies could possibly have jeopardised the rebuilding of Israel's national identity and her political security. Such an extreme situation is the background for this call for the mass divorcing of foreign wives.

¹²⁵ (note both passages are contingencies and start with “if” Exodus 21:10 Deut 21:15-16).

¹²⁶ Although this requirement is only made of an elder, the believers are to follow the elder's example and live like their leaders (2 Thess 3:7; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3)

¹²⁷ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, p. 133.

¹²⁸ The future tense is favoured by Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, p. and Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis* (NICOT) p.

¹²⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis* (NICOT) p. 241. But there is some debate over whether this term refers to a child, or whether it refers to any young man up to the age of 40. should be translated young man

¹³⁰ John H Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary, p. 291

¹³¹ *The Revised Good News Bible* puts this view clearly in its translation of Gen 6:2: “...some of the heavenly beings saw that the young women were beautiful, so they took the ones they liked....” And in its translation of Gen 6:4 it has: “In those days, and even later, there were giants on the earth who were descendants of human women and the heavenly beings”

Liberals accept this interpretation but say it was incorporated into Genesis from Ancient Near Eastern myth (e.g. Skinner, S.R.Driver). Conservative scholars, who hold to this view, would say that the passage teaches angelic cohabitation with human women, and that it is a true record of a “catastrophic outburst of occultism.”¹³² Some conservative scholars think Satan got demons to materialise, engaged women and produced a hybrid race so that there would be no possibility of a ‘seed of the woman’ eventuating because the human race was lost to these hybrids. Some think there would have been no woman free of demons – thus there would be no woman available to carry the Christ child. Others think Satan achieved such a corruption that God would be forced to wipe out the human race creating a situation where there would be no need for a Promised Man and no chance of one either.

Commentators who hold these views include: Gerhard Von Rad¹³³, W.A.Van Gemmeren¹³⁴, James M Boice¹³⁵, Charles C Ryrie¹³⁶, E.H. Merrill¹³⁷, John F MacArthur¹³⁸, F.F.Bruce¹³⁹, Lewis Sperry Chafer¹⁴⁰, Donald Grey Barnhouse¹⁴¹, J. Carl Laney¹⁴² Robert P. Lightner¹⁴³, Ronald Barclay Allen¹⁴⁴, Gordon J. Wenham¹⁴⁵, Bruce Vawter¹⁴⁶, John Phillips¹⁴⁷. It is also the view of the Septuagint (the early Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures), and 1 Enoch (the Pseudepigraphal book) – these both show an early date for this view). Others scholars feel they cannot be certain but believe that this view or the Intermarriage of the Sethites (godly line) and Cainites (ungodly line) are the most likely. These scholars include: Derek Kidner¹⁴⁸, Herbert Wolf¹⁴⁹, Victor P. Hamilton¹⁵⁰, Wm. La Sor, Fred Bush, David L. Hubbard¹⁵¹, H.C. Thiessen¹⁵², John J. Davis¹⁵³.

(b) Ungodly Cainites Marry Godly Sethites.

Notice the contrast in this view. Here the ‘sons of God’ are men from the godly line of Seth and the ‘daughters of men’ are the women from the ungodly line of Cain. This is the sin of the unequal yoke. The sin was serious because the intermarriage contaminated the godly line & accelerated sinful behaviour to an all time low. Perhaps Satan engineered this amalgamation in order to totally corrupt the entire human race to the point where God would be obligated to wipe them out in judgment, thus eliminating the need for the Promised Man of Gen 3:15 (thus avoiding his own defeat). Alternatively Satan may simply have wanted to corrupt the entire race so that there was no righteous seed left through

¹³² Merril F. Unger, *Unger's Old Testament Commentary*, p. 36

¹³³ Gerhad Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 109-112.

¹³⁴ W.A. Van Gemmeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4”, *Westminster Theological Journal* Vol 43, 1981pp20-48

¹³⁵ James M. Boice, *Genesis* Vol 1, p244-249

¹³⁶ Charles C Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p.159-160; Ryrie Study Bible note on Gen 6:2

¹³⁷ E.H. Merrill, *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, p.23

¹³⁸ John F MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible*, notes on Gen 6:2

¹³⁹ F.F.Bruce, *Answers To Questions*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 2 p 114-117

¹⁴¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, Vol 1p. 47

¹⁴² J. Carl Laney, *New Bible Companion*, p. 14

¹⁴³ Robert P. Lightner, *A Survey of Evangelical Theology*, p.146

¹⁴⁴ Ronald Barclay Allen, *Genesis*, Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Commentary, p.17

¹⁴⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 140

¹⁴⁶ Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis*, p.110 – Like S.R.Driver, *Genesis* (International Critical Commentary) & others (Skinner, Delitzsch), Vawter declares this is the meaning of the text but that it is a false record imported into the text from myths in the Ancient Near East.

¹⁴⁷ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis*, p. 79-81.

¹⁴⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p. 84

¹⁴⁹ Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, p. 97-100

¹⁵⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis* NICOT, p. 263-265.

¹⁵¹ La Sor, Bush, Hubbard, *An Old Testament Survey* p. 82

¹⁵² H.C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 139-140

¹⁵³ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 113-114).

whom God could produce the righteous Promised Man, who would (in an act of Righteous Divine Judgment) deliver the death blow to Satan.

Commentators who hold this view include: Augustine¹⁵⁴, Millard J. Erickson¹⁵⁵, Erich Sauer¹⁵⁶, Wayne Grudem¹⁵⁷, J. Dwight Pentecost¹⁵⁸, J. Barton Payne¹⁵⁹, H. C. Leupold¹⁶⁰, G.Ch Aalders¹⁶¹, David L. Smith¹⁶², John Murray¹⁶³, Renald M Showers¹⁶⁴, Paul Enns¹⁶⁵. Others scholars feel they cannot be certain but believe that this view or the fallen angel view are the most likely. These scholars include: Derek Kidner¹⁶⁶, Herbert Wolf¹⁶⁷, Victor P. Hamilton¹⁶⁸, Wm. La Sor, Fred Bush, David L. Hubbard¹⁶⁹, H.C. Thiessen¹⁷⁰, John J. Davis¹⁷¹

(c) Believers Marrying Unbelievers

This view is quite similar to but distinct from the Sethite/Cainite view. Here the 'sons of God' are godly men from either line & the 'daughters of men' are ungodly women from either line. These mixed marriages would have resulted in a wholesale sell out on the part of the godly line, such that there was no longer any restraining influence in the world & thus sinful behaviour accelerated to an all time low. The reasons and results would be the same for the Sethite/Cainite view.

(d) Tyrannical Rulers took wives indiscriminately

In this view the 'sons of God' are tyrannical rulers of the day and the 'daughters of men' are women of the common classes. The sin that was committed is either polygamy, in which the rulers take as many women as they choose to be their wives, or, it involved the "right of the first night"¹⁷² in which rulers take women on their wedding night (before the consummation of their marriage) & sexually exploit them (to show their absolute, despotic power). A variation on this view argues that these leaders were demon-controlled¹⁷³, because to see the sons of God as rulers only, does not seem to do justice to other ancient Near Eastern literature which suggests that more powerful rulers are involved.¹⁷⁴ "We know from Daniel 10:13,20 that the great kings and kingdoms of the earth had 'princes' behind them, powerful spirits.....we also know from Ezekiel 28:11-19 that the King of Tyre may have been associated....with Satan.." ¹⁷⁵

¹⁵⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 5, p. 303

¹⁵⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 443

¹⁵⁶ Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 68

¹⁵⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* p.413-414

¹⁵⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 42

¹⁵⁹ J. Barton Payne, *A Theology of the Older Testament*, p. 204-208.

¹⁶⁰ H.C. Leupold, *An Exposition of Genesis* p.

¹⁶¹ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, p. 153-154

¹⁶² David L. Smith, *With Wilful Intent: A Theology of Sin*, p. 166

¹⁶³ John H Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, p. 243-249

¹⁶⁴ Renald M Showers, *What on Earth is God Doing?* P. 24-25

¹⁶⁵ Paul Ens, *Moody Handbook on Theology*, p. 45-46

¹⁶⁶ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p. 84

¹⁶⁷ Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, p. 97-100

¹⁶⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis NICOT*, p. 263-265.

¹⁶⁹ La Sor, Bush, Hubbard, *An Old Testament Survey* p. 82

¹⁷⁰ H.C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 139-140

¹⁷¹ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 113-114).

¹⁷² John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary, p. 293 Walton traces the practice of the 'right of the first night' to the Gilgamesh Epic in Ancient Near Eastern literature.

¹⁷³ Allen P. Ross, *Genesis*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p36

¹⁷⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 182

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

The point of this periscope is simply to show that, as sin began in the individual (Gen 3) and then moved into the entire family (Gen 4), so now it has become entrenched in the leaders of society. This periscope describes a brazen display of serious sin and indicates the depths to which society has plummeted, and the degree to which sin has taken control. Instead of standing as guardians of the good & models of the general ordinances of God for human conduct, these leaders abandoned their sacred trust & facilitated society's wholesale sell-out to evil. From Satan's perspective he is simply extending his evil hold on man and intensifying it at the same time.

Commentators who hold this view include: Meredith G. Kline¹⁷⁶, Claus Westermann¹⁷⁷; Walter C Kaiser¹⁷⁸, L.S. Schraeder¹⁷⁹, John H. Walton¹⁸⁰, Manfred E. Kober¹⁸¹ Commentators who hold the demonised-ruler view include: Allen P. Ross¹⁸², David J. A. Clines¹⁸³

Any attempt to come to a conclusion as to what this exceptionally problematic passage of Scripture means, must be tempered with the fact that very capable evangelical scholars can be found supporting each possible interpretation. This in itself must indicate the degree of difficulty involved in exegeting this paragraph. Each of the views that have been presented above are possible. Whatever view is taken, it must "adequately account for (a) the phrase "sons of God"; (b) the flood, (c) the progeny of the sons of God, (d) the phrase "the daughters of men", (e) ...Jude 6... & 2 Peter 2:4-5."¹⁸⁴ In addition it must also (f) reflect the immediate context & literary genre of Genesis, (g) reflect the totality of the weight of Biblical theology, & (h) be culturally appropriate.

Remember this: we do not need to come to a firm decision on the exact nature of this sin in order to understand the drift of the narrative: something terrible has happened that contributes to the dreadful violence that warrants a universal flood.

Note 4. A Violent World (6:5-13)

It has been approx. 1600 years since God made Adam and things have been steadily deteriorating. Sin has now reached avalanche proportions and it appears the "race has now sinned beyond recall."¹⁸⁵

(a) What the Lord saw. (Gen 6:5,11-12)

(1) He saw unrestrained evil (6:5,11-12)

The earth is said to have become 'corrupt' in God's sight (6:11,12). The word 'corrupt' indicates a state of ruin. Clothes get ruined (Jer13:7). Utensils get ruined (Jer 18:4). Places can be ruined, like the land of Egypt was ruined after the plague of gnats (Ex 8:24). But here we are told that the whole earth is "marred, spoiled, injured or ruined."¹⁸⁶ It has been wrecked by man's inconceivable evil. It no

¹⁷⁶ Meredith G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1-4" Westminster Theological Journal Vol 24, 1962, p. 187-204

¹⁷⁷ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, Vol 1. p. 363-383.

¹⁷⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 80-81

¹⁷⁹ L.S. Schraeder, *Genesis*, Liberty Bible Commentary, p. 29-30

¹⁸⁰ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary, p. 292-294.

¹⁸¹ Manfred E. Kober, "Sons of God in Genesis 6: Demons, Degenerates, Despots?" (Faith Baptist Bible College)

¹⁸² Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 181-183

¹⁸³ David J.A. Clines, "The Significance of the Sons of God in Gen 6:1-4", JSOT Vol 13, 1979 p. 34-35.

¹⁸⁴ Robert P. Lightner, *A Survey of Evangelical Theology*, p. 146

¹⁸⁵ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis*, p. 82

longer serves the purpose for which it was made.

The earth was 'full of violence' (6:11). The word 'violence' translates the Hebrew 'hamas'. In Hebrew the word refers to a cold-blooded, unscrupulous & brutal violence that ruthlessly breaches the rights of others. It is motivated by greed and hate.¹⁸⁷ In that world there was no sense of right and wrong. There was no ethic. People lived their lives by expedience. It was a vicious, cruel place, pulsing with disrespect & every shade of violent & abusive behaviour. It is not surprising therefore that, after the flood, one of the first things God establishes is the law of capital punishment (Gen 9:4-6) as a measure to prevent such rampant violence from surfacing again.

(2) He saw universal evil (6:5,11-12)

The earth was 'full' of violence (Gen 6:11), and that 'all the people' on earth had corrupted their ways (6:12). Noah is the only exception. He is the only righteous man left (7:1). Wickedness was endemic to the human race itself. The Lord will therefore 'wipe mankind' from the face of the earth (6:7,13).

(3) He saw ingrained evil

The Lord saw that "every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time." (Gen 6:5).¹⁸⁸ It was man's heart that was the problem. He practised evil because he was evil.

(4) He saw unrelenting evil

The world had gone berserk. There were no checks or balances. Neither was there any relief from this sickening infestation - "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart...was only evil...all the time" (Gen 6:5). This was "not just a spasmodic lapse"¹⁸⁹ – evil had become the way of life.

¹⁸⁶ David M Fouts, Genesis, The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study, p. 59

¹⁸⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis, p. 171 – citing the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol 4 p.482

¹⁸⁸ This verse is often taken as a support for the doctrine of Total Depravity. The Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity means that sin has affected every area of man's being – his mind, his emotions, his will. In this sense depravity is 'total', i.e. sin has extended to and affected every part of man's being (Jer 17:9). It is also 'total' in that sin has affected everyone without exception (Rom 3:9,23). Total depravity does not mean that every man is as bad as other men (Luke 18:9-12) or that man is always as bad as he can be. Man can still choose to do good (Rom 2:14-15, Luke 6:33, 11:13) and God is cognizant of the good man does (Rom 2:16) and will judge him accordingly (Rom 2:16, Rev 20:12-13), but man's goodness is never enough to make a man acceptable to God (Gal 3:11, Romans 3:12). Even the good man does, does not spring from faith in God (Rom 14:23), is not motivated out of a love for God (Matt 22:37), and does not conform to God's perfect standard (Rom 3:23).

¹⁸⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis, p. 273.

(b) What the Lord felt (Gen 6:6)

(1) He felt genuine grief

This is not to say that God grieved because He had miscalculated, or made a mistake, in making man (Numbers 23:19, 1 Sam 15:29). God is perfect in all His ways (Psalm 18:30). This is the grief God feels because He must now bring cataclysmic judgment on the man He made & loves. God never made man with the purpose of judging him in this way. God simply feels the deepest regret and distress over what must happen (cf Matt 23:37).¹⁹⁰

(2) He felt intense grief

“...His heart was filled with pain...” (Gen 6:6). See Gen 34:7 where the same word is used. God is deeply & radically affected by man’s rebellion. And though God loves righteousness and hates wickedness (Psalm 45:7), He never delights in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:27,32; 33:11).

(c) What the Lord did (Gen 6:3, 7,13)

(1) He pronounced judgment (6:3,7,13)

The exegesis of Gen 6:3 is “fraught with problems”¹⁹¹ with “almost every word in this statement [having] been the subject of controversy.”¹⁹² This verse has primarily been understood two ways:

[a] The human spirit that God placed in human beings at creation would not remain in man forever – man was doomed to die. His life span would now only be 120 years.¹⁹³

[b] The Holy Spirit would not contend with (‘strive with’, ‘plead with’, ‘give last chances to’ and possibly ‘be despised by’¹⁹⁴) man forever. God’s patience would one day come to an end. Man’s corruption (see NIV margin) is such that judgment will fall on man within 120 years. This seems to be the more preferable view: (1) It fits with what we know of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit; (2) it fits with Noah’s preaching a message of righteousness [2 Peter 2:5] which is

¹⁹⁰ Robert B Hughes & J. Carl Laney, *New Bible Companion*, p. 14

¹⁹¹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, p. 113

¹⁹² Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis*, p.141. The four major issues centre on the meaning of the words “spirit” (does this refer to ‘the human spirit’ or ‘the Holy Spirit?’); “contend” (does this mean ‘strive with’ or ‘remain with’ or ‘be despised by’, or ‘protect?’); “corrupt” (does this mean ‘mortal’ or ‘corrupt?’); and “one hundred and twenty years” (does this refer to ‘a change in man’s allotted lifespan’, or, is this ‘the time left before the flood’ ?)

¹⁹³ The problem with seeing the 120 years referring to man’s life span is that it doesn’t match with the longevity recorded in Genesis 11 where it is said that Shem lived 600 years, Arphaxad lived 438 years, Shelah lived 433 years and Eber lived 464 years. G J. Wenham has suggested that there could have been a gradual reduction in longevity over time (Wenham, *Genesis*, p. 142). Further, it is hard to see how reducing man’s life span to 120 years can effectively prevent a further development of wickedness – much wickedness can be accomplished in a far shorter period. In addition, it is also difficult to see fresh significance in the words “My spirit (i.e. ‘breath of life’) will not remain in man forever” in this view. After all, there is nothing new in that – it has been true ever since the fall.

¹⁹⁴ See *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, p.424 In this view, the Holy Spirit was ‘humiliated’ or ‘despised’ by man’s continual rejection of His convicting ministry in which the Holy Spirit ‘pleaded with’ men to repentance, warning them of a coming judgment (cf John 16:8) through Noah’s preaching of righteousness (cf 2 Peter 2:5). In this sense the Holy Spirit contended with man in his rebellion.

probably understood to be a call to righteousness; (3) Genesis 6:3 must be understood in the light of the context which is leading up to & providing reasons for the coming flood. It is therefore much more likely that the Lord is pronouncing the coming of a judgment of death which will affect all men at the same time (i.e. in the flood), rather than men dying one by one when they eventually reach 120 years of age. Henri Blocher says this view fits better with 1 Peter 3:19f where the Spirit who did the preaching is again in view.¹⁹⁵

(2) He delayed judgment (6:3)

The God of the Bible is patient beyond our imagination (Ex 34:6, Num 14:18, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Psalm 145:8). Although God has decided that the wickedness of the pre-flood world must be dealt with in judgment, He sees fit to mercifully suspend the judgment for 120 years (Gen 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20). God's delays are consistent with his righteousness (cf Gen 15:14-16) and his compassion (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Tim 2:4). For this reason, when those under sentence of judgment repent and turn from their sin, God readily 'changes His mind' and relents of the judgment He has pronounced. There are so many instances of God doing this in the Old Testament (Exodus 32:9-10,14; Jonah 3:10, 4:2; Jeremiah 18:7-8; Ezekiel 18:25,27,32) that we can be sure it is the characteristic approach of a loving and compassionate God. "God does not come out of nowhere and lower the boom on unsuspecting people who had no chance...."¹⁹⁶ – His delays are full of warnings and pleadings as He contends with sinful man.

(3) He executed judgment

"Through this story the author seeks to express in a most terrifying way that human sin brings God's judgment."¹⁹⁷

Note the following six features of the flood:

[a] Gigantic Proportions (Gen 7:11)

[b] Prolonged Duration (Gen 7:11; Gen 8:13-14)

[c] Devastating Effect (Gen 6:7,13,17; 7:19-23)

[d] Universal Scope (Gen 6:7,12-13,17; 7:4,19,21,23; 9:11)

The minimal evangelical position is that wherever the world had been corrupted by human sin, that area of the world was visited with Divine destruction, and that destruction included the obliteration of all human life and animal life except that which had been protected in the Ark. "The text repeatedly emphasises that the catastrophe annihilated

¹⁹⁵ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, p. 205

¹⁹⁶ Anthony Evans, *Our God is Awesome*, p. 245

¹⁹⁷ William S. La Sor, D.A. Hubbard, F.W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 84

all human and animal life on earth.”¹⁹⁸ This means that the “universality of the flood would be certain even if the flood was quite local.”¹⁹⁹ The end result, however, is quite unequivocal and non-negotiable: by the time God was done with His judgment, there were only 8 survivors of the Noah family (Gen 9:18-19). For some evangelicals “all the universality demanded is that which was necessary for the destruction of the human race.”²⁰⁰ For others, the universality included not only the destruction of human and animal life, but the cleansing of the entire planet with the waters that had been separated in Creation week (cf 7:11 with Gen 1:2,6-9, & 2 Peter 3:6) which required a global flood and a return of the planet to the watery chaos of Gen 1:2. Only in this way can the flood be an appropriate picture of the coming judgment of fire which will engulf the “present heavens and earth” (2 Peter 3:7).

(e) Divine Origin (Gen 6:1-7; 6:12-13,17; 7:4,11)

(f) Unique Occurrence (Gen 8:21, 9:11, 15-16)

The sign of the rainbow is in itself fascinating. “The battle imagery suggested by the bow may imply that the most recent battle fought and won against evil was now over.”²⁰¹

Note 5. The sin of Ham

(a) The Occasion of Ham’s sin: Drunkenness (9:20-21)

Noah’s shame was not that he drank wine, but that he drank to excess & thereby lost self-control that resulted in immodesty (cf Eph 5:18).²⁰² In view of 3:6-7, this nakedness must be seen as a shameful thing.²⁰³

(b) The Nature of Ham’s sin: Treachery (9:22-23)

The text simply reads: “Ham...saw his father’s nakedness” (9:22), but from the curse placed on Ham’s son Canaan, we learn that Ham had done something significantly wrong (9:25). So far in Genesis, curses are only distributed on occasions of significant wrong doing (cf 3:14, 17, 4:11). There are two main views about the nature of Ham’s sin:

(1) Sexual violation.

In this view the phrase “saw his father’s nakedness” is taken euphemistically to refer to an incestuous homosexual act. See Lev 20:17.

¹⁹⁸ G. Ch Aalders, Genesis, p. 191

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ W.H. Griffith Thomas, Genesis, p.78

²⁰¹ David M. Fouts, Genesis, The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study, p. 61

²⁰² Notes on Genesis, Dr T. Constable, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004. p.88

²⁰³ John Sailhamer,

(2) Treachery.

Having looked lewdly²⁰⁴ & “with satisfaction”²⁰⁵ on his father’s nakedness Ham then spoke derisively about Noah to his brothers outside (9:22). It seems to be a case of an attempted coup for family leadership²⁰⁶. The curse on Cain suggests a judgment in kind. Having dishonoured his father, Ham opened himself up to “the oracle against his own family’s honour.”²⁰⁷ This explains the both the nature and severity of Noah’s curse.

(c) The Result of Ham’s sin: The Curse & the Blessings (9:22-28)

(1) The Curse on Canaan:

On learning of Ham’s breach of faith, Noah delivered an oracle (or prophecy) cursing Canaan, Ham’s son (9:22).

The curse on Canaan (9:25,26,27) was specifically restricted to the sons of Canaan and not the other Hamites (10:6) who had good success in their time, especially under Nimrod (Gen 10:8-12). The curse came to fruition as a punishment for the Canaanites disgraceful lifestyles,²⁰⁸ not because they were racially inferior.²⁰⁹ “Ham sinned as a son and was punished in his son”²¹⁰ The curse was fulfilled from Israel’s conquest of Canaan at the time of Joshua (Gen 15:6, Joshua 9:21,23,27; Judges 1:28,30,33,35), continuing down through Israel’s United Kingdom under David & Solomon (1 Kings 9:20-21, 1 Chron 22:2, 2 Chron 2:17-18). The complete subjugation of Canaan is not recorded in the Old Testament but occurs in the defeat of Carthage in 146 BC and the final expunging of Canaanites in 63 BC by the Romans.²¹¹ “The Canaanites long ago became extinct; the curse, therefore, cannot be applied to anyone today.”²¹²

Note 6. The Tower of Babel

Like all events in Genesis, this is history & is therefore told as a historical event. The New Testament refers to this as a historical event (Acts 17:26, Rev.17:5,18).

(a) Babel: An Act of Blatant Defiance

In defiance against God’s command²¹³ to take dominion and “fill the earth” (9:1,7 cf Gen 1:28) Noah’s descendants came to Shinar²¹⁴ (9:2) and built a city so that they would not be

²⁰⁴ “Ham immodestly looked” – David L. Smith, *With Wilful Intent*, p. 167; “Ham’s focus was probably on his father’s privates.” David M. Fouts, *Genesis, Bible Knowledge Key Word Studies*, p. 61

²⁰⁵ Charles C Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, n.9:22, p. 19

²⁰⁶ James B Jordan, “*Rebellion, Tyranny & Dominion in the Book of Genesis*” pp 47-52. The nature of the curse condemns the Canaanites to the “lowest” political category (9:25) – they will be slaves to their brothers (i.e. Ham’s other sons).

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ “...slaves in relationship to Israel. This did not immediately stem from Noah’s condemnation but rather as a judgment upon them for the licentious lives....The prediction rather *anticipated* the sinfulness of those who came from the Canaanite line and *prophesied* that their sins would be judged by servitude.” John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, p. 37 - emphasis mine.

²⁰⁹ “...it is questionable whether the Canaanites were black.” John F Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, p.37

²¹⁰ James M. Boice, *Genesis*, Vol 1, p.321

²¹¹ J. Barton Payne, *The Encyclopaedia of Biblical Prophecy*, #17, p.159

²¹² Charles C Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, p.19 n 9:25

²¹³ John H. Walton views God’s word to mankind to “fill the earth” (Gen 9:1,7) as a ‘blessing’ and not as a ‘command’. If it was not a command, it could not disobeyed. Therefore, for Walton, the building of Babel is not an act of disobedience to God’s instruction to ‘fill the earth’ per se. Neither does he see the business of man ‘making a name’ for himself as necessarily an act of pride, though he concedes

scattered over the earth (Gen 11:4). The sin was not in the building of the city per se, but in the attempt to have the entire race stay and live in that city in defiance of the command to spread out and fill the earth (9:1,7).²¹⁵

(b) Babel: a Place of Divine Judgment

(1) The Need for the Judgment (11:6)

Things 'post-flood' are steadily deteriorating, and had God not intervened, would have become just as bad as things were in the 'pre-flood' period when "every inclination of the imagination of man's heart was only evil all the time." (Gen 6:5)

(2) The Nature of the Judgment (11:7)

The Nature of the Judgment: 'confuse' (11:7) translates the Hebrew word 'balal' meaning to 'mix' or 'mingle'. It is used of mixing cakes, or of mixing flour with oil (Ex 29:40, Lev 2:5, 14:10).²¹⁶

(3) The Impact of the Judgment (11:8-9)

What holds people together in community is culture & the core of culture is common language.²¹⁷ Without the ability to communicate goes the ability to co-operate and the possibility of community disintegrates. The confusion of language at Babel triggered the inevitable division of mankind into nations (cf Gen 10:25).

that "perhaps the builders were proud" (p.374) (Genesis, NIV Application Commentary, p. p374-375). Walton's main contention is that the word 'fill' does not imply the need to 'spread out'. "The earth", he says, "is no fuller when people spread out" (p.375). However, his arguments are not satisfying. It is not simply that there was only one thing wrong with the Babel project as Walton seems to insist. There were several things awry - as there usually is when sin reaches these proportions. One is the purpose of the tower. Another is this refusal to disperse throughout the earth. In response to Walton's comments: (1) The word 'fill' in 9:1 (and its extrapolation in 9:7) must refer to a steady (albeit natural) dispersion throughout the world, because (a) the word 'fill' has "a spatial signification" & refers to the act of having "a quantity of space filled with a mass or collection in a container or contained area" [J. Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew O.T., Logos Research Systems Inc, Oak Harbour]; (b) the instruction to fill the earth in 9:1, 7 is the very reason why "men moved eastward" (11:2) in dispersion in the first place; (d) The use of the word 'fill' in Gen 1:22 indicates that fish were to be dispersed throughout the waters of the world, and in Gen 6:13 the word 'fill' means that violence had spread everywhere on the earth. (e) contra Walton, the earth would indeed be 'fuller' when the people spread out - in the same way a cancer patient's body is 'full' of cancer when a tumour metastasises & spreads through the body. The word 'fill' correctly refers to extent as much as to volume (cf Exodus 10:6); (2) God's words to mankind in Gen 9:1& 7 are to be understood as containing both a blessing and a command. It is not one or the other. This command, itself an echo of Gen 1:28 where the command forms an integral component of the conditional nature of both the Adamic (Gen 1:28), and the Noachic covenants (Gen 9:1). Interestingly enough most commentators understand the term "fill the earth" as a command (John Davis, Paradise to Prison, p. 144,145,146,148; Derek Kidner, Genesis TOTC, p. 100; Allen P. Ross, Genesis, Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 44; Merrill F Unger, Genesis, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 43, 51,52; Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis, NICOT, p. 353; Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis, p. 192, 194, 240;

²¹⁴ "the plain in Shinar (11:2) is the fertile plain of Babylonia (modern Iraq) that lies between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers....Mesopotamia was first called Sumer, then called Sumer and Akkad, and then Babylonia." J. Carl Laney, R. B. Hughes, The New Bible Companion, p. 16. "The area was an exceptionally fertile area with plenty of water for irrigation. It would require little dependence on God" Merrill F Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 51

²¹⁵ Hugo Gressman, The Tower of Babel, p.3. "...it was the building of the city, and not the tower per se, that provoked the Divine displeasure." See also Victor P. Hamilton, Genesis, NICOT, p. 356; See John J Davis, Paradise to Prison, p. 146 "The Lord did not react against the building of the city, but against the wicked motives for building it."; See also Allen P. Ross, "Studies in the Book of Genesis: Part IV: The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9", Bibliotheca Sacra, April-June 1981

²¹⁶ Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 52

²¹⁷ Alva J McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 48

[a] Different Languages

As far as Scripture is concerned, this explains how there are so many different languages in the world. While the main language groups are very different from each other, the fact that human beings can learn these different languages shows that there is some linguistic commonality in the human race

[b] Different Nations

From Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, different language groups developed into communities and, as they settled and claimed their respective land areas, they became nations. The One True God is still the God of all these nations (Romans 3:29, Acts 17:26-29) although, from the time of Babel, the nations do not acknowledged Him as the One True God, and develop their own cultural religions in the dreadful tradition of Nimrod. God is not localised, tribalized or culturized – God is the God of all the races (Gen 9) & all the nations (Gen 11).²¹⁸ One day the nations of the earth will stand before Him in the judgment (Matt 25:31-46).

[c] Different Races

This division of man probably explains the whole phenomena of ethnicity. Different races (better, people groups²¹⁹) have different appearances. Evolutionists assume that these characteristics developed over many thousands of years as the gene pool enlarged through the exceptionally tedious process of random mutation. The Creationist assumes that the human race started with a very large gene pool, but as the race divided (forced by the language problem), the breeding pool was significantly reduced, and as a result ethnic characteristics appeared. These were further accentuated by climate, local environment, and other local factors. The important point, from the creationist perspective, is that ethnic characteristics developed because of a reduced gene pool, not from new genes arising through mutation (evolution).

[d] Different religions

²¹⁸ George W Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions, p. 107-108

²¹⁹ We speak of different races, but Scripture indicates only one race – the human race (Acts 17:26). Within this one race there are various “people groups” who have distinct characteristics. But the unity of the race can be seen in the fact that people groups can interbreed and still produce fertile offspring. This indicates that the biological differences between races cannot be that great.

GENESIS 12-15

Note 1. The Call of Abraham

(a) The First Call (Acts 7:2 Gen 11:31)

1: The original call came to Abraham when he was in Ur (Acts 7:2). The call included the directive to leave his father's country, people and house. But see Gen 11:31.

2: Abraham came from an idolatrous community (Josh 24:4)

3: Abraham was the father of the Hebrew people, but Moses becomes the father of the Hebrew nation (Mosaic Covenant). The Mosaic Covenant changed Israel from a people to a nation galvanised by their own *law*, their own *language* and their own *land*.

(b) The Second Call (Gen 12:1-3)

1: This call came to Abraham in Haran (12:4).

2: The promise included the following:

(1) Geographical Blessing (12:1)

(2) National Blessing (12:2a, 3a)

(3) Personal Blessing (12:2b-c)

(4) Spiritual Blessing (12:3c)

Note 2. A Culture with covenants

Note 3: Covenant Structures

Covenants were made when the interested parties stated the terms of the agreement, took a verbal oath of intention, recited the penalty if the covenant was broken, and formally ratified the covenant - making sure to provide an enduring sign (like a pile of stones Gen 31:44-46) that would be an ongoing reminder of the covenant that had been made.

(a) **Covenants could be bilateral agreements.** In these cases two parties formed the covenant together, prescribing the terms and enacting the covenant formalities together.

(b) **Covenants could also be unilateral agreements.** In these cases one party alone prescribed the terms of the covenant, and that one party alone enacted the formalities of the covenant on the understanding that fulfilment of the covenant depended entirely and only on the one making it.²²⁰ In these cases one of the participants is not an equal partner in the making of the covenant, though he would be a participant or recipient²²¹ of that covenant.

(c) **Covenant Ratification** took various forms. Sometimes the covenant was made by exchanging sandals (Ruth 4:7-12), exchanging salt (Lev 2:13, Numbers 18:19, 2 Chron 13:5), and sometimes by participating in a covenant meal (Genesis 26:30-31; Gen 31:43-47). Sometimes covenants were made by swearing with a raised hand (Genesis 14:22-24, Ezra 10:19, Ezek 17:18).²²² The most serious form of covenant was the blood covenant. A blood covenant was ratified by sacrificing an animal. The shedding of the animal's blood indicated the seriousness and strength of the covenant – it was so binding that the penalty for breaking it by either party was death. The penalty for breaking the terms of a blood covenant was death – the shedding of the culprit's blood.²²³ (See Jeremiah 34:18-19). Examples of blood covenants in Scripture include the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:1-21), the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 24:7-11) and the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34, Matt 26:27-28, cf Heb 9:15-10:18). The shedding of blood indicated that the blood covenant was as permanent as life itself.²²⁴

The Bible traces the nation of Israel's astonishing resilience and indestructibility to her unique and permanent relationship to God, established in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:1-21). This cannot be stated too clearly. The permanence of Israel's relationship to God and the reason for her existence and her indestructibility is firmly rooted in the terms and the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

²²⁰ " 'Berith' [Hebrew for covenant] necessarily implies two or more parties: but it may happen that from the nature of the case, *its stipulations are binding on only one*. So here, Yahweh alone passes between the pieces, because He alone contracts obligation" J. Skinner, *Genesis*, International Critical Commentary, p. 238.

²²¹ "Abraham was not a participant in the covenant; rather he was a recipient." J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 58

²²² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, pp 56-57.

²²³ "The significance of walking between the pieces of slain animals appears to have been that of a self-maledictory oath – the covenanter swears to be as the animals he passes between if he fails to remain true to his word of the covenant." Jeffrey L Townsend, "Fulfillment of the Land Promise in the Old Testament." *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol 142 # 568, 1985, p. 322. See also J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, p. 97.

²²⁴ See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 57; H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*

Note 4. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15)

(1) A National Covenant.

Note 1: The Covenant was made with Abraham and with his descendants after him (Gen 12:2, 15:4-5, 17:7-8, 26:3-4). The covenant is not made with Ishmael - God will bless Ishmael in certain ways, but the covenant is made with Israel through Isaac alone (Gen 17:20-21). Thus the recipients of this covenant are biological Jews. Paul refers to them as "my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is...the covenants..." (Romans 9:3-5).

Note 2: This does not mean the Abrahamic Covenant is irrelevant to Gentile nations. In fact, Israel was chosen to bless the Gentile nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4).²²⁵ God is the God of the whole earth (Psa 24:1; Gen 1:1-31) and the nations on it (Acts 17:26). God's special redemptive & political blessings would come to the Gentiles, but they would come through the nation of Israel. Gentiles would be blessed as Gentiles²²⁶ through the promises God covenanted to the Jewish nation. In this way the Gentiles are related to the covenants of Israel: they are the recipients, the beneficiaries of God's blessings that are to come through Israel as God's servant, but the Gentiles are not legal parties to the covenant. "The nations are not partners of that covenant; yet they are blessed through Abraham, the covenant partner (Gen 12:3)."²²⁷ Jesus Himself said, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22).

(2) A Unilateral Covenant.

Note 1: Although Abraham was a partner to the covenant (as recipient) he was not an 'equal partner'. He was certainly a partner - he prepared the animals [Gen 15:9-10] and submitted to the sign of the covenant (circumcision) [Gen 17:1-27]. But Abraham was not an equal partner.

Note 2. It is probably better to say Abraham was a recipient of the covenant. He was put into a trance like sleep (Genesis 15:12). God alone would recite the terms and promises of the Covenant (Gen 15:13-16,18-20), and God alone would pass between the cut pieces of the animals (Genesis 15:7), thus committing Himself alone to the fulfilment of those promises in a unilateral covenant. The unilateral covenant depended on God keeping the terms of it, not Abraham.

(3) A Blood Covenant.

Note 1: It is evident this is a blood covenant (Gen 15:9-10, 17). The unusually large number of animals sacrificed (Gen 15:9) indicates the tremendous importance this covenant.²²⁸ When God walked through the pieces of the sacrificed animals (Gen 15:17), he was thereby

²²⁵ We cannot think of God in local, tribal or geographic terms. He is the God of the whole earth. God's purpose is to bring the nations of the world to the knowledge of Himself. God's method is that this will be accomplished through one particular nation – Israel. "This needs to be seen clearly seen and grasped firmly, or else the God of the Old Testament Himself becomes a particularist (Israel's tribal God). This could never be. [If God were] a particularist He would cease to be Elohim, the God of creation and the God of the nations." G.W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions p.89.

²²⁶ They would not need to become Jewish proselytes, but would be blessed as Gentiles.

²²⁷ Rodney J. Decker, "The Church's Relationship to the New Covenant." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:607 July – Sept 1995 p.290-305

²²⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 333

indicating that if He ever reneged on the terms and promises of this covenant, God Himself would have to pay the penalty attached to this covenant & to cease to exist!

(4) A Complex Covenant

Note 1: The Abrahamic Covenant is a complex covenant in that there are a number of promises involved. Some are personal, some national and some universal.

Note 2: As a complex covenant, all the component promises are equally important. In other words promises of material, political, economic and geographic blessing under the covenant can't be minimised just because of the enormous importance of the spiritual blessings. Each component blessing is an integral part of the covenant and the parts cannot be divorced from the whole.²²⁹ In this regard Feinberg argues that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant requires that every single one of the component covenant promises be fulfilled simultaneously.²³⁰ Because the promises and blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant as a complex covenant have never been realised simultaneously in the history of the nation, the fulfilment of the Covenant remains future awaiting that kind of fulfilment.

[5] A Literal Covenant

In the Abrahamic Covenant God made literal promises to a real, literal, historical person (Abraham) and to his real, literal, historical descendants – the nation Israel. Because the promises were made as literal promises, they would be literally fulfilled.

On the personal level Abraham would himself, in space-time history, be literally blessed in every way and he would have a great name. (Gen 24:1).

On the national level, the promises were just as literal and would also be literally fulfilled. Those national promises made to Abraham's descendants included becoming a great nation (literally), having everlasting possession of the Promised Land (literally), and becoming the means of a universal spiritual blessing (literally).

[6] An Unconditional Covenant

Note 1: While there has been considerable discussion among evangelicals as to the conditional/unconditional nature of the covenant with Abraham, on the face of it, it seems that "the Abrahamic Covenant is absolutely conditionless."²³¹ The argument for the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant is critically important to the question of the permanency of Israel's relationship with God.

Note 2: "Replacement theology" argues that the Abrahamic Covenant was conditional & that Israel has forfeited her right to her covenantal relationship with God because of disobedience. For them, *literal Israel* has been replaced by *spiritual Israel* (the Church), & the

²²⁹ John S Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity": Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, ed. John S Feinberg, p. 80.

²³⁰ The future restoration of Israel will have all the promises fulfilled simultaneously (Micah 7:11-20) including the land promise (7:11-13), the land blessings (7:14-15), the subjugation of the nations (7:16-17); the forgiveness of sins (7:18-19).

²³¹ Jacob Jocz, The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny, p.23.

literal blessings have been replaced with *spiritual blessings* the 'inter-national Church' can enjoy. In Replacement Theology, national Israel has no future in God's purposes

Note 3: At this point we simply observe that in the formal making of the covenant (Gen 15:1-21) there are absolutely no conditions stated. This guarantees, ipso facto, an 'eternally secure' and therefore permanent relationship.

[7] An Everlasting Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant would last 'forever'. The everlasting nature of the Abrahamic Covenant is both implicitly deducted and explicitly stated.

(a) Implicit Deduction

God alone prescribed the terms of the Covenant (Gen 12:2-3, 15:4-7, 13-16, 18-21). God alone walked through the pieces of the sacrificed animals, God declared that the Covenant would be fulfilled. He further declared that if He did not fulfil that covenant, He would be obligated to terminate His own existence! Since God is everlasting, He cannot possibly terminate His own existence. Therefore the covenant with Abraham must be everlasting in nature and fulfilment.

(b) Explicit Statement.

The Abrahamic Covenant is explicitly said to be 'everlasting'.

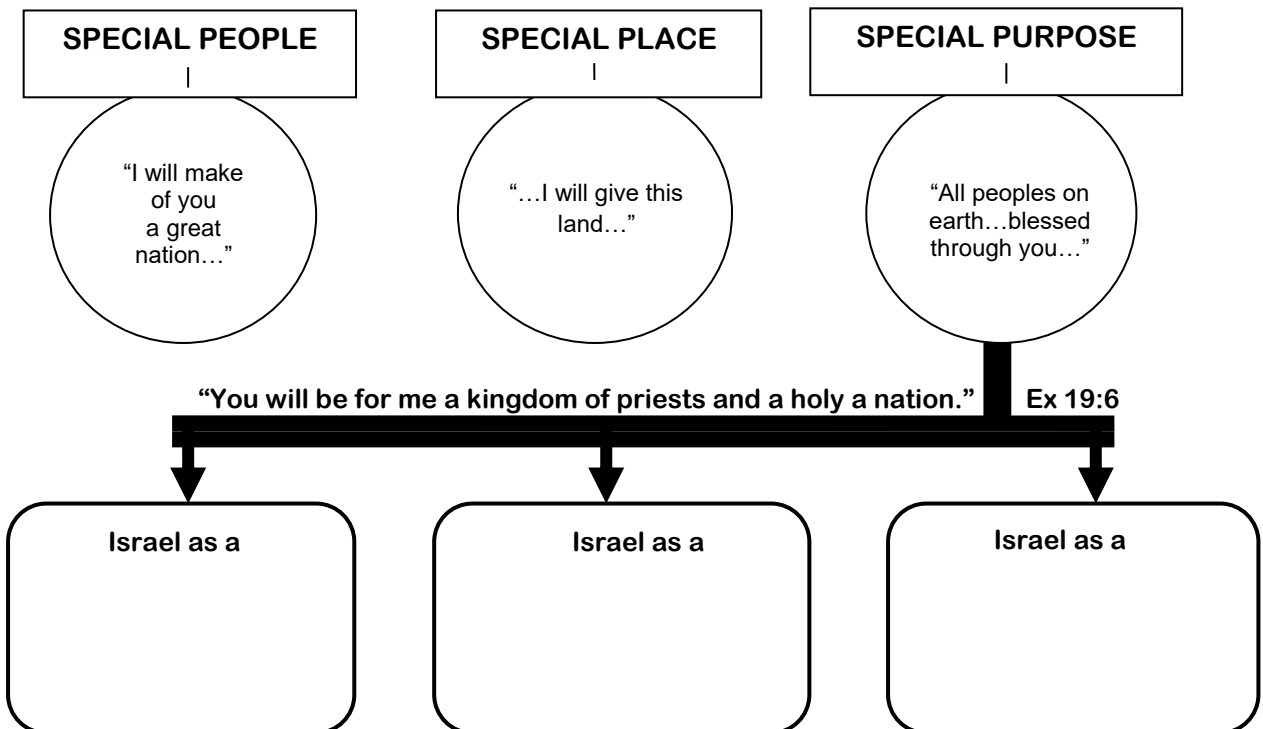
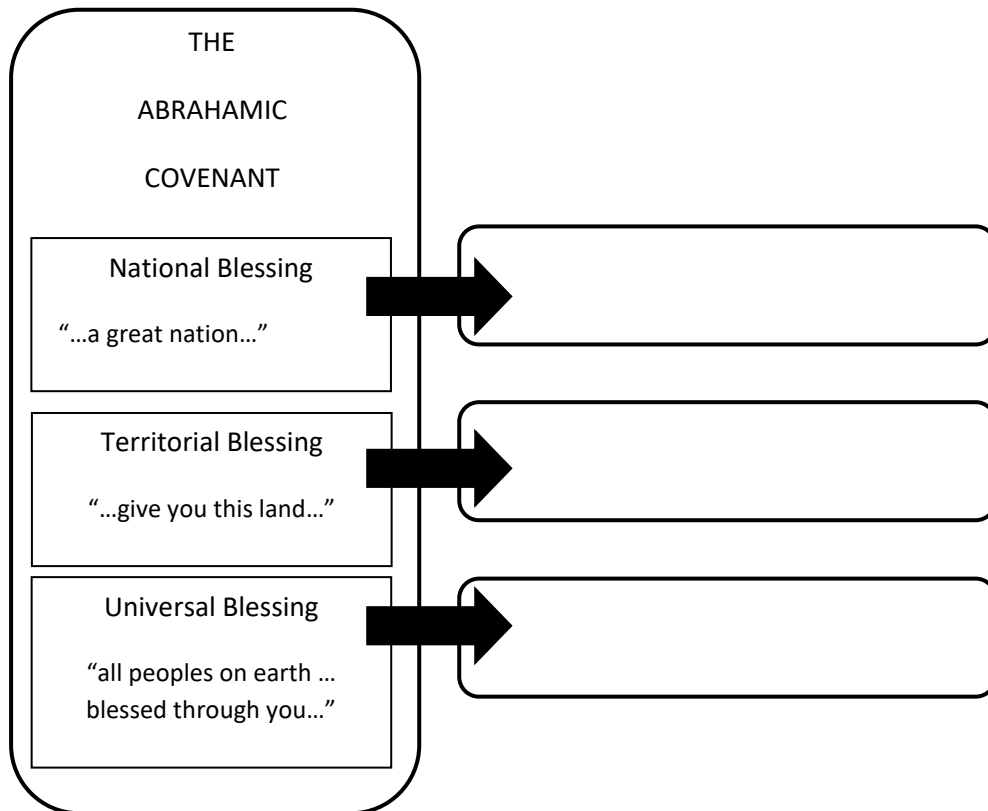
God declared to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between men and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Gen 17:7)

"The whole land of Canaan...I will give to you as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you...." (Gen 17:8)

"...you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." (Gen 17:9)

"O descendants of Israel His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is the Lord our God;....He remembers His covenant forever....the covenant He made with Abraham, the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit." (Psalm 105:6-11 is quoted in 1 Chron 16:13-18 as David brings the ark to Jerusalem.)

If the covenant with Abraham is an everlasting Covenant without conditions, it must follow that ethnic Israel has a permanent relationship with God. But what does 'everlasting' (Heb. 'olam') mean?



1. Israel as a Witness to God.

When God revealed Himself personally and propositionally to Israel, he never intended that revelation to be confined to Israel. God called Israel to be a witness to the nations (Ex 19:5-6). The prophets constantly reminded Israel of this priestly calling. For example, in Isaiah 40-55 (NIV) Isaiah refers to Israel as God's servant 12 times (Isa 41:8,9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1,2,21,26; 45:4; 48:20), calls them his witnesses 3 times (Isa 43:10,12; 44:8) and his messengers twice (Isa 42:19; 44:26).²³² Of course, this automatically begs the question: a messenger and witness to whom? The answer is: "to the nations".²³³ But this begs yet another question: what was Israel to be a witness to the nations about? The answer is that God appointed Israel to witness to the fact that there is only one God and there is no other god besides him - Isaiah 40-55 repeatedly mentions this. God's relationship with Israel is for his glory (Isa 41:16; 43:7,21; 48:11) and renown (Isa 55:13). God uses Israel to show his righteousness (Isa 44:13; 45:24; 51:5,8); his sovereignty over nature and the nations (Isa 45:1-6; 46:10-11; 48:3; 49:22-23; 51:12-16); his faithfulness (Isa 44:2-5,21; 45:19,23; 46:3-5; 49:7-9,14-23); his compassion (Isa 49:13; 50:3; 51:12; 54:7-8); his patience (Isa 48:9-11); his justice (Isa 51:4); his love (Isa 43:4); his power (Isa 45:24; 41:20-29; 44:24-28; 45:20-21; 46:10; 47:3-8; 52:6,10); his forgiveness (Isa 43:25; 44:22-23); his salvation (Isa 48:20-21; 49:7-9; 52:3,9; 54:5). God's actions on behalf of Israel are public actions so that the nations might understand that he is the only true God and that there is no God besides him (Isa 43:10-13; 44:6-8; 45:6,14,18,21-22; 46:9; 47:4; 48:12-13; 49:26; 54:5).

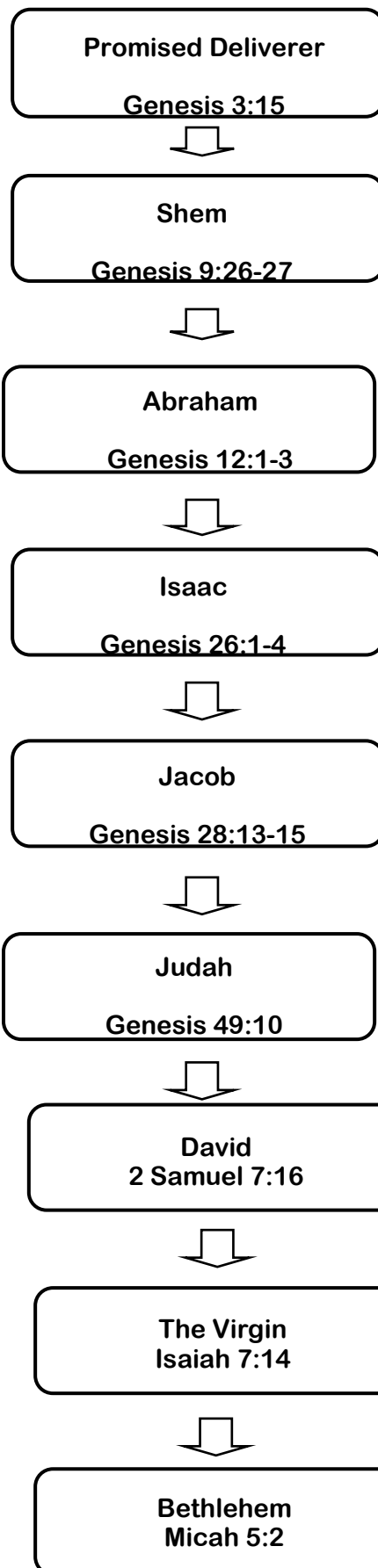
2. Israel as a Custodian of the Scriptures.

Israel was the sole recipient of God's special 'propositional' revelation. When God gave Israel the law (Ex 20:1-26, Deut 5:1-22), this set them apart from all the other nations. The Psalmist said God "has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws." (Psa 19:20). Israel understood that being "entrusted with the very words of God" (Rom 3:2) was one of their greatest claims to fame, and the Jews were quick to "...brag about the law" (Rom 2:23). In having the law, Israel possessed "the embodiment of knowledge and truth..." (Rom 2:20) and so they correctly saw their role in the world as "a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, and instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants..." (Rom 2:19-20). Gentile nations, on the other hand, were left to consider God's finger prints in creation (Psa 19:1-5), the "conscience language of the soul" (Rom 2:14-15), and the sense of God working in human history (Acts 14:16-17, 17:26-27). But the explicit propositional revelation of God in human language was given to Israel alone.

²³² Within this section of Isaiah (40-55) there are also four 'Servant Songs' that speak of Messiah (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) – so there are two servants: literal-ethnic Israel and the Messiah himself. That Messiah is called God's servant does not minimise, much less cancel out, Israel from being God's servant. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. p.123.

²³³ The nations are mentioned repeatedly: 40:15-17,22-24; 41:1,4-6,11,15-16,20-26; 42:1,4,6,10-13; 43:3-6,9,14; 45:1,4-5,13-14,22-23; 46:1,11; 47:1,5-12; 48:14,20; 49:1,6-7,22-26; 51:4-5,7-8,13; 52:2,4,10,15; 54:3).

3. Israel as a Channel for Messiah.



Note 1: Paul makes it clear that it is from God's chosen people, Israel, that the human ancestry of Christ is traced

– the Christ who is God over all, forever praised! (Rom 9:1-5).

Note 1. Shem's genealogy is given twice in Gen 10-11 preparing the reader for Abraham (Gen 11:26) - Ham and Japheth's genealogy appear only once (Gen 10:21-31; 11:10-26).

Note 2. Genesis 9:27 reads: "*May God enlarge Japheth's territory and numbers! May he live in the tents of Shem...*". The question is: who will live in the tents of Shem? The NIV takes the antecedent of 'he' to be Japheth, but there is very good reason to understand that the personal pronoun 'he' refers instead to God (NASB, NET). Clearly, God's promise is connected to the line of Shem. God himself will live in the tents of Shem.

